**Okul Öncesi Öğretmen Adaylarının Pedagojik Dokümantasyon Deneyimleri İle
Değerlendirme Konusunda Kendilerine Olan Güvenin Ve Yeterliklerinin Desteklenmesi**

*Strengthening Pre-Service Early Childhood Teachers' Confidence and Competence on
Assessment Through Their Pedagogical Documentation Experiences*

Metehan Buldu *

Abstract: This study investigated how pre-service early childhood education teachers' confidence in assessing children has changed after learning pedagogical documentation process and identify a roadmap on how to support their professional development in terms of assessment. The design of the study was qualitative case study in nature. Based on that, qualitative case study design was utilized for the current study. For the selection of the participants, a purposive sampling strategy was utilized. The data of the study were drawn from pre-service teachers who were enrolled in an elective course called Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood Education in an early childhood teacher education program at a state university. The data were collected through pre-and post- focus group interviews, and documentation panel displays and reflection journals about their documentation experiences. Thematic analysis method was utilized and three main theme was determined after all data analysis process was conducted. These were; (1) exploiting assessment tools in learning process, (2) supporting pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs on assessment, and (3) interpreting assessment results for planning learning process. Findings revealed that implementing pedagogical documentation supports the pre-services teachers' confidence and competencies on implementing assessment strategies in terms of understanding how to interpret assessment evidences and decide about children's learning outcomes. Considering the findings of this inquiry, it can be recommended that pre-service early childhood teacher training programs should be designed to provide necessary experiences to implement assessment strategies such as pedagogical documentation.

Structured Abstract: The current study aimed to investigate how pedagogical documentation experiences supports pre-service early childhood teachers' confidence and competence in assessing children's learning outcomes through pre-and post- focus group interviews, document analysis (documentation panels) and reflection journals about their documentation experiences. The guiding research question of the study is: "How does implementing pedagogical documentation contribute to the participant early childhood pre-service

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teachers' confidence and competence in assessing children's learning?" The underlying theoretical background of the study is Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory which describe confidence as a cognitive process for mediating individuals' motivation, behaviors and actions. Early childhood profession has a long history of studying children and observation of young children is essential to providing developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 2011), because assessing young children's development and learning accurately is an inbuilt component of effective practice in early childhood education. During early childhood years, children have limited attention span and sometimes their non-verbal expressions can explain important details about their development. Which is why, assessing children's learning and development is different from adults'. Taking into account all of these information about early childhood assessment, research studies show that most of the early childhood teachers either have lack of knowledge or feel uncomfortable while assessing children (Brookhart, 2011).

Pedagogical documentation is one of the best strategies that used in early childhood learning environments (Rinaldi, 2001), which was is described as a cyclical process that covers multiple assessment strategies and combine them for reflecting children's learning and development. Assessment strategies in the process of documentation are mainly composed of records through photos, videos, audio recordings, children's work, and observations and it gives an opportunity to teachers, parents and children to discuss their learning and development. When 2013 Early Childhood Education Program (MEB, 2013) was examined, it was seen that the program recommends teachers to assess children through multiple forms of data collection methods, such as developmental portfolios, development report, observations, checklists, rubrics, and video-recordings. Therefore, implementing pedagogical documentation in early childhood learning environments is practical way of assessing children's learning and development.

The design of the study was qualitative case study in nature. Based on that, single case study design was utilized for the current study. For the selection of the participants, a purposive sampling strategy was utilized. 24 early childhood pre-service teachers who were taking "Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood Education" as an elective course participated in this study. To answer the research questions, different data collection methods were used to examine the consistency of the findings. For this purpose, pre- and post- focus group interviews, document analysis through their documentation panels, and individual journal reflection papers were utilized in the current study.

To analyze the data, thematic analysis method was utilized which works as reading data, rereading it, viewing data from different perspectives and organizing it in various ways through and after data collection process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The main finding of the current study revealed that implementing pedagogical documentation supports the pre-services teachers' (1) exploiting assessment tools in learning process, (2) supporting pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs on assessment, and (3) interpreting assessment results for planning learning process.

Findings of the study showed that pre-service ECE teachers articulated their experiences through pedagogical documentation with evaluable comments. It was not surprising that pre-service found Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood course useful, and improved their professional development in terms of assessing young children. One of the most important findings revealed that pre-service ECE teachers feel more competent about how to use assessment tools and strategies while assessing young children after they had experienced pedagogical documentation implementations. Parallel with the result of the study, a study including workshops on documentation conducted by Peaslee, Snyder, and Casey (2007) which were aimed to help teachers to enhance their assessing and interpreting children's development and learning and at the end of their investigation they found that teachers acknowledged documentation as a tool for assessing young children and making future plans.

Studying pedagogical documentation with pre-service ECE teachers showed that learning to implement pedagogical documentation had a positive effect on pre-service teachers' professional development in terms of how to be able to apply learned theoretical knowledge in terms of assessing young children. If pre-service teachers become knowledgeable enough, they should have confidence to use assessment tools and strategies in their future field experiences. So, it can be recommended that pre-service early childhood teacher training programs should be designed to provide necessary experiences to implement assessment strategies such as pedagogical documentation.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Professional Development, Teacher Education, Pedagogical Documentation, Documentation Panel

Öz: Bu çalışmada, okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının erken çocukluk eğitiminde pedagojik dokümantasyon sürecini öğrendikten sonra çocukları değerlendirme konusunda kendilerine olan güvenlerinin ve yeterliklerinin nasıl değiştiğini ve öğretmen adaylarının mesleki gelişimleri açısından nasıl desteklenmeleri gerektiği araştırılmıştır. Çalışmanın tasarımı doğada nitel vaka çalışmasıdır. Buna dayanarak, mevcut çalışma için nitel vaka çalışması deseni kullanılmıştır. Katılımcıların seçimi için amaçlı örnekleme tekniği kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri, bir devlet üniversitesindeki okul öncesi öğretmenliği programında seçmeli ders olarak okutulan Erken Çocukluk Eğitiminde Pedagojik Dokümantasyon dersine devam eden öğretmen adaylarından elde edilmiştir. Öğretmen adaylarıyla yapılan öncesi ve sonrası odak grup görüşmeleri, onlar tarafından hazırlanan dokümantasyon panel görselleri ve öğretmen adaylarının dokümantasyon deneyimlerine dair yazılı görüşleri çalışmanın verisini oluşturmuştur. Çalışmanın bulguları tematik analiz yöntemi kullanılarak elde edilmiş ve sonuçlar (1) değerlendirme araçlarını öğrenme sürecinde kullanmak, (2) öğretmen adaylarının değerlendirme konusundaki öz-yeterlik inançlarını desteklemek ve (3) öğrenme sürecinin planlanması için değerlendirme sonuçlarının yorumlanması olarak üç tema altında toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın bulguları pedagojik dokümantasyon uygulamalarının değerlendirme stratejilerini uygulama, yapılan değerlendirme uygulamaları sonucunda elde edilen verileri yorumlama ve yeni öğrenme çıktıların gerçeğeşebilmesi için planlama yapabilmek açısından okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının kendilerine olan güven ve yeterliklerini desteklediğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu sonuçlar dikkate alınarak, okul öncesi öğretmenliği programlarında değerlendirme stratejilerini uygulamak için gerekli deneyimleri sağlayacak eğitim programlarının tasarlanması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okul Öncesi Eğitim, Mesleki Gelişim, Öğretmen Eğitimi, Pedagojik Dokümantasyon, Dokümantasyon Paneli

Introduction

Assessment in early childhood education is highly critical issue (Wortham, 2008), because of children's age characteristics, for this reason assessing young children's development and learning accurately is an inbuilt component of effective practice in early childhood education. Early childhood profession has a long history of studying children and observation of young children is essential to providing developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 2011). During early childhood years, children have limited attention span and sometimes their non-verbal expressions can explain important details about their development. Which is why, assessing children's learning and development is different from adults'.

That's why, assessment strategies are also different during these years while compared to assessment strategies that used in adult's learning. To give an example, using observation or children's drawings can be used in early childhood classrooms as assessment strategies. Moreover, combining these strategies to get more valid and reliable information about development is another important issue. The main idea of early childhood assessment strategies is to show children's whole development in different learning areas (Wortham, 2008; McAfee & Leong, 2012). Reflecting learning process as a whole is the main purpose of such kind of assessment strategies. Providing a highquality learning environment and creating child-centered learning process require ongoing assessment understanding to better know about children's strengths, needs and interests (Flottmann, Stewart & Tayler, 2010). When viewed from this perspectives, pedagogical documentation is one of the best strategies that used in early childhood learning environments (Rinaldi, 2001).

Pedagogical documentation was first introduced by Loris Malaguzzi through Reggio Emilia Approach (MacDonald, 2007). The Reggio Emilia is mainly based on the studies of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Howard Gardner, and Loris Malaguzzi (Gandini, 2012). Pedagogical documentation is described as a cyclical process that covers multiple assessment strategies and

combine them for reflecting children's learning and development. Briefly, Pedagogical documentation can be defined as a multipurpose tool for making children's understanding and learning visible (Kalliala & Samuelson, 2014; Alcock, 2000). Assessment strategies in the process of documentation are mainly composed of records through photos, videos, audio recordings, children's work, and observations and it gives an opportunity to teachers, parents and children to discuss their learning and development. Furthermore, pedagogical documentation can include some products such as panel, portfolio, and monthly bulletins. However, using pedagogical documentation is required to know early childhood assessment and assessment strategies well (Rinaldi, 2001). Professional development is another perspective to be considered, pedagogical documentation empowers teachers' professional development and provides teachers with feedback about their implementations and planning (Bowne et al., 2010 & Buldu, 2018). Taking into account all of these information about early childhood assessment, research studies show that most of the early childhood teachers either have lack of knowledge or feel uncomfortable while assessing children (Brookhart, 2011). Moreover, previous studies showed that most of the pre-service teachers have lack of competency while assessing children's learning because of lack of information about how to implement assessment strategies (Vingsle, 2014).

When 2013 Early Childhood Education Program (MEB, 2013) was examined, it was seen that the program recommends teachers to assess children through multiple forms of data collection methods, such as developmental portfolios, development report, observations, checklists, rubrics, and video-recordings. Therefore, implementing pedagogical documentation in early childhood learning environments is practical way of assessing children's learning and development. In the light of this information, the current study aimed to investigate how pedagogical documentation experiences supports pre-service early childhood teachers' confidence and confidence in assessing children's learning outcomes through pre-and post- focus group interviews, document analysis and reflections about their documentation experiences. The underlying theoretical background of the study is Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory which describe confidence as a cognitive process for mediating individuals' motivation, behaviors and actions.

The research question was determined as follows:

- How does implementing pedagogical documentation contribute to the participant early childhood pre-service teachers' confidence and competence in assessing children's learning?

Method

This study aimed to investigate how pedagogical documentation experiences supports pre-service early childhood teachers' confidence in assessing children's learning outcomes through pre-and post- focus group interviews, document analysis and reflections about their documentation experiences. For this purpose, the current study explored how pre-service ECE teachers' confidence in assessing children has changed at which stage and identify a roadmap on how to support it in terms of their professional development.

The design of the study was qualitative case study in nature. Based on that, single case study design was utilized for the current study. For the selection of the participants, a purposive sampling strategy was utilized. 24 early childhood pre-service teachers who were taking "Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood Education" as an elective course participated in this study. Also these pre-service teachers are placed in a field-based internship one they in a week at a pre-school. To answer the research questions, different data-collection methods were used to examine the consistency of the findings. For this purpose, pre- and post- focus group interviews, document analysis through their documentation panels, and individual journal reflection papers were utilized in the current study.

Research context and procedure

All these pre-service ECE teachers were female with ages ranging from 22 years old to 28 years old. The pre-service ECE teachers are taught the types of assessment, strategies, and how to use the tools of assessment in a systematic way through pedagogic documentation during the semester (Krechevsky & Stork, 2000). The course begins with discussion of assessment in early childhood education and the role of using pedagogic documentation as an assessment tool. Pre-service teachers encouraged to think and discussed about types of assessment strategies, assessment tools, and how to apply pedagogic documentation process during the course. Focus group interviews at the beginning and end of the semester, personal reflections at the end of the semester, and documentation panels were used as data source in this research.

Data collection procedure:

The prime interest of the researcher is to explore how pre-service ECE teachers' confidence of using assessment via their elective university course with content of using pedagogical documentation in early childhood education. With making focus group interviews at the beginning and at the end of the semester, researcher want to see the change in their confidence level of using assessment; personal reflections and documentation panels prepared by pre-service teachers are used for uncovering the details of how implementing pedagogical documentation enhance their confidence of assessing young children. Data from the focus group interviews, reflections, and the documentation panels of 24 pre-service early childhood education teachers who participated in the Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood Education course were used in this study. For this study, the researcher drew on 6 focus group interviews (4 at the beginning of the semester and 4 at the end of the semester), 24 personal reflection papers, and 4 documentation panel prepared by pre-service teachers at the end of the course. Firstly, focus group interviews at the beginning of the course were about what do they know with regard to assessing young children, interviews at the end of the semester were about what they learned about assessing young children via the course. Secondly, reflections of preservice teachers were about how much do they feel enough to assess and interpret young children. Lastly, documentation panels were used to view their implementation of pedagogic documentation.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, thematic analysis method was utilized which works as reading data, rereading it, viewing data from different perspectives and organizing it in various ways through and after data collection process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Three main theme was determined after all data analysis process was conducted. These are; (1) using pedagogical documentation as an assessment tool, (2) supporting pre-service teachers' confidence and competence on assessment, (3) interpreting assessment results for planning learning process. To provide ethical procedure from participants, informed consent form was obtained from the pre-services teachers to provide confidentiality before starting to the study. Moreover, the coding process was conducted with two different researchers for providing interrater reliability. The calculated interrater agreement of the coded data was 94.2%.

Findings

Pre- and Post-focus group interviews were the main data sources of this inquiry. Data from personal reflections and documentation panels were used to support the main data source.

The main finding of the current study revealed that implementing pedagogical documentation supports the pre-services teachers' **(1) exploiting assessment tools in learning process, (2) supporting pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs on assessment, and (3) interpreting assessment results for planning learning process.**

Table 1. Contribution Categories of Pedagogic Documentation from Preservice Teachers' Beliefs in terms of Pre- and Post- Focus Group Interviews

Themes	Pre-focus group interview frequencies	Post- focus group interview frequencies
Exploiting assessment tools in learning process	9	21
Supporting pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs on assessment	8	23
Interpreting assessment results for planning learning process	6	19

Exploiting assessment tools in learning process

Analyzed data from pre-focus group interviews represented that small number of pre-service teachers mentioned that they know and use assessment tools on-site, rest of them mentioned that they know what are assessment tools and strategies but they do not know how to use them, however post-focus group interview analysis showed that most of the pre-service teachers can use assessment tools and strategies. With an example, making observation was mentioned 9 times through pre-focus group interviews, on the other hand, it was mentioned 21 times through post-focus group interviews.

“Actually, I think that I know lots of assessment strategies, but I’m not sure that I truly implement them while working with children”

“At the end of the course and implementations, we learned how and when to use observation tools, and we recognize that assessment is not just asking questions to get feedback from children.”

In addition, applied documentation panels and personal journal reflections supported the accuracy of the focus group interview results. When documentation panels created by pre-service teachers' through field experiences were analyzed, it was seen that most of them used assessment tools while assessing children's development and learning. For instance, 6 groups of pre-service teachers worked together while creating documentation panels and it was seen that 2 groups of them used descriptive observation recording tools like scribbles, anecdotal records, and running records while assessing young children; and also 4 groups of pre-service teachers used calculation needed recording tools like checklists, participations charts, and frequency counts that reflected on their documentation panels. Data obtained from journal reflections were about pre-service teachers' feelings about their confidence to use assessment tools and strategies before and after taking Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood Education course. Reflection journal analysis showed that before taking the course, what assessment tools and strategies were known by pre-service teachers, but they were not sure about when and how to implement them; however, they stated after taking this course and having experiences in the field, they stated that they feel more competent about how to use assessment tools and strategies while assessing young children. For instance, pre-service teachers mentioned that:

“After implementations of documentation panels with children, I recognized that even sentences of children among themselves can be an element of assessment and give us clues from their learning and experiences.”

"I realized that using various data sources is important while assessing young children, I should not assess the data that I have collected from a single point of view, and I should collect and save data with consciousness through different ways."

Supporting pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs on assessment

Based on the pre- and post-focus group interviews data, a small number of pre-service teachers were feeling confident about assessing young children before taking the course of Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood Education, on the other hand, post-focus group interview analysis showed that most of the pre-service teachers were feeling more confident for assessing young children's development and learning. Table 1 exhibits this result as feeling competent about assessing young children mentioned 8 times in pre-focus group interviews while it was mentioned 23 time during post-focus group interviews. Moreover, gathered data from journal reflections about pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs on assessment before and after taking Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood Education course represented that pre-service teachers have theoretical knowledge about assessing young children but they were not feeling confident implementation, on the other side, they stated after having field experience and using theoretical knowledge in the field, they feel more confident to implement what do they have in their mind about assessing young children. Examples of pre-service teachers' comments are:

"We were aware of the assessment tools but we did not know how to use them before taking the course, however, after taking the course we learned about assessment and observation tools and what can we do with them. All these experiences made us feel confident in terms of assessing young children because we learned when and how to use observation tools such as control lists, anecdotal records, rubrics, etc."

"I feel confident and competent about evaluating and interpreting the data obtained through assessing young children because I learned how to save the data, how to analyze them, what should I pay attention to while interpreting the results, and what kind of decisions I will make after interpreting the results at the end of pedagogical documentation course."

Interpreting assessment results for planning learning process

Pre- and post- focus group interviews of pre-service teachers were analyzed in terms of their interpretation of assessment results for planning. Pre-focus group interview analysis represented that very small number of pre-service teachers knows how to interpret assessment results to make effective plans for future learning of children. On the other hand, post-focus group interview results showed that most of the pre-service teachers can interpret the data gathered from their assessment experiences and they stated that they can use those results to make effective plans for learning processes. With an example from focus group interview results as main data source, pre-service teachers mentioned 6 times that they can use assessment results to make future plans more beneficial for students in their classrooms, however, the same thing was mentioned 19 times during post-focus group interviews. In addition, personal journal reflections supported the accuracy of the focus group interview results in terms of interpreting assessment results. Pre-service teachers stated that, as a result of the course and implementations in real learning environment experience, they have gained experience in how they can assess young children's development and learning, and how useful it is when planning new activities for young children. Some quotations from pre-service teachers provided rationale for this result, such as:

"We have learned how to assess children's development and learning with systematic observation and how to interpret the results of our assessment and use them for our future planning."

"I did not know how to use assessment result for planning teaching process, I have gained experience in how to do the assessment, how to monitor children's development and learning. I think

it has a great benefit for me in terms of gaining the ability to interpret and realized how useful the assessment will be while planning new activities.”

Discussion and Implications of the Study

The focus of this study is to investigate how pedagogical documentation experiences supports pre-service early childhood teachers' confidence in assessing children's learning outcomes through pre-and post- focus group interviews, document analysis and reflections about their documentation experiences. For this purpose, the current study explored how pre-service ECE teachers' confidence in assessing children has changed at which stage and identify a roadmap on how to support it in terms of their professional development, and the main finding of the current study revealed that implementing pedagogical documentation supports the pre-services teachers' confidence and competencies on implementing assessment strategies in terms of understanding how to interpret assessment evidences and decide about children's learning outcomes.

Findings of the study showed that pre-service ECE teachers articulated their experiences through pedagogical documentation with evaluable comments. It was not surprising that pre-service found Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood course useful, and improved their professional development in terms of assessing young children. Rinaldi (2001) and Wien (2011) emphasized that opportunities of teachers' professional development requires personal experiences in different teaching environment. One of the most important findings revealed that pre-service ECE teachers feel more competent about how to use assessment tools and strategies while assessing young children after they had experienced pedagogical documentation implementations. Parallel with the result of the study, a study including workshops on documentation conducted by Peaslee, Snyder, and Casey (2007) which were aimed to help teachers to enhance their assessing and interpreting children's development and learning and at the end of their investigation they found that teachers acknowledged documentation as a tool for assessing young children and making future plans. Also, the data obtained from reflection journals and documentation panels supports this result because practice and exposure of knowledge gained through the course represented how pre-service teachers became confident to use assessment skills in different contexts. Additionally, the study of Edwards et al. (2007) supports the findings of this study that, they conducted a collaborative study to investigate opportunities to learn and implement pedagogical documentation in teacher education program. They identified various skills that pre-service teachers can developed during their inquiry, those skills were about observation tools and documentation process, and they stated that when pre-service teachers learn to document, this will help them to use their assessment skills in a positive manner. Another finding of the study is related to how the course “Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood Education” is related to supporting pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs on assessment. Beyond pre-post focus group interviews, journal reflections and implementing documentation panels it was explored by pre-service early childhood teachers' articulations that they feel more confident and competent after taking this course and field experiences have a big share in this. In other words, implementation of pedagogic documentation supported pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs on assessment. Similar to this inquiry, DeLuca, Chavez, and Cao (2012) examined how assessment conceptions of pre-service teachers changed during an assessment course and they found a positive change in pre-service teachers' confidence about using assessment. Dahlberg et al. (2013) stated that pre-service teachers learn how to use assessment to see the suitability of educational activities in the classroom. Another key point emerged from the current study is, learning about how to implement pedagogic documentation enhances the ability of pre-service teachers while interpreting assessment results for planning future learning processes. As Gandini (2012) stated, pedagogical documentation helps to promote to the educators' continuous professional development.

Studying pedagogical documentation with pre-service ECE teachers showed that learning to implement pedagogical documentation had a positive effect on pre-service teachers' professional

development in terms of how to be able to apply learned theoretical knowledge in terms of assessing young children. To further the understanding of importance and effectiveness of pedagogical documentation for pre-service and in-service teachers, further inquiries about pedagogical documentation should be generalized in different teacher education programs. If pre-service teachers become knowledgeable enough, they should have confidence to use assessment tools and strategies in their future field experiences. Consequently, it can be recommended that pre-service early childhood teacher training programs should be designed to provide necessary experiences to implement assessment strategies such as pedagogical documentation. Also the same effect can be seen on in-service early childhood teachers, so in-service professional training seminars could be designed to enhance their assessment implementations through pedagogical documentation practices.

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