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PRE-SERVICE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT THE CONSISTENCY OF THE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM ON THE FORMATION OF THEIR TEACHER IDENTITY

(Research Article)

Özkan ÇELİK 

Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University

ocelik@mu.edu.tr

Alper YORULMAZ 

Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University

alperyorulmaz@mu.edu.tr

Halil ÇOKÇALIŞKAN 

(Corresponding author)

Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University

hcokcaliskan@mu.edu.tr

Özkan ÇELİK is assistant professor doctor at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Faculty of Education, Department, of Primary Education Program. His research interests are value education, creative drama, teacher education and teaching social studies.

Alper YORULMAZ is doctor at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Faculty of Education, Department, of Primary Education Program. His research interests are Mathematics Education for primary level students, primary teacher training, learning and teaching skills.

Halil ÇOKÇALIŞKAN is doctor at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Faculty of Education, Department, of Primary Education Program. His research interests are science education for primary level students, primary teacher training, learning and teaching skills.

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Özkan ÇELİK

ocelik@mu.edu.tr

Alper YORULMAZ

alperyorulmaz@mu.edu.tr

Halil ÇOKÇALIŞKAN

hcokcaliskan@mu.edu.tr

Abstract

The present study aimed to determine the effect of belief about the consistency of teacher education program in the formation of teacher identity of pre-service primary school teachers. In the study, a correlational survey method was benefitted. The participants of the research study consisted of 203 senior pre-service primary school teachers of three different state universities in 2018-2019 academic year. Early Teacher Identity Scale and TEDS-M Beliefs about the Effectiveness of Teacher Education Program were used as data collection tools. As a result, it was determined that the pre-service primary school teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of the teacher education program are high and the early teacher identity was at a medium level. In addition, it was revealed that the beliefs about the consistency of the teacher education program differed significantly in favor of the female pre-service teachers when compared to the beliefs of the males. However, the early teacher identity level of the two groups did not differ. It was concluded that there was a low positive relationship between belief about the effectiveness of teacher education program and the early teacher identity and belief about the effectiveness of teacher education program was a significant predictor of early teacher identity.

Keywords: Teacher identity, teacher education, the effectiveness of program, belief

1. Introduction

When education is examined as a system, it can be said that the teacher is the main source that makes the functioning and transformation of this system possible. The teacher acts as the main guide in the functioning of the learning and teaching process as desired and attaining the expected outcomes at the end of the process. Effective and qualified fulfillment of this duty of the teacher is closely related to his/her pre-service training and the process of building his/her teacher identity (Avraamidou, 2014; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Uğurlu and Demir, 2016). Teacher identity refers to how a teacher conceptually sees, identifies, and evaluates himself/herself as a teacher (Lasky, 2005). Having a developed teacher identity affects the design of the learning process, being open to innovations and reforms (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink ve Hofman, 2012). Therefore, it can be thought that teacher training process is also the starting point for developing teacher identity.

Formation of teacher identity is a dynamic learning process that changes and is shaped as a result of each gain of the individual. Pre-service teachers develop a teacher identity by

gaining various knowledge, skills and attitudes towards their profession through the courses they take during their undergraduate education (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2011). In addition, the state of continuing the teaching program and the first years of teaching are very important in the formation of teacher identity (Dede and Akkoç, 2016). In this process, the individual is also affected by knowledge, skill, motivation and culture (Taner and Karaman, 2014). Under these influences, he/she internalizes his/her teacher identity by criticizing and changing what he/she has been taught (Tavşanlı and Saraç, 2016). Therefore, on the basis of the answer to what kind of teacher he/she will be, he/she defines his/her own teacher identity.

In addition, many different factors that affect the formation of teacher identity can be mentioned. The physical and personality characteristics of the individual, his/her special abilities, skills and environment and the activities she participates in are some of these factors (Pennington and Richards, 2016). Knowles (1992), on the other hand, classified the sources that affect the formation of teacher identity in four groups as role models, experiences gained in the teaching profession, courses taken during the teacher training process, and experiences that the individual gains in relation to learning in childhood. This classification shows that teacher training program is an important factor in the formation of teacher identity. With the undergraduate education received, teachers are expected to take on the identity of a teacher who has professional competence to achieve the goals expected from education today (Çelik and Kalkan, 2019). Meeting this expectation depends on the ability of teacher training programs allocating sufficient time to pre-service teachers, engaging them in practice, strengthening their decision making and offer opportunities for learning through research (Walkington, 2005). It can be said that possession of all these features by teacher training programs will ensure the training of teachers with high professional competences and the formation of a positive teacher identity. Thus, it is thought that the investigation of pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of teacher training programs and their perceptions of teacher identity will contribute to the literature. Examining the pre-service teachers' beliefs is important in determining the consistency of the teacher training program. In addition, examining pre-service teachers' identities related to the teaching profession plays an important role in developing more effective teacher training programs. In this connection, it was aimed to determine the effect of pre-service primary school teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program on the formation of teacher identity. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought.

1. What are the pre-service primary school teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity?
2. Do the pre-service primary school teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity vary significantly depending on gender?
3. Do the pre-service primary school teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program predict the perceptions of pre-service teacher identity?

2. Method

The current study was conducted to determine the effect of the pre-service primary school teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program on the formation of pre-service teacher identity employed the correlational research design, descriptive in nature. Correlational research design aims to determine the relationship between two or more variables and the degree of this relationship (Karasar, 2016).

2.1. Study Group

The study group of the current research is comprised of 203 senior students attending the Departments of Primary Education at the Education Faculties of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Balıkesir University and Mehmet Akif Ersoy University in the 2018-2019 academic year. The purpose of selecting the study group from among senior students is that they are close to the end of their teacher training process, and they have almost completed the formation of their teacher identity. They are also more competent in terms of evaluating the consistency of the teacher training program. The distribution of the pre-service primary school teachers by gender, university attended and grade point average is given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Distribution of the study group by gender, university attended and grade point average*

Variables		n	%
Gender	Female	151	74.4
	Male	52	25.6
Universty	Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University	81	39.9
	Balıkesir University	51	25.1
	Mehmet Akif Ersoy University	71	35.0
Grade point avarage	2.00-2.50	17	8.4
	2.51-3.00	44	21.7
	3.01-3.50	116	57.1
	3.51 and higher	26	12.8

As can be seen in Table 1, 74.4% of the study group is female pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers seem to have a balanced distribution by university attended. In terms of grade point average, the majority of the pre-service teachers have a grade point average in the range of 3.01-3.50.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

In the current study, the Scale of Beliefs about the Consistency of the Teacher Training Program developed by Tatto, Ingvarson, Schwille, Peck, Senk and Rowley (2008) and adapted to Turkish by Aydın and Çelik (2017) and the Scale of Pre-service Teacher Identity developed by Friesen and Besley (2013) and adapted to Turkish by Arpacı and Bardakçı (2015) were used to collect data. In the data collection tool of the current study, there is a section including items to elicit information about the participants' university, gender and grade point average.

2.2.1. The Scale of Beliefs about the Consistency of the Teacher Training Program

The Scale of Beliefs about the Consistency of the Teacher Training Program was developed by Tatto et al. (2018) to determine beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and adapted to Turkish by Aydın and Çelik (2017). The scale consists of a single dimension and 6 items. This is a six-point Likert scale. The Cronbach Alpha value calculated for the internal consistency of the scale is 0.90 while in the current study this value was found to be 0.73. The lowest score to be taken from the scale is 6 while the highest score is 36 and increasing scores indicate increasing beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program.

2.2.2. The Scale of Pre-service Teacher Identity

The Scale of Pre-service Teacher Identity was developed by Friesen and Besley (2013) to determine the state of the formation of the identity related to teaching profession in the pre-

service period and adapted to Turkish by Arpacı and Bardakçı (2015). The scale is a five-point Likert scale consisted of 17 items. When the structural features of the scale are examined, it is seen that it has three factors called “Self-confidence as a teacher” (Items 1, 3, 7, 11, 12, 16), “Self-perception as a teacher” (Items 5, 8, 9, 10, 17) and “Participating teacher” (Items 2, 4, 6, 13, 14, 15). The internal consistency coefficient Cronbach Alpha was calculated to be 0.93 for the original scale while it was calculated to be 0.74 in the current study.

2.2. Data Collection

The required permissions were granted to collect data and then, the data collection tools of the current study were administered to senior students attending the Departments of Primary Education in the Education Faculties of the selected three universities in March 2019. The participation of the senior students was on a volunteer basis. After the collection of the data collection tools, the uncompleted or wrongly completed ones were discarded and thus data obtained from a total of 203 data collection tools were entered into the prepared data base.

2.2. Data Analysis

In line with the purpose of the current study, two different scales were used. In the analysis process, first the reliability values of the scales were calculated. After the calculation of the reliability values, means and standard deviations of the scales and their sub-dimensions were checked. In order to determine whether the scores taken from the scale exhibit a normal distribution, skewness and kurtosis values were calculated. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients ranging from +1.500 to -1.500 indicate that the distribution is normal. In the current study, the skewness coefficient was found to be -1.087 and the kurtosis value was found to be 1.126 for the scores obtained from the scale of beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program while the skewness coefficient was found to be -.951 and the kurtosis coefficient was found to be 1.124 for the scores obtained from the scale of pre-service teacher identity. These values show that the distribution is normal.

Descriptive analyses were used to determine the pre-service teachers’ beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity. The scores taken from the scale of beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program were evaluated as follows: between 1 and 2.66 as “low”, between 2.67 and 4.32 as “medium” and between 4.33 and 6.00 as “high”. The scores taken from the scale of pre-service teacher identity are evaluated as follows: between 1 and 2.33 as “low”, between 2.34 and 3.67 as “medium” and between 3.68 and 5.00 as “high”. In order to determine whether the participating pre-service teachers’ beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity vary significantly depending on gender, t-test; one of the parametric analyses, was used. Moreover, regression analysis was performed to determine the effect of beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program on the pre-service teacher identity. A correlation coefficient in the range of 0.70-1.00 means that there is a “high” correlation, in the range of 0.30-0.70 means that there is a “medium” correlation and in the range of 0.00-0.30 means that there is a “low” correlation (Büyüköztürk, 2010). Findings obtained from these analyses are given in the findings section.

3. Findings

The results of the analyses conducted in relation to the sub-problems of the study are presented in tables and then interpreted.

Findings related to the pre-service teachers’ beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity are presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. *Beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program*

	N	\bar{x}	ss	Level
1. Beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program	203	4.28	1.09	High
2. Pre-service teacher identity	203	3.59	.41	Medium
Self-confidence as a teacher	203	3.06	.35	Medium
Self-perception as a teacher	203	3.57	.57	Medium
Participating teacher	203	4.14	.66	High

As can be seen in Table 2, the mean score taken from the scale of beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program is (\bar{x}) 4.28. Thus, it can be said that the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program are high. The pre-service teachers' having strong beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program is claimed to make them believe that pre-service training will have significant effects in their professional teaching career and thus to enhance their motivation towards the training process. The mean score taken from the scale of pre-service teacher identity was found to be (\bar{x}) 3.59, which is a value at the medium level. On the other hand, the mean score taken from the sub-dimension of self-confidence as a teacher is medium (\bar{x} =3.06); the mean score taken from the sub-dimension of self-perception as a teacher is (\bar{x} =3.57) medium and from the sub-dimension of participating teacher is high (\bar{x} =4.14).

Table 3. *Distribution of the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity*

	Low		Medium		High		Total	
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program	18	8.9	60	29.6	125	61.6	203	100
Perceptions of pre-service teacher identity	4	2.0	110	54.2	89	43.8	203	100

As can be seen in Table 3, 125 (61.6%) of the pre-service teachers' level of beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program is high, that of 60 (29.6%) pre-service teacher is medium and that of 18 (8.9%) is low. When the pre-service teachers' perceptions of pre-service teacher identity are examined, it is seen that 89 (43.8%) of them are at the high level, 110 (54.2%) are at the medium level and 4 (2.0%) are at the low level.

Finding related to the pre-service teachers mean scores taken from the scale of beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and the scale of pre-service teacher identity vary significantly depending on gender. See Table 4.

Table 4. *Results of t-test conducted to determine whether the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of their pre-service teacher identity depending on gender*

	Groups	N	\bar{x}	Ss	Sd	t	p
Beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program	Female	151	4.38	1.01	201	2.30	.02
	Male	52	3.98	1.27			
Perceptions of pre-service teacher identity	Female	151	3.64	.38	201	2.86	.00
	Male	52	3.45	.46			

As can be seen in Table 4, the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program vary significantly depending on gender ($t=2.30$; $p<.05$). This

difference is in favor of the female pre-service teachers ($\bar{x} = 4.38$). The pre-service teachers' perceptions of their pre-service teacher identity were also found to be varying significantly depending on gender ($t=2.86$; $p<.05$) in favor of the female pre-service teachers ($\bar{x} = 3.64$). Thus, it can be argued that the teacher identity is developed faster in female pre-service teachers.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between their beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Test conducted to determine the relationship between the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity

Variables	Beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program	Perceptions of pre-service teacher identity	Self-confidence as a teacher	Self-perception as a teacher	Participating teacher
Beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program	1	.21**	-.06	.27**	.21**
Perceptions of pre-service teacher identity		1	.45**	.84**	.92**
Self-confidence as a teacher			1	.08	.21**
Self-perception as a teacher				1	.73**
Participating teacher					1

n=203, **p<.01

As can be seen in Table 5, there are positive significant correlations between the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and their perceptions of pre-service teacher identity and the sub-dimensions of self-perception as a teacher and participating teacher ($p<.01$). The correlation between the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity was found to be positive and low ($r=.21$). Positive and low correlations were found between the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and the "self-perception as a teacher" ($r=.27$) and "participating teacher" ($r=.21$) sub-dimensions. No significant correlation was found between the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and the sub-dimension of "self-confidence as a teacher" ($p>.01$).

The results of the regression analysis conducted to determine the extent to which the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program predict their perceptions of pre-service teacher identity are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *The extent to which the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program predict their perceptions of pre-service teacher identity*

	R	R ²	F	B	Sd	Beta	t	p
Beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program	.21	.04	9.46	.08	.02	.21	3.07	.02*

As can be seen in Table 6, there is a correlation between the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity ($R = .21$, $R^2 = .04$). Thus, it can be argued that the beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program are a significant predictor of the perceptions of pre-service teacher identity ($F(1-202) = 9.46$, $p < .05$). The beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program explain 4% of the perceptions of pre-service teacher identity. The significance test of the real predictor variable coefficient in the regression equation ($B = .08$) revealed that the beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program are a significant predictor ($p < .01$).

4. Discussion, Conclusion

Consistency between the elements of a training program such as objectives, applications and outcomes can be seen as the indicator of the effectiveness of this program. Therefore, in the current study, it was aimed to determine the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and their beliefs were found to be "high". Consistency of the program is one of the requirements of success (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth and Bryk, 2001a) and it is one of the quality indicators of the program (Tatto et al., 2008). Newmann, Smith, Allensworth and Bryk (2001b) emphasized that a program with a weak content but showing consistency is more successful than a program with a good and intense content but not showing consistency. On the basis of the opinions stated by the pre-service teachers participating in the current study, it can be argued that investigated the pre-service primary school teacher training program is consistent.

In terms of the professional development of the pre-service primary school teacher, teaching identity appears to be an important concept. In the current study, the participating pre-service teachers' perceptions of pre-service teacher identity were found to be at the "medium" level. When the sub-dimensions of the scale of pre-service teacher identity were examined, it was found that their perceptions of the self-confidence as a teacher and self-perception as a teacher are at the medium level while their perception of the participating teacher was found to be at the high level. In the literature, different levels of perceptions of teacher identity have been reported. In the studies conducted by Çelik and Kalkan (2019) with pre-service teachers from different departments and by Karalı (2018) with pre-service social studies teachers, it was found that the participating teachers have high perceptions of pre-service teacher identity while in the study by Ulubey, Yıldırım and Alpaslan (2018) with pre-service teachers having pedagogical formation training, it was found that their perceptions of pre-service teacher identity are between the medium and high level. In their study conducted with pre-service teachers having pedagogical formation training, Uluyol and Şahin (2018) found that the pre-service teachers' perceptions of pre-service teacher identity are very high. These differences seen in the perceptions of pre-service teachers are thought to arise from the use of different data collection tools and characteristics of the participants. Although there are differences between the levels of perceptions, it can be stated that pre-service teachers have positive perceptions of their pre-service teacher identity.

The pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity were found to be varying significantly depending on gender in favor of the female pre-service teachers. Uçar Çelebi (2018) also found that female teachers' views on professional identity perceptions, one of the dimensions of teacher identity, are statistically significantly higher than views of the male teachers. This shows that female pre-service teachers have more developed perceptions of their pre-service teacher identity and beliefs of the consistency of the teacher training program. Literature also supports this finding of the current study (Alptekin Yolcu, 2018; Çelik and Kalkan, 2019).

Formation of teacher identity is a multi-dimensional process. This causes many factors to affect the process. There are various studies in the literature investigating the effect of teacher training process on teacher identity (Barret, 2008; Day, Flores and Viana, 2007; Lasky, 2005; Stenberg, Karlsson, Pitkanien and Maaranen 2014; Yaşar, Karabay and Bilaloğlu, 2013). In the current study, the relationship between the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity were investigated. It was found that there are positive significant correlations between the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program and perceptions of pre-service teacher identity and its sub-dimensions of self-perception as a teacher and participating teacher. Moreover, the pre-service teachers' beliefs about the consistency of the teacher training program explain 4% of their perceptions of pre-service teacher identity. In the study conducted by Örnek (2020), it was determined that educational sciences courses, subject matter knowledge courses, sociopolitical characteristics of education faculties and school experience courses are among the effective factors in terms of the process of pre-service education in the formation of professional identity of teachers. In addition, Beijaard (2019) stated that teacher trainers have an effective role in the development and shaping of the teaching profession identity. In this regard, it can be argued that consistency of teacher training programs is important for the development of positive teacher identity in pre-service teachers.

5. Recommendations

This research study was carried out with pre-service teachers and it is the limitation of this study. The effect of the consistency of teacher training programs on teacher professional identity can be examined in terms of teachers and compared with the results of the research.

To conclude, it was found that teacher training program has an effect in formation of teacher identity and the consistency of the teacher training program is a significant predictor. Therefore, it is necessary to do planning to support pre-service teachers' physical, mental, social and emotional development in all aspects of the program improvements and teacher trainings should reflect this issue on their course planning.

It is necessary to realize plans that will support pre-service teachers' physical, mental, social and emotional development in all aspects of the program improvements to be realized due to the predictive nature of the teacher education program and the approaches that instructors take as a basis in their lessons in the formation of the teacher identity reached as a result of the research.

6. Conflict of interest

The authors declares that there is no conflict of interest.

7. Ethics committee clearance

The authors confirms that the study does not require ethics committee approval according to research integrity guidelines in their country.

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