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Teacher Candidates' Attitudes Towards Reading Habit (Case of Dokuz Eylul and Pamukkale Universities)

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the reading habit of the teacher candidates at the education faculties of Dokuz Eylül University (DEÜ) and Pamukkale University (PAÜ) in a contrastive manner. In this study, screening model being one of the descriptive research methods was used to identify the reading habit of the teacher candidates, obtain quantitative data and produce statistics related to the research topic. The population of this study is the 3rd year students at the education faculties of Dokuz Eylül and Pamukkale Universities. By choosing a certain number of classes in various departments of both faculties, a questionnaire was administered to 1832 students. In the data collection process, "Teacher Candidates' Attitudes towards Reading Habit Scale" (TCARHS) developed by Susar Kırmızı (2012) was used. The factor coefficients of the items rang from .80 to .54. The attitudes of DEU students towards reading habit have a higher level than those of PAU students.

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1. Introduction

Reading skill is one of the most effective ways individuals use in both their educational and social life. It also precedes all the other skills. Having such an importance, reading has various definitions. In the information era of the time, the main purpose of education is to train individuals who are able to think, express it appropriately, criticize, do research, read, interpret, put the knowledge into practice and convey this to others. About reading that is one of the most useful tools in teaching, different researchers have various definitions. Reading is one of the four main skills people use in both first and second foreign language education.

Different definitions of reading can be listed as follows. Reading is seeing figures as a result of moving eyes on the lines, perceiving their meanings and pronouncing them (Öz, 2001:193). It is the process of interpreting and evaluating the special symbols people decided on previously among them using sense organs (Yalçın, 2002:47). It is the process of seeing, perceiving and interpreting a text with its words, sentences, punctuations and other elements

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(Kavcar, Oğuzkan, Sever, 2005:41). Today, understanding of a good reading is cognitive. This understanding is based on the way our mental processes work at the time of reading (Calp, 2005:81). It is a process of interpretation as a result of reciprocal interaction of written and spoken pieces of works, reader and the environment (Akyol, 1997: 26). According to Nunan (1989: 33), reading is not just a coded form of grammar. Good readers make a connection between their background knowledge and the reading text. P. Ur argues that students should start reading after they have gained basic speaking skills. According to P. Ur (1992), as cited from Rivers, students who comprehends what they read “wants to read to get information, to accomplish a task in daily or business life, to play a game, to meet friends, to understand what happens around the world, and to have pleasure from reading (Rivers, 1981; P. Ur, 1992: 141-142)”. As can be inferred from these definitions, reading is a cognitive process in which symbols are perceived and interpreted by the help of sense organs. What matters in this process is not reaching the meaning of sentences one by one, but rather seeing it holistically and comprehending the meaning behind it. Reading also helps learners to better understand the problems and situations they encounter in life, analyze them, and evaluate them. Gaining reading habit and developing positive attitudes towards it is a long and challenging process. For this reason, a suitable environment is needed starting from early ages to have reading habit and make children like reading. The fundamentals of reading habit are laid in a family environment and it takes a long time (Camp, 2007). Students having a suitable environment for reading habit at home also want to see it at school. Schools and consequently, teachers have a great impact on students gaining a reading habit (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Mckool & Gespass, 2009). In order for the students to be motivated for reading, interesting and encouraging examples should be presented. Children should see people who are reading around them (Akay, 2009). It is the only way to make them interested in reading. For that reason, teachers who are the role models for students have a big responsibility. In order for them to be a good role model, teachers should have a satisfactory level of reading habit. Teachers should speak to their students about the books they read, the gains of reading to individuals, and how important reading is for their mental world and the way they think. According to Baccus (2004), experiences of teachers in reading habit and their guiding students for it have an important role in students’ motivation to read. It is for that reason teacher candidates should exhibit a positive attitude toward reading habit to have a student profile of effective literacy along with perceiving the existence of different worlds, questioning, and research skills. The quality of teacher candidates’ interest and habit in reading is quite important to be a model for children and youth (Saracaloğlu, Bozkurt ve Serin, 2003: 150).

Stating that it is a significant aspect of affective behaviors, Oppenheim defines attitude as positive or negative reaction of an individual towards a stimuli. (Köklü, 1992: 28). Attitude is an inclination forming individuals’ regular behaviors with a psychological object of theirs (Smith, 1968). Attitudes is a state of readiness to a neural behavior guiding reactions against objects and situations (Ülgen, 1995: 97). Attitude does not come from birth and the change of an attitude is affected by expertise and reliability. These factors together identify a person’s believability. Believable sources cause an easy change of attitude. A person who exhibits attitudes in a believable way is perceived as an honest person, resulting in believability against the person carrying the action increases. For this reason, in order to train a generation having a reading habit, firstly both teachers and teacher candidates should have a positive attitude towards reading habit and make their students feel that reading is a philosophy of life.

Reading habit is an attitude that should be taken into consideration for the interpretation of the realities in life, and one of the best ways to endow a positive attitude in students is the teachers and teacher candidates having the same attitudes themselves. It can be argued that comparison of teacher candidates’ interests and habits of reading would contribute to the literature. Reading habit is an attitude that should be taken into consideration for the interpretation of the realities in life, and one of the best ways to endow a positive attitude in students is the teachers and teacher candidates having the same attitudes themselves. It can be argued that comparison of teacher candidates’ interests and habits of reading would contribute to the literature.

2. Method

In the present study, the teacher candidates’ attitudes toward reading habit were examined. In other words, since it was aimed to examine the issue as it is, survey model was used, as it is one of the qualitative research methods. (Karakaya, 2011; Ekiz, 2009). This model enable researchers to gather data on the large groups of participants’ views and attitudes, and to describe facts and events.

2.1. Population and Sample

The study was conducted at the education faculties of Dokuz Eylul University (DEU) and Pamukkale University (PAU) in the 2012-2013 academic year. The scales gathered from 1832 3rd year students (978 female, 845 male) from various majors were taken into analysis. The scale was administered to randomly selected four classes from two schooling shifts, i.e. normal and evening (two from each). 990 students (612 female, 378 male) from Dokuz Eylul University and 842 students (375 female, 467 male) from Pamukkale University participated in the study. The study was conducted in the following departments of the education faculties: Art Teaching, Music Teaching, Turkish Language Teaching, Social Studies Teaching, English Language Teaching, Science Education, Computer and Instructional Technology, Elementary Teaching, Early Childhood Education, Elementary Mathematics Education, Guidance and Counseling.

2.1.1. Data Gathering Tool

“Teacher Candidates’ Attitudes towards Reading Habit Scale” (TCARHS) developed by Fatma Susar Kirmizi (2012) was used in the study. The development of the 34-item scale was conducted with 3rd year students (n=784) at Pamukkale University Faculty of Education. Before applying factor analysis to the data gathered from the preliminary study, it was examined whether factor analysis is possible. For this purpose, KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value was taken as a reference (KMO= 0,97). The gathered data was examined with Bartlett test of Sphere city value (Eroğlu, Kalaycı, 2008). The results revealed that Approx Chi-Square was found as 3994,693 and the results of the Bartlett test of Sphere city were significant at a 0,05 level. After identifying that the data was suitable for factor analysis, rotated factor analysis was conducted. According to the results of the factor analysis on TCARHS, it included three sub-dimensions. The examination revealed a Cranach’s Alpha reliability coefficient as 0,95. The scale included items with factor loading value of 0,45 and higher. The Equal-Length Spearman-Brown value of the scale was identified as 0,94; Guttman Splitt-half value as 0,94, Unequal-length Spearman-Brown value as 0,94. 5 of the items in the scale was negative while 29 being positive. Cranach’s Alpha reliability coefficient of the data gathered at Dokuz Eylul University was calculated as 0,95. In the analysis process, statistical techniques being arithmetic mean, standard deviations, t-test and ANOVA were used.

3. Findings

In line with the sub-problems of the study, the comparison of the teacher candidates’ attitudes toward reading habit based on the variables identified in the sub-problems was conducted. T-test was used to identify whether teacher candidates’ attitudes differ based on the university variable. The results of the analysis are presented in.

Table 1. Teacher candidates’ attitudes towards reading habit based on university variable

Groups	N	\bar{X}	ss	sd	t	p
DEU	990	119,03	18,13	1830	21,16	,000
PAU	842	92,51	34,18			P<0,05 Significant

When examined Table 1, it can be seen that teacher candidates’ attitudes toward reading differ significantly based on the university they study at, $t(1830)=21,16$, $p<0,05$. Students of DEU have a higher level of attitudes towards reading habit than those of PAU students. It can be explained by the city’s, i.e. Izmir, cultural-art activities, having a national library and high number of libraries, book fairs and the university’s high entrance exam points. As to identify whether owning a library at home show a significant difference in terms of attitudes towards reading habit, t-test analysis was conducted and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Teacher candidates’ attitudes towards reading habit based on owning a library variable

Groups	n	\bar{X}	ss	sd	t	p
Owning a library	683	104,87	32,97	1830	-2,18	,02
No library	1149	108,01	27,71			P<0,05 Significant

As Table 2 shows, teacher candidates having a library of themselves significantly differed from those who do not, $t(1830)= -2,18$, $p<0,05$. Most of the student did not own a library but they had better attitudes toward reading habit compared to those owning a library. Buying a book is not the only to reach a book. It can be thought that borrowing books from friends or a public library, getting e-books and magazines made owning a library not a reliable indicator of the attitudes towards reading habit. In line with the sub-problems of the study, variance analysis was used to identify whether teacher candidates’ attitudes towards reading habit differ based on major variable. The results are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. ANOVA results for teacher candidates' attitudes towards reading habit based on majors

Variance Source	Sum of Squares	sd	Mean Square	F	p	Significant difference
Between groups	108869,20		10	10886,92	13,05	,000 8-11, 9-11
Within groups	1518821,38	1821	834,05			
Total	1627690,59	1831				

As can be seen in Table 3, there is a significant difference in teacher candidates' attitudes toward reading habit based on majors. To further examine which groups caused the significance, Schaffer test was used. The statistics for majors are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Statistics for teacher candidates' attitudes towards reading habit based on majors

Major	n	\bar{X}	Ss
Art Teaching	92	104,16	28,00
Turkish Language Teaching	271	113,48	29,31
Social Studies Teaching	128	109,89	27,05
Computer and Instructional Technology	93	106,38	25,04
Early Childhood Education	261	106,93	30,25
Music Education	76	120,98	20,78
Social Studies Teaching	236	105,76	30,40
Science Education*	132	88,93	31,90
Elementary Teaching*	205	99,62	30,37
Mathematics Education	193	117,25	19,31
Guidance and Counselling*	145	100,60	35,73
Total	1832	106,84	29,81

* The difference between groups is significant.

The results of the analysis showed that there was a significant difference in teacher candidates' attitudes based on their majors, $F(10, 1821)=13,0$; $p<0,05$. In other words, teacher candidates' attitudes towards reading habit differ based on their majors. Focusing on the participants' attitudes toward reading habit based on their majors, Science Education students had the lowest level ($\bar{x}=88,93$), and Music Education students the highest level ($\bar{x}=120,98$). The Schaffer test conducted to see the differences between groups revealed that there is a significant difference between students studying Science Education ($\bar{x}=88,93$), Elementary Education ($\bar{x}=96,62$), and Guidance and Counseling ($\bar{x}=100,60$). The attitudes of students studying Guidance and Counseling towards reading habit were higher.

The subject of both informative and literary texts is human. One of the reasons we read is to get to know ourselves and other individuals. Aiming to get to know people closely, students studying guidance and counseling would use the knowledge gained from their readings in their professional lives. They seem to be aware that they can learn more about people by reading. It can also be said that students studying Science Education are satisfied with a learning based on scientific knowledge, experiment and implementation. However, it is tragic that Elementary Education students had a lower mean because their attitude has an effect on their students gaining reading habit. Elementary teacher are role models to exhibit reading habit in such a critical period.

4. Results, discussion and suggestion

The present study compared the attitudes of teacher candidates studying at DEU Buca Education Faculty and PAU Education Faculty and examined the difference based on three variables being whether having a personal library, their majors, and universities. In the university comparison, it was found that DEU students had a higher level of attitude towards reading habit. On the other hand, the students not having a personal library had a more positive attitude than those who own, which is an interesting finding of the study unlike the general assumptions. That the students having a library have a lower attitude can be an indicator of reading being an interactive activity.

Some researchers in the field found that most of the books students chose to read were obtained as course book, or from friends (Dunlap, 1933; Dökmen 1994). As for the third sub-problem of the study, the participants' attitudes differed based on their majors, which is also consistent with the findings of Özbay, Bağcı, Uyar (2008).

Sufficient reading time and environment should be provided to students to be able to talk about many texts in a meaningful way because school gives a reason to read and variety to read (Gabriel, Allington, & Billen, 2012: 190). The following suggestions have been put forward based on the results of the study: Sufficient financial support should be provided to class and school libraries to have contemporary and high quality publications. Educations and

organizers of reading programs should be careful to choose books which are interesting and appropriate to readers' skills and lives. For this reason, it should be paid attention to choosing books from a wide range of topics. Events encouraging reading such as seminars, book fairs, and author talks should be organized by universities. Projects and home works towards their reading and research should be assigned to teacher candidates in order for them to use libraries effectively and regularly. To help students to develop a positive attitude towards reading habit, assignments on reading habit should be given in undergraduate courses. Working hours of libraries can be reorganized for students to use them more. Candidates should be made aware of the importance of their attitudes towards reading habit on their students. Reading habit is basic skill that should be developed in early ages.

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