

## The Comparison of the Views of Early Childhood Teachers and Candidate Teachers towards the Inclusion Education<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*The aim of this study is to compare the views of pre-school teachers and student pre-school teachers towards inclusion education. The research study population consists of 41 pre-school education teachers serving at independent kindergartens and pre-school education kindergartens of primary education in the centre of Burdur province during the year 2009-2010 and 241 student pre-school teachers studying at the Department of Pre-school Education Teaching of Elementary Education Division in Mehmet Akif Ersoy University. The research data were collected through the scale "My Thinking About Inclusion Scale/MTAI" developed by Stoiber, Gettinger ve Goetz (1998) and adapted into Turkish by the Şahbaz and Dalğaras "Kaynastırma Hakkında Düşüncelerim Ölçeği/KHDÖ", the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency quotient of which was calculated as .73. The views of the pre-school teachers and student pre-school teachers, attending the research, towards the inclusion education are compared by using parametric tests. At the result of this research, it is found that the views of the pre-school teachers and student teachers, attending the research, towards the inclusion education are undecided and there is no significant difference between their views.*

**Keywords:** Inclusion, Pre-School Education Teacher, Student Teacher, My Thinking About Inclusion Scale/MTAI

### 1. Introduction

Pre-school period is one of those during which physical, mental, social-emotional developments of children are at their highest pace (Waller, 2009). The knowledge, skills and behaviors to be given to the child in this period affect the child's future life positively; and they also help the child become a constructive, creative and independent individual who can express himself well (Aral, Kandır and Can-Yaşar, 2002; Arı, 2003, Oktay, 2005; Yavuzer, 2006). Pre-school education is important for normally developing children as well as children with special needs (Karadeniz, 2002). Children with special needs attend pre-school education and like normally developing children, they also learn a lot of skills concerning life, gain experience and move these knowledge and skills to their future life. When education environments designed for students with special needs are examined, it can be seen that full time separation education and full time integration education are carried out on different levels. Educating students with special needs in different environments from normally developing students is called separation education. This practice is the first educational arrangement to be put forth regarding students with special needs (Çağlar, 1979) and it was first carried out in boarding or day special education schools (Kırcaali-İftar, 1998).

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Education environments arranged in order to provide mutual interaction for individuals with special education needs with other individuals are called integration education (MEB, 2006a; KHK/573). Starting with pre-school education, integration in normal education environments is important for individuals with special needs in terms of being a member of the society (Özsoy, Özyürek and Eripek 2002). In the research studies carried out it has been found that students with special needs participating in integration practices have higher development test scores than the scores of students with special needs who have education in special education classes; that there are improvements in their language and skill developments (Sasso, Rude, 1998; Quot. Ersoy and Avcı, 2000) and that they perform better in individual activities (Diamond and Hestenes, 1996). Moreover, it has also been observed that in the classes of integration education both normal students and students with special needs develop more positive attitudes towards each other (Peck, Carlson and Helmstetter, 1992; Quot. Odom, 2000) and that normal students have more information about the requirements of students with special needs through mutual interaction (Diamond and Hestenes, 1996). In the path to success for integration practices in pre-school education, while school administration, inspectors, families and teachers have very important roles, the most important role is of the teacher's. Teachers must be willing to practice integration in their classes and they must have an accepting attitude towards students with special needs.

Attitudes of teachers towards integration may be affected by the teacher's age, the level of the class of practices, the number of students in the class, the type of disability, the level of disability and the support given to the teacher by school administration (Batu and Kırcaali-İftar, 2007). Most of the negative attitudes of teachers towards integration result from the expectations of teachers who are unaware of students with special needs and integration practices. If special education experts inform teachers about integration practices and students with special needs, teachers' attitudes and expectations towards integration practices may change positively (Şahbaz, 1997). Teachers can be informed about individuals with special needs through in-service training or pre-service training (during undergraduate education). When teachers are informed about students with special needs through in-service training, positive changes are likely to occur in their opinions about integration since, this way, they are able to know these students and help them (Batu and Kırcaali-İftar, 2009).

Informing pre-school teachers through pre-service training (during undergraduate education) is important as well. When pre-school teachers are informed about integration practices through pre-service training they may change their opinions about integration in a positive way (Ayramidis, Bayliss and Burden 200b; Campbell, Gilmore and Cuskelly, 2003; Gözün and Yıkmaş, 2004; Mağden and Avcı, 1997; Lambe and Bones, 2006-2007, 2008; Reber, Marashak and Glor-Scheib, 1995; Wilczenski, 1993). Examining the studies outside and of Turkey, it can be seen that most studies focus on determining the attitudes and opinions of classroom and branch teachers on integration and issues concerning families (Atay, 1995; Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000a; Batu, 2000a; Beh-Pajoo, 1992; Carroll, Forlin, and Jobling, 2003; Diken, 1998; Dönmez, Avcı and Arslan, 1997; Goodman, Gottlieb and Harrison, 1972; Gresham and Reschly 1986; Guralnick and Groom, 1988; Harasymiv and Horne, 1975; Higgs, 1975; Larvie and Horne, 1991; Leyser, Kapperman and Keller, 1994; Loreman, Sharma, Forlin and Earle, 2005; Metin, 1997; Özbaba, 2000; Polat, 1993; Ringlaben and Price, 1981; Stoiber, Gottinger and Goetz, 1998; Sucuoğlu and Diken 1999; Şahbaz, 1997; Şahbaz and Peker, 2006; Uysal, 1995; Van Reusen, Shosho and Bonker, 2000). In some of these studies, the relation between the **gender** of the teachers and their opinions and attitudes towards integration has been examined and different findings have been obtained.

In some studies, female teachers (Higgs, 1975; Beh-Pajoo, 1992; Leyser, Kapperman and Keller, 1994), in some others, however, male teachers (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden 2000a; Carroll, Forlin, and Jobling, 2003; Loreman, Sharma, Forlin and Earle, 2005) have found to have a more positive attitude towards integration; still in some others, no significant relation has been found between teacher's gender and attitude towards integration (Harasymiv and Horne, 1975; Özbaba, 2000; Polat, 1993; Ringlaben and Price, 1981; Sucuoğlu and Diken 1999; Şahbaz and Peker, 2006). In the literature, there is limited research on the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers about the integration of students with special needs. Among these research studies, opinions, attitudes and competence of present pre-school teachers (Bennett, DeLuca and Bruns, 1997; Özbaba, 2000; Temel, 2000; Sünbül and Sargın, 2002; Üstün and Yılan, 2003; Artan and Balat-Uyanık, 2003; Varlier, 2004; Kaya, 2005; Yavuz, 2005) and prospective pre-school teachers (Proctor and Niemeyer, 2001; Campbell, Gilmore and Cuskelly, 2003; Diken, 2006; Sarı, Çeliköz and Seçer, 2009; Şahbaz and Kalay, 2010; Kayılı, Koçyiğit, Yıldırım-Doğru and Çiftci, 2010) have been examined and no study has been found on the comparison of present and prospective pre-school teachers' opinion about integration. The need for this study has emerged from this point.

## **2. The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to compare the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers about integration. To that end, following questions have been tried to be answered.

### **2.1 Sub-purposes**

1. Do the opinions of present pre-school teachers about integration
  - a) vary by gender?
  - b) show a significant difference by occupational experience?
  - c) vary by place of duty?
  - d) vary according to whether or not they have taken special education courses?
  - e) vary according to whether or not they have taken integration education?
2. Do the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration
  - a) vary by gender?
  - b) vary significantly by the class they have education in?
  - c) vary significantly by high schools they graduated from?
  - d) vary according to whether or not they have taken special education courses?
  - e) vary according to whether or not they have taken integration education?
3. Is there a significant difference between the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers about integration?

## **3. The Importance of the Study**

In the literature, the importance of the requirements that teachers should be willing to practice integration education in the classroom and that they should have an accepting attitude towards students with special needs is emphasized. Provided that teachers are informed about the students with special needs integrated into their classes through in-service training and they can have some knowledge of getting to know these students and helping them (Batu –Kırcaali-İftar, 2009), positive changes may occur in their opinions about integration. Not only taking in-service training, but it is also important for pre-school teachers that they have pre-service training (during graduate education). When prospective teachers are informed about students with special needs and the integration of these students into normal class environments through pre-service training (during graduate education) they may develop more positive attitudes for these students.

When undergraduate programs for pre-school teachers in higher education institutes in Turkey are assessed, it is concluded that courses on integration practices are not included. However, pre-service period (undergraduate education period) can be the best time to determine prospective teachers' worries about integration practices and to change any negative attitudes and perceptions (Loreman, Sharma, Forlin and Earle, 2005). Therefore, the findings to be obtained at the end of this research study are important in order to determine prospective pre-school teachers' opinions about integration, make up any deficiencies in the pre-service period and for teachers to contribute to the success of integration practices when they start working. Besides, this study is considered to be important as it will serve as a model for future studies on this subject.

## **4. Limitations of the Research**

This research study is limited to,

- a) Pre-school teachers working at independent nursery schools and in the nursery classes of elementary schools under the Ministry of Education in the Centrum of Burdur city in 2009-2010 school year,
- b) Prospective pre-school teachers attending day and evening classes of Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Faculty of Education Department of Elementary Education Early Childhood Education Program in 2009-2010 school year,
- c) The qualities measured by the assessment instrument employed in the research.

## **5. Method**

### **5.1 Research Model**

In this research descriptive scanning model has been used in order to compare present and prospective pre-school teachers' opinions about integration.

### 5.2 Study Group

41 pre-school teachers working in nursery classes of independent elementary schools and nursery schools under the Ministry of Education in the Centrum of Burdur city in 2009-2010 school year and 241 1., 2.,3.,and 4. Grade prospective pre-school teachers attending day and evening classes of Mehmet AkifErsoy University, Faculty of Education Department of Elementary Education Early Childhood Education Program in 2009-2010 school year constitute the study group of the research.

**Table1.Distribution of Pre-schoolteachersbyGenderandOccupationalExperience**

Gender		Occupational Experience of Pre-schoolteachers					Total
		0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-and more years	
Female	N	13	1	3	9	12	38
	%	31.7	2.4	7.3	22.0	29.3	92.7
Male	N	1	2	0	0	0	3
	%	2.4	4.9	0	0	0	7.3
Total	N	14	3	3	9	12	41
	%	34.1	7.3	7.3	22.0	29.03	100.0

When Table 1 showing the distribution of participating pre-school teachers by their gender and occupational experience is analyzed, it is seen that a total of 41 teachers consisting of 38 (92.7%) female and 3 (7.3%) male teachers have participated in the study.

**Table2.Distribution of ProspectivePre-schoolTeachersbytheirGenderandGradesTheyAttend**

Gender		Grades of theProspectivePre-schoolTeachers				Total
		1.grade	2.grade	3.grade	4.grade	
Female	N					
	%	54	53	50	36	193
Male	N	22.4	22.0	20.7	14.9	80.1
	%	19	11	7	11	48
	N	7.9	4.6	2.9	4.6	19.9
	%	73	64	57	47	241
	%	34.1	7.3	23.7	19.5	
Total						100.0

When Table 2 showing the distribution of prospective pre-school teachers by their gender and gradesthey attend it can be seen that a total of 241 prospective teachersconsisting of 193 female (80.1%) and 48 male (19.9%) teachershaveattendedthe research; prospect teachers at their first grade constitute the largest percentage (34.1%) of the study group and those at their second grade hold the smallest percentage (7.3%).

### 5.3 Data Collection Instrument

In order to compare the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers about integration the data of the research have been collected using “My Thinking About Inclusion Scale” developed by Stoiber, Gettinger and Goetz (1998) and adapted into Turkish as “KaynastirmaHakkındaDusuncelerimOlcegi (KHDO)” by Şahbaz and Dalğar (2011). This scale (KHDO) is a fivefold scale which consists of 20 entries. There are 9 reversing entries on the scale (2,6,8,11,14,17,18,19,20). Entry scores obtained from the data are recoded according to reversing entries. The lowest score to be obtained from the KHDO scale is 20, while the highest is 100. Scores between 20-35.9 mean “totally agree” and represent a very positive opinion, scores of 36-51.9 mean “agree” and represent a positive opinion; scores between 52-67.9 mean “hesitant ” and represent a hesitant opinion; scores between 68-83.9 mean “disagree” and represent a negative opinion and those between 84-100 are for “totally disagree” and represent a very negative opinion. Therefore, low scores obtained on the scale reflect positive opinions while high scores reflect negative opinions.

### 5.4 Data Collection

The data of the research have been collected applying KHDO on 41 pre-school teachers working in nursery classes of independent elementary schools and nursery schools under the Ministry of Education in the Centrum of Burdur city in 2009-2010 school year and 241 1., 2.,3.,and 4. Grade prospective pre-school teachers attending day and evening classes of Mehmet AkifErsoy University, Faculty of Education Department of Elementary Education Early Childhood Education Program in 2009-2010 school year.

### 5.6 Data Analysis

The responses of present and prospective pre-school teachers to My Thinking About Inclusion Scale (KHDO) have been inputted into SPSS 18.0 package program. While the reversing entries on the scale were being scored they were scored reversely. In order to analyze whether the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers show a normal distribution or not,coefficient of skewness of the total scores and Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test have been observed. As a result of the analyses, it has been found that the skewness coefficient of the total scores of present pre-school teachers' opinions is (0.002), the skewness coefficient of the total scores of prospective pre-school teachers' opinions is (0.265); and the significance values of both groups on Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test have been calculated to be  $p>.05$ , it has been decided that the scores show a normal distribution. Therefore, the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers participating in the research about integration have been compared by parametric tests (for some groups t-test, for variables with more than two options Anova test).

## 6. Findings

In order to determine whether opinions of pre-school teachers about integration vary by gender, average totals of teachers' opinions about integration by their gender have been calculated and the results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.Average Total Scores of Pre-school Teachers' Opinions About Integration by their Gender**

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD
Female	38	57.89	6.98
Male	3	55.33	1.52
Total	41	57.70	6.76

When Table 3 showing the average total scores of teachers' opinions about integration by their gender is analyzed, it can be seen that a total of 41 pre-school teachers 38 of whom are female and 3 male have participated in the research, average score of female teachers is  $\bar{X}=57.89$ , average score of male teachers is  $\bar{X}=55.33$  and the total score of opinions of teachers about integration is  $\bar{X}=57.70$ . In order to determine whether there is a significant difference between opinions of pre-school teachers about integration and their occupational experience or not, teachers have been divided into three groups according to their occupational experience (0-5 years, 6-20 years and 21 or more years of experience), variance analysis has been performed and the results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.Averages of Pre-school Teachers' Opinions about Integration by Their Occupational Experience and Variance Analysis Results**

Occupational Experience	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	F	p	Significant Difference
0-5 years	14	55.78	7.79				
6-20 years	15	59.86	6.86	2;38	1.384	.263	-
21 years or more	12	57.25	4.80				
Total	41	57.70	6.76				

When Table 4 is analyzed, it can be observed that a total of 41 pre-school teachers have taken part in the research consisting of 14 teachers who have 0-5 years of occupational experience, 15 with 6-20 years of experience and 12 teachers with 21 years or more experience. When research findings are analyzed in terms of a significant difference between the opinions of pre-school teachers by their occupational experience, it is seen that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of pre-school teachers about integration by their experience [ $F_{(2;38)}=1.38, p>.05$ ].

**Table 5. Average Total Scores of Pre-school Teachers' Opinions About Integration according to their of Duty and t-test Results**

Place of Duty	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Elementary	22	60.63	6.20	39	3.34	.002
Nursery	19	54.31	5.83			

When Table 5 on the average total scores of participating pre-school teachers' opinions about integration by their place of duty and t-test results is analyzed, 22 pre-school teachers working at nursery classes in elementary schools, 19 pre-school teachers working at independent nursery schools have participated in the research and there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of pre-school teachers about integration according to their place of duty [ $t_{(39)} = 3.34, p < .05$ ].

**Table 6. Average Total Scores of Pre-school Teachers' Opinions About Integration according to whether or not they have taken Special Education Courses and t-test Results**

Special Education Course	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Taken	19	55.89	6.90	39	1.62	.112
Not taken	22	59.27	6.37			

When Table 6 regarding the average total scores of participating pre-school teachers' opinions about integration according to whether or not they have taken special education courses and t-test results is analyzed, it is observed that 19 pre-school teachers who have taken special education courses and 22 pre-school teachers who have not taken the courses have participated in the research; and that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of pre-school teachers about integration according to whether or not they have taken special education courses [ $t_{(39)} = 1.62, p > .05$ ].

**Table 7. Average Total Scores of Pre-school Teachers' Opinions About Integration according to whether or not they have taken Integration Courses and t-test Results**

Integration Course	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Taken	16	55.43	7.42	39	1.76	.085
Not taken	25	59.16	6.01			

When Table 7 regarding the average total scores of participating pre-school teachers' opinions about integration according to whether or not they have taken integration courses and t-test results is analyzed, it can be seen that 16 pre-school teachers who have taken integration courses and 25 pre-school teachers who have not taken the courses have participated in the research and that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of pre-school teachers about integration according to whether or not they have taken integration courses [ $t_{(39)} = 1.76, p > .05$ ].

**Table 8. Average Total Scores of Prospective Pre-school Teachers' Opinions About Integration by their Gender and t-test Results**

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Female	193	59.99	8.85	239	1.45	.147
Male	48	57.93	8.33			

When Table 8 concerning the averages total scores of prospective pre-school teachers' opinions about integration by their gender and t-test results is analyzed, it can be seen that 193 female prospect teachers and 48 male prospect teachers have participated in the research and that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration by their gender [ $t_{(239)} = 1.45, p > .05$ ].

**Table 9. Averages of Prospective Pre-school Teachers' Opinions about Integration by their Grades and Variance Analysis Result**

Grades	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	F	p	Significant Difference
First	73	61.69	8.87				-
Second	64	63.85	8.73				
Third	57	56.59	6.75	3;237	17.89	.073	
Fourth	47	54.10	6.67				
Total	241	59.58	8.77				

When Table 9 concerning the averages of prospective pre-school teachers' opinions about integration by their grade and variance analysis results is analyzed, it is seen that 73 prospective pre-school teachers who attend the first grade, 65 teachers attending the second grade, 57 teachers attending the third grade and 47 teachers attending the fourth grade have taken part in the research and that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration by their grade [ $F_{(3;237)}=17.89$ ,  $p>.05$ ].

When research findings are analyzed in terms of averages, it is observed that average score of first grade prospect teachers is  $\bar{X}=61.69$ , average score of second grade prospect teachers is  $\bar{X}=63.85$ , of third grade prospect teachers is  $\bar{X}=56.59$  and that of fourth grade teachers is  $\bar{X}=54.1$ . Looking at the location of the scores obtained on the scale and taking into consideration the fact that low scores represent a positive opinion and high scores represent the negative one; it can be asserted that the opinions of second, third and fourth grades students are hesitant. It can also be understood when the findings are analyzed in terms of averages that there is a relative difference between the averages, the highest average belongs to the second grade and the lowest average belongs to the fourth grade prospective pre-school teachers.

**Table 10. Average Total Scores of Prospective Pre-school Teachers' Opinions about Integration according to the High School They Graduated from and Variance Analysis Result**

School Type	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	F	p	Significant Difference
High School	66	59.37	8.75				
Vocational School for Girls	30	56.23	8.50				
Anatolian High School	119	60.10	8.88	3;237	2.09	.101	-
Teacher High School	24	61.61	8.07				
Total	241	59.58	8.77				

In Table 10, it is seen that 66 high school graduates, a total of 241 prospect teachers being 30 Girls' Vocational High School Graduate, 119 Anatolian High School Graduate and 24 Teacher High school graduate have participated in the research and that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration according to the schools they graduated from [ $F_{(3;237)} = 2.09$ ,  $p>.05$ ].

**Table 11. Average Total Scores of prospective Pre-school Teachers' Opinions About Integration according to whether or not they have taken Special Education Courses and t-test Results**

Special Education Course	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Taken	108	55.75	7.03	239	6.59	.000
Not taken	132	62.67	8.86			

When Table 11 showing the average total scores of participating prospective pre-school teachers' opinions about integration according to whether or not they have taken special education courses and t-test results is analyzed, it is observed that 108 prospect teachers who taken special education courses and 132 teachers who have not taken the course have participated in the research and that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration according to whether or not they have taken special education courses [ $t_{(239)}= 6.59$ ,  $p<.05$ ].

**Table 12. Average Total Scores of Prospective Pre-school Teachers' Opinions About Integration according to whether or not they have taken Integration Courses and t-test Results**

Integration Course	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Taken	16	55.43	7.42	39	1.76	.085
Not taken	25	59.16	6.01			

In the analysis of Table 12, it is seen that 50 prospect pre-school teachers who have taken integration courses and 191 prospect teachers who have not taken the courses have participated in the research and that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration according to whether or not they have taken integration courses [ $t_{(239)} = 4.91, p < .05$ ].

**Table 13. Average Total Scores of Present and Prospective Pre-school Teachers Opinions about Integration and t-test Results**

Participants	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Present Teachers	41	57.70	6.76	239	1.30	.077
Prospect Teachers	241	59.58	8.77			

In the analysis of Table 13, it is seen that 41 pre-school teachers and 241 prospect pre-school teachers have participated in the research and that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers about integration [ $t_{(239)} = 1.30, p > .05$ ].

## 7. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to compare the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers' opinions about integration. As a result of the research, it has been concluded that the opinions of prospective and present pre-school teachers about integration do not vary by their sex and that the opinions of male and female teachers about integration are hesitant. The results from the research are consistent with other research studies (HarasymivandHorne, 1975; Diken, 1999; Polat, 1993; Özbaba, 2000; Şahbaz and Peker, 2006; Sarı, Çeliköz and Seçer, 2009) which have found out that there is no significant difference between the opinions of teachers about integration and their sex. According to the findings obtained from the research there is no significant difference between the opinions of present and prospective teachers about integration by their sex, however, when the findings are compared relatively and taking into consideration the fact that that low scores represent a positive opinion and high scores represent the negative one; it can be asserted that the opinions of present and prospective female teachers are more negative than those of male teachers. Findings acquired from the research are consistent with the results of previous studies (Higgs, 1975; Beh-Pajooh, 1992; Leyser, Kapperman ve Keller, 1994) which have found out female teacher have more negative opinions in comparison with male teachers.

The study shows that the opinions of participating pre-school teachers about integration do not vary by their occupational experience and that the opinions of pre-school teachers about integration of students with special needs are hesitant. In the literature, different research results can be found regarding the relation between teachers' opinions about integration of students with special needs into normal education environments and their occupational experience. In some of these research studies it is stated that there is no relation between teachers' opinions about integration and their occupational experience (Temel, 2000; Üstün ve Yılan, 2003; Özbaba, 2000) whereas some studies have found that the more experience the pre-school teachers have to more positive their opinions about integration become (Artan ve Balat-Uyanık, 2003). The findings of this research are in compliance with the studies which have found no significant difference between teachers' occupational experience and their opinions about integration.

It has been found that the opinions of participating prospective pre-school teachers about integration do not vary by their grade; and that the opinions of first, second, third and fourth grade prospective teachers about integration are hesitant. While the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration do not vary significantly by their grade; when research findings are compared relatively it can be asserted that the most positive opinions are of the fourth grade students. This is considered to be due to the courses regarding students with special needs taken by prospective pre-school teachers during their undergraduate education period.

In this respect, research findings are consistent with some other research results (Artan and Balat-Uyanık, 2003; Temel, 2000; Üstün and Yılan, 2003; Özbaba, 2000). At the end of the study it has also been found that the opinions of pre-school teachers about integration vary significantly by their place of duty; and that when the findings are compared relatively the opinions of teachers working at independent nursery schools are more positive than the opinions of teachers who work at nursery classes within elementary schools. This is considered to be due to the fact that physical conditions of independent nursery schools are better than those of nursery classes within elementary schools and this facilitates the work of pre-school teachers working at independent nursery schools. The study has concluded that the opinions of participating prospective pre-school teachers about integration do not vary by the high schools they graduated; and that the opinions prospective teachers about integration are hesitant. While the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration do not vary significantly by the high schools they graduated; when research findings are compared relatively it can be asserted that the most positive opinion is of the prospect teachers who graduated from Girls' Vocational High School. This is considered to be due to the courses available and practices carried out about students with special needs at Girls' Vocational High Schools. In this respect, research findings are consistent with some other research results (Artan ve Balat-Uyanık, 2003; Temel, 2000; Üstün ve Yılan, 2003; Özbaba, 2000).

The findings indicate that the opinions of participating pre-school teachers about integration do not vary according to whether or not they have taken special education courses and that the opinions pre-school teachers about integration are hesitant. While the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration do not vary significantly according to whether or not they have taken special education courses; when research findings are compared relatively, it can be seen that the opinions of teachers about integration who have taken special education courses are more positive than the opinions of teachers who have not taken the courses. The findings obtained at the end of the study show consistency with the results of other studies stating that special education courses affect pre-school teachers' opinions about integration in a positive way (Artan ve Balat-Uyanık, 2003; Temel, 2000; Üstün ve Yılan, 2003; Özbaba, 2000).

It can be asserted according to the study that the opinions of participating prospective pre-school teachers about integration do not vary according to whether or not they have taken integration courses and that the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration are hesitant. When research findings are compared relatively, it can be said that the opinions of prospect teachers about integration who have taken integration courses are more positive than the opinions of prospect teachers who have not taken the courses. The findings obtained at the end of the study show consistency with the results of other studies stating that participation of prospective teachers into teaching practices (training), being informed about integration and taking courses on integration affect their opinions in a positive way (Lambe and Bones, 2006, 2007, 2008, Reber, Marashak and Glor-Scheib, 1995; Gözün and Yıkımsı, 2004; Mağden and Avcı, 1997; Proctor and Niemeyer, 2001; Campbell, Gilmore and Cuskelly, 2003)

At the end of the study it has also been found that there is no significant difference between the opinions of participating present and prospective pre-school teachers about integration and that the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers about integration of students with special needs are hesitant. While the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers about integration do not vary significantly; when research findings are compared relatively, it can be said that the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers are more negative than those of present teachers. The findings obtained at the end of the study show consistency with the results of other studies stating that the opinions of prospective pre-school teachers about integration are more negative than those of present pre-school teachers (Sarı, Çeliköz ve Seçer, 2009).

In conclusion, while there are differences between the opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers on integration of students with special needs, it can be observed that on a general sense present and prospective teachers' opinions are hesitant. In the literature, it is stated that opinions of teachers about integration of students with special needs into normal education environments are affected by crowded classes, lack of resource rooms, features of the school and students with special needs and teachers' lack of knowledge and experience about integration. These factors stated in the literature are considered to affect opinions of pre-school teachers as well. Opinions of present and prospective pre-school teachers about integration who have taken integration courses appear to be more positive than opinions of present and prospective teachers who have not taken the courses; whereas even their opinions about integration of students with special needs into normal education environments are hesitant and not "positive".

When undergraduate programs of early childhood education departments of faculties of education in higher education institutes in Turkey are assessed, it is concluded that courses on integration practices are not included or they are given as elective courses in some Departments, and that special education course is a two-hour course given in the VI. Semester; basic concepts and disability types are included in the content of the course and comprehensive information is not included about integration education. It is considered that integration and special education courses given as a theoretical course only cannot be sufficient alone to change opinions of prospective pre-school teachers on integration education.

## **8. Implications**

Based on the conclusions of this study, following suggestions have been made for practice and future research.

### **8.1 Implications for practice**

It has been determined in the study that opinions of prospective pre-school teachers who have taken special education and integration courses are more positive than those who have not taken these courses. In the programs of Early Childhood Education Departments of Faculties of Education at Universities can include compulsory of elective courses concerning “Integration of Students with Special Needs”.

### **8.2 Implications for future research**

1. Opinions about integration of prospective pre-school teachers from different universities can be taken.
2. Opinions about integration of pre-school teachers working in different cities can be taken.
3. It can be suggested to determine whether theoretical and applied programs organized in order to inform present and prospective pre-school teachers lead to a positive change in the opinions of present and prospective teachers.

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