

SCHOOL READINESS: CHANGES IN THE VIEWS OF PROSPECTIVE EARLY
CHILDHOOD TEACHERS FOLLOWING A PRE-SERVICE SCHOOL READINESS
AND TRANSITION TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COURSE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

BERNA SİCİM

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

JUNE 2011

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

SCHOOL READINESS: CHANGES IN THE VIEWS OF PROSPECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS FOLLOWING A PRE-SERVICE SCHOOL READINESS AND TRANSITION TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COURSE

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June, 2011, 140 pages

The current study aimed to investigate the changes of the school readiness and transition to elementary school course on pre-service early childhood teachers' views about young children's school readiness. Teacher view of children's school readiness scale and interview protocols were administered as pre-post test and pre-post interviews to pre-service early childhood education teachers who were in the process of completing final year in their education in the four university's department of early childhood teacher education in Ankara, Turkey. The teacher views of children's school readiness scale was administered to 169 pre-service early childhood teachers and a subsample of 26 pre-service early childhood teachers were interviewed before and after they completed School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School course. Qualitative and quantitative findings in mixed methods research demonstrated that school readiness and transition to

elementary school course in early childhood teacher education programs elaborated participants' views about children's school readiness. According to the participants, program courses should provide more sufficient practice and content knowledge. In this way pre-service teachers can have opportunities to use their experiences gained during school readiness and transition to elementary school course to support young children's school readiness. The results of the current study also indicated that pre-service teachers needed to develop an understanding of children's school readiness in terms of definition, skills, factors, assessment, transition activities, and elementary school program so that they can be better prepared to teach with emphasis on the connections between preschool education and elementary school.

Keywords: School Readiness, Transition to Elementary School, Early Childhood Education, Teacher Training

ÖZ

OKULA HAZIRBULUNUŞLUK: OKUL ÖNCESİ ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ İLKÖĞRETİME HAZIRLIK VE İLKÖĞRETİM PROGRAMLARI DERSİNDEN SONRA GÖRÜŞLERİNDEKİ FARKLILIKLAR

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Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Refika Olgan

Haziran, 2011, 140 sayfa

Bu çalışma, İlköğretime Hazırlık ve İlköğretim Programları dersinin Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği öğrencilerinin küçük çocukların okula hazır bulunuşlukları hakkındaki görüşlerindeki değişimi incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Ankara’da bulunan dört üniversiteden seçilen okul öncesi öğretmenliği bölümünde son yılını tamamlama sürecinde olan öğretmen adaylarına öğretmenlerin çocukların okula hazır bulunuşlukları ile ilgili anketi ve görüşme formu ön-son test ve ön-son görüşme olarak uygulanmıştır. Çocukların okula hazır bulunuşlukları ile ilgili öğretmen görüş ölçeği 169 öğretmen adayına ve alt örneklem 26 öğretmen adayıyla görüşme yapılarak ilköğretime hazırlık ve ilköğretim programları dersinden önce ve sonra olmak üzere uygulanmıştır. Nitel ve nicel verilerden elde edilen bulgular okul öncesi eğitimi öğretmenliği programın da ki ilköğretime

hazırlık ve ilköğretim programları derslerinin, öğretmen adaylarının çocukların okula hazır bulunuşluğu ve ilköğretime geçişleri hakkındaki görüşlerine anlamlı bir etkisi olduğunu göstermiştir. Katılımcılara göre, programdaki derslerin daha fazla pratik ve temel bilgiler içermesi gerekmektedir. Böylece aday öğretmenler bu derslerden edindikleri deneyimleri kullanarak çocukların okula hazır bulunuşluk düzeylerini arttıracaktır. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları ayrıca okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının küçük çocukların okula hazır bulunuşluklarını belirleme, becerilerini, faktörlerini, değerlendirmesini, geçiş etkinliklerini ve ilköğretim programı açısından anlamlandırılmasına ihtiyaçları olduğunu göstermiştir ve bunun sonucu olarak okul öncesi eğitim ve ilköğretim okulu arasındaki ilişki vurgulanarak öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenliğe daha iyi hazırlanabileceği gösterilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okula Hazır bulunuşluk, İlköğretime Geçiş, Okul Öncesi Eğitimi, Öğretmen Yetiştirme.

To Memories of
My Grandmother, Esma OLGUNER
My Uncle, İsmail SİCİM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Refika Olgan without her full-hearted commitment and guidance, the study would have been impossible. She also provided unending moral support and a reminder of the power of self- confidence. In particular, my committee member, Assist. Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Haser has also offered invaluable feedback and support. I would like to acknowledge the important contributions of the other committee members Prof. Dr. Ceren Tekkaya, Assist. Prof. Dr. Özcan Doğan and Assist. Prof. Dr. Şule Özkan for their time, advice and supports.

I wish to express my appreciation to Assist. Prof. Dr. Feyza Tantekin Erden, Prof. Dr. İsmihan Artan, Dr. Semra Şahin and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Semra Sungur. In addition, Dr. Özlem Şimşek, Ress. Ass. Menekşe Boz, Ress. Ass. Binnur Yıldırım and Prof.Dr. Elif Yeşim Üstün who have helped me implement this study.

My dear friends who are devoted their time to improve my study, I want to thank specially Esra BALGALMIŞ, Yasemin TAŞ, Şenil ÜNLÜ, and Simge YILMAZ. They are also brilliant academics. I also wish to thank my dearest friends Deniz Mehmetlioğlu, Asiye Parlak Rakap, Ayşe Yenilmez, Büşra Tuncay, Çağla Öneren Şendil, Deniz Kahrıman, Elif Kalaycı, Gamze Kurt, İkbāl Tuba Şahin, Memet Üçgöl, Meriç Özgeldi, Muhammet Ali Karaduman, Özlem Dursun, Ramazan Sak, Sema Sönmez, Şule Alıcı and Dekant Kıran who is a computer genius. I would like to thank my life-long friends, İrem Tuğral, Tuba Çulcu and Cansel Akçay for their encouragement and loving during this challenging process.

Special thanks go to my family, my mother and father; Zuhāl and Mehmet Sicim, countless ways, they encouraged me while writing thesis, my sisters; Esra Sicim Savaş and Nihal Sicim who are the closest person in my life. My aunt Sevim Çavdaroglu who have provided me love and patience in this process.

Thanks to my lovely dog Rex, he always makes me happy whenever we are together. He understands me more than anyone else.

My sincere appreciation must be expressed for pre-service early childhood teachers who supported this research through their participation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| PLAGIARISM..... | iii |
| ABSTRACT..... | iv |
| ÖZ | vi |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | ix |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | xi |
| LIST OF TABLES | xv |
| LIST OF FIGURES | xvi |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS | xvii |
| CHAPTER | |
| 1.INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 What is the Importance of School Readiness..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Statement of the Problem..... | 8 |
| 1.3 Purpose of the Study | 8 |
| 1.4 The Significance of the Study..... | 10 |
| 1.5 Definitions of the Terms | 12 |
| 1.6 Assumptions and Limitations | 13 |
| 1.6.1 Assumptions of the Study..... | 13 |
| 1.6.2 Limitations of the Study | 13 |
| 2. LITERATURE REVIEW | 14 |
| 2.1 Definition of School Readiness and Related Theories..... | 14 |
| 2.2 The Five Domains of School Readiness | 20 |
| 2.2.1 Physical Well-being and Motor Development | 21 |
| 2.2.2 Social and Emotional Development | 22 |
| 2.2.3 Approaches toward Learning..... | 23 |
| 2.2.4 Language and Communication Development | 24 |
| 2.2.5 Cognition and General Knowledge | 24 |
| 2.3 Core Indicators of School Readiness | 25 |
| 2.3.1 Children’s Perspectives on School Readiness | 25 |
| 2.3.2 The Parent’s Perspective on School Readiness | 29 |

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 2.3.3 The Community's Perspectives on School Readiness..... | 30 |
| 2.3.4. Teacher Perspectives of School Readiness..... | 32 |
| 2.4 Assessment of the School Readiness | 35 |
| 2.5. Transition to Elementary School | 36 |
| 2.5.1 Curriculum Continuity..... | 36 |
| 2.5.2. Transition Practices | 37 |
| 2.6. Research about Preschool Teachers' Views on School Readiness | 39 |
| 2.7. Training and Development of Early Childhood Teachers | 44 |
| 2.8. Early Childhood Teacher Education Curriculum in School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School in Turkey | 45 |
| 2.9. Summary of the Literature Review | 47 |
| 3. METHODOLOGY | 48 |
| 3.1. Design of the Study | 48 |
| 3.2 Research Questions | 50 |
| 3.3. Populations and Sample | 50 |
| 3.4. Instrumentation | 54 |
| 3.4.1. Quantitative instrument | 54 |
| 3.4.2 Interview Protocol | 57 |
| 3.5. Data Collection | 58 |
| 3.6. The School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School (SRTES) Course | 59 |
| 3.6.1. University A | 60 |
| 3.6.2. University B..... | 62 |
| 3.6.3. University C..... | 64 |
| 3.6.4. University D | 65 |
| 3.7. Data Analysis | 66 |
| 3.8. Internal and External Validity..... | 68 |
| 3.8.1 Internal Validity of the Study | 68 |
| 3.8.2 External Validity of the Study | 69 |
| 4. FINDINGS | 71 |
| 4.1. Quantitative Results of the Study | 71 |
| 4.1. Descriptive Statistics..... | 71 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 4.2 Assumptions of Paired-sample t test Analysis | 73 |
| 4.3. Inferential Statistics | 74 |
| 4.4. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)..... | 76 |
| 4.5. Qualitative Findings of the Study | 78 |
| 4.5.1. Definition and Importance of School Readiness | 79 |
| 4.5.2 School Readiness Skills..... | 83 |
| 4.5.3 School Readiness Activities | 85 |
| 4.5.4. School Readiness Assessment | 87 |
| 4.5.5. Factors Influencing the School Readiness..... | 90 |
| 4.5.6. Parent and Community Role in School Readiness | 92 |
| 4.5.7. Physical Environment..... | 94 |
| 4.5.8. Transition to the Elementary School | 97 |
| 4.5.9 Background Information of School Readiness | 100 |
| 5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 104 |
| 5.1. Discussion | 104 |
| 5.1.1 Pre-Service Early Childhood Teachers’ Views towards Definition, Skills, and Importance of Children’s School Readiness..... | 104 |
| 5.1.2 Pre-Service Teachers’ Views about Transition to Elementary School and School Readiness Activities | 107 |
| 5.1.3. Pre-service Teachers’ Views on the Assessment of School Readiness... | 108 |
| 5.1.4. Pre-Service Teachers’ Views on Physical Environment Factor on Children’s Readiness | 109 |
| 5.1.5. Pre-service Teachers’ Views on Elementary School Curriculum | 110 |
| 5.1.6. Pre-Service Teachers’ sources of Knowledge about Children’s School Readiness | 112 |
| 5.2. Implications for Policy and Practice | 112 |
| 5.3. Recommendations for Further Studies..... | 117 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| REFERENCES..... | 119 |
| APPENDICES | 135 |
| A. Çocukların Okula Hazırbulunuşluk İle İlgili Öğretmen Adayı Görüş Anketi ... | 135 |
| B. Görüşme Formu..... | 139 |
| C. Consent Form | 140 |

LIST OF TABLES

TABLES

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 3.1 Characteristics of the participants in the qualitative part of the study regarding gender and university..... | 53 |
| Table 3.2 Characteristics of the sample used in the quantitative part of the study regarding gender and university..... | 53 |
| Table 3.3 Subscales and Reliability Coefficients of VSRS..... | 56 |
| Table 3.4 Major domains in the pre-service early childhood teachers Interview and sample questions..... | 58 |
| Table 3.5 University A SRTES course..... | 61 |
| Table 3.6 University B SRTES course..... | 63 |
| Table 3.7 University C SRTES course..... | 64 |
| Table 3.8 University D SRTES course..... | 66 |
| Table 4.1 Pretest, Posttest Scores for the Whole Group..... | 72 |
| Table 4.2 Pretest, Posttest Scores in the Subscales for the Whole Group..... | 73 |
| Table 4.3 Paired Sample t test..... | 74 |
| Table 4.4 Paired Sample t-test for VSRS Subscales..... | 75 |
| Table 4.5 Effect Sizes of Paired Sample t test..... | 76 |
| Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics on VSRS between Groups..... | 76 |
| Table 4.7 Levene's Test for The Homogeneity of Variance..... | 77 |
| Table 4.8 Difference in Mean Scores for the Four Groups..... | 77 |

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURES

Figure 1. Summary of the qualitative and the quantitative study sampling.....52

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SRTES: School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School

VSRS: Teachers View of Children's School Readiness Scale

ECE: Early Childhood Education

MoNE: Ministry of National Education in Turkey

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is the Importance of School Readiness

The earliest period of life that begins with infancy and ends with the age of eight is called the early childhood period (Bryant, 2009; Essa, 2003). During this period children learn a great deal of information connected to their daily lives, social roles, social norms, interaction with others and their surroundings. According to Shore (1997), especially during the first three years, children show enormous cognitive development. This is related to their brain development; indeed studies have found that at birth and during the first few years of life children have three times more neurons than adults (Gable, 1997). The ability of children to use this huge capability is mostly related to the environment which they inhabit. The billions of neurons that children have at birth continue to live if they are used repeatedly, otherwise they disappear (Shore, 1997). During this period adults who surround the child have an important responsibility to provide an adequate environment in which the child has a multitude of opportunities to observe, to explore, to learn by doing, seeing, touching and hearing (New & Cochran, 2009). Parents are the first adults that children interact with, and the home environment is the first place where children learn about most of the things that are connected with both biological and social survival. Therefore, parents and the home environment are very important in the development of biologically and sociologically healthy children. The next step is the school years and children start to acquire information and skills and learn more things during this period. However, parents and the home environment is still of major significance. The child raised in a rich environment and participated in early childhood education adapts more easily to the school (Docket & Perry, 2007; Lara-

Cinisomo, Fuligni, Ritchie, Howes, & Karoly, 2008; West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000). On the other hand, children with behavioural difficulties raised in socio-economically disadvantaged families tend to have an insufficient command of language and social skills, which present obstacles to the children's school readiness (Macmillan, McMorris, & Kruttschnitt, 2004). If preschool children exhibit behaviour problems in group activities in class because they are unable or unwilling to follow the teachers' instructions then their readiness in terms of academic and social skills will be diminished. Therefore, children's behaviour problems in their preschool years linked to their school readiness may continue throughout their future education (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). For children who lack these opportunities early education, it becomes even more important to aid their transition to formal school. Thus, for all children the early years are important for children's later educational life since those early experiences are important in terms of the stages in later schooling (Oktay & Unutkan, 2003).

Early identification of children's school readiness problems would be helpful in order to prepare activities to resolve these problems before children start formal schooling. Children who fail to succeed in one or more of the following critical dimensions of school readiness; socio-emotional development, reading, writing skills and mathematic skills, and have not reached an appropriate level of socio-emotional development, will inevitably encounter difficulties in managing complex academic tasks in elementary schools (Hair, Halle, Terry-Humen, Lavelle, & Calkins, 2006). Children's readiness for school can be determined by the teachers and parents based on children's skills (Hanson et al., 2000). The views of the necessary school readiness skills according to parent and teachers were differentiated by the age at which children start compulsory schooling. Children start formal schooling in different ages in different countries. For example, while children in the UK and New Zealand begin formal compulsory schooling

at the age of five, in Australia, Belgium, France, six year old children start to school, in Finland and Turkey formal schooling begins at seven years old. Whatever, the differences between countries, a child's transition to school and their school readiness are considered as a big step for them and their families (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). These critical transitions can be achieved more easily if education in the early years is utilized effectively, this means that it is very important to analyze which skills and support should be provided in order for the child to be fully ready for school (Pianta, Cox, & Snow, 2007).

Early childhood education is one way of preparing a child for school, and many studies show that children who engage in early childhood education are more socially adapted, and better than other children in terms of their cognitive, emotional, and even their academic development (Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006). Although there are differences between countries, such as; the starting age for school, the socio economic profiles, preschool education and parenting styles, there are some fundamental aims of early childhood education which seem to be held in common across the world. According to the Ministry of National Education (Turkey) (MoNE) there are five main aims of early childhood education (MoNE, 2006)

1. To develop children in physical, cognitive, emotional and social areas and enable them to acquire positive habits.
2. To develop children's imagination, creative thinking, and self-expression and communication skills.
3. To help children speak Turkish effectively.
4. To create a universal educational environment for children who come from financially disadvantaged families with inadequate care, nutrition (physical environment).

5. To support the transition of children to elementary schools (MoNE, 2006, p.10).

In Turkey, elementary school is compulsory for children between the ages 6-14. The aim of the period of education is to gain the following basic skills in reading and writing, mathematic, social skills and the sciences, and to lay the foundation for responsible citizenship. The curricula for elementary schools and early childhood education changed in the years 2005 and 2006, respectively. One of the changes in early childhood education was driven by goals and objectives of elementary school and aimed to establish and sustain continuity between preschool and elementary education (Oktay, 2010; Polat, 2010). It is widely accepted that teachers of preschool and elementary school are assumed to implement similar teaching strategies based on *emotional support, classroom organization and instructional strategies*, which in turn ensures and sustains the continuity between preschool and elementary school (Hamre, Pianta, Mashburn, & Downer, 2007). Embracing the goals, objectives, activities of elementary schools is prerequisite to attain children's school readiness so it is very important that the preschool teacher is aware of all aspects of the elementary education system. For example, concentration is required for elementary school education because, in Turkey, Each lesson is approximately 40 minutes in length (MoNE, 2006). The aim of the early childhood education is to develop a child's readiness for, and support their transition to elementary school (Corsaro & Molinari, 2005). For children enrolled in early childhood education helps their transition to elementary school means understanding the daily routine and rules of school, how they should behave in a school and how positive social relationship have with classmates (Groark, Mehaffie, McCall, & Greenberg, 2007).

A question arises at this point, in terms of what understanding and skills do preschool teachers need to possess in order to improve children's school readiness. Deciding on children's readiness for school can be provided by operational definitions,

guidelines, and timelines. However, there is no consensus on the definition of the school readiness (Zigler, 2006) and this is reflected in the differences between countries in terms of the age that children enter formal schooling.

To highlight conceptualizations of children's school readiness, views from selected theorists about the issue are presented. To appreciate the framework of readiness, it is worth to briefly examine the following three models; broad ecological, academic skills and maturational. First, according to the ecological view which is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, the environment has strong effect on human development. Child development and school readiness are related to every possible context of the environment. There are three main factors; the family, school and community that can be considered to be the core indicators of school readiness.

The family is responsible for financial security, nurturing and sufficient care giving, and providing a rich environment. Schools take part in leading the implementation of the curriculum, teacher training, and parent involvement. Lastly, the community provides high quality early childhood care and education, financial opportunities for employment, libraries, playgrounds, and a safe environment. From this point of view, sustaining the readiness for school focuses on improving preschool programs, instructions and equality of the public accountability. In relation to the academic skills approach to school readiness not all authors are in agreement. Some describe an approach which emphasizes the significance of literacy and mathematic abilities for preparing children for school. According to Docket and Perry (2007), the focus on academic skills has been significantly criticized since many believe that it is children's social and emotional development, and motivation to learn that should be given importance in the definition of school readiness. In terms of the maturational perspective, Gesell, Ilg and Ames (1968) consider that children's intrinsic maturation continues within expected terms. This is based on the theory that developmental

milestones are permanent, so no extraneous factors are important. Taking this assumption into account, it is concluded that if children are not ready for school, the requirements for readiness for formal school are inappropriate, in other words that do not take into account the development stages of the young child (Docket & Perry, 2006).

In relation to school readiness, there are three main facts, support from the family, the social environment and the teacher. Children in early ages tend to learn academic contents and assignments of school in consultation with the adults in their lives, adults help children to match to social demands, and bring rewards of praise and attention (Zigler, 2006). In addition to the presence, support and opinions of adults have a significant role in school readiness. Furthermore, the social environment also has important role in children's school readiness (Corsaro & Molinari, 2005). Finally, there is the part that the teacher plays in children's lives. After parents, early childhood educators are the first teachers of the young child and their effect endures, not just through school but over the child's whole life. In addition to the studies that have investigated the contribution of family relations to children's later life, there are also many research findings that confirm the important contribution of teacher's interaction with children (Berk, 2006; Docket & Perry, 2006; McIntyre, Blacher, & Baker, 2006; Pianta, Kraft-Sayre, Rimm-Kaufman, Gercke, & Higgins, 2001; Wortham, 2006). In early childhood education, teachers are expected to support children's readiness skills, motivate them, assess their development and moderate the classroom atmosphere. The nature and the quality of relationships between teachers and the children have an impact on their school outcomes. Early, Pianta, Taylor, and Cox (2001) noted that teachers who received training about school readiness used more effective approaches enhancing children's transition to school. Teachers' views of school readiness have a significant role in children's success at school (Docket & Perry, 2007). Consequently, teachers' training and their ability to implement what they gained in the training are one of the

important components in early childhood education (Ackerman, 2004). According to Hundley (2010) the education process of early childhood teachers is unique and there are many issues that present challenges in the discipline. It is the content and the quality of the education that a teacher receives that determine the amount of attention they pay to school readiness issues (Early & Winton, 2008). Therefore, pre-service early education teacher training programs should emphasize the issue of school readiness to ensure that candidate teachers are aware of its importance and have the requisite understanding of how they can increase children's school readiness levels. Therefore, in-depth research on early childhood teacher education in terms of curriculum and innovation are critical.

As mentioned above, in Turkey, some critical changes have been enacted to ensure the continuity from preschool to elementary education. According to MoNE (2006) the development of skills can be promoted by activities related to self-care, socio-emotional, physical, and intellectual and language domains. The school readiness dimensions encompass all developmental areas, for children this is not only reading and writing activities. Preschool teachers are expected to prepare children for elementary school. MoNE (2006) defined what this preparation included: awareness of definition and needs of school readiness; knowledge of early childhood education goals and objectives, ability to equally foster children's academic and social skills in addition to reading and writing skills, enhance the environment to support the children's emergent literacy skills, support for children's communication skills and confidence, involvement of parents and offering them guidance in relation to their children's education, evaluation of children's readiness and modifying implementations based on the assessment of the children. Furthermore, all these aspects of the preparation of young children for formal schooling must be recognized when designing teacher education programs and these programs must follow teacher guide developed by MoNE (2006), in

order for pre-service teachers to develop the appropriate skills and abilities (Parlak & Erden, 2009).

In order to develop an adequate level of education of early childhood practitioners, a school readiness and transition to elementary school course (SRTES) was added to the pre-service early childhood teacher education curriculum. The SRTES course aims to inform practitioners about how to develop a learning environment to support young children's school readiness and transition to elementary school (Alisinanoğlu, 2010).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Pre-service teachers enter training program with a set of views and skills then, mainly during the program they accept the elements of the program that confirm these beliefs and consequently they tend to ignore other aspects of the syllabus. Thus, in this aspect the pre-service teachers benefit little from this training (Kagan, 1992). Bradekamp (2004) argued that in particular, teachers need to understand the needs of the preschool children in terms of school readiness. Unfortunately, the diversity of the preconceptions of the teachers can cause problems for the children's learning in preschool periods and future preparedness for formal school. Therefore, the characteristics of elementary school and demands that this education will make upon the children needs to be included in courses for early childhood education teachers. There are various discrepancies between the features of the field of early childhood education and other educational settings such as elementary schools (as cited in Hundley, 2010).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine pre-service teachers' views changes toward children's school readiness after the recent development of 'School Readiness

and Transition to Elementary School (SRTES)' course in early childhood teacher education programs. In Turkey, early childhood teacher education programs have undergone several changes in order to sustain the connectivity between the preschool and elementary school. There is a need to investigate effects of these changes in relation to the candidate teachers attending a course related to children's school readiness and transition to elementary school. In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire and an interview protocol to obtain the data. 26 pre-service early childhood teachers were pre and post interviewed and a 'views of children's school readiness' questionnaire was administrated to 169 pre-service teachers before and after the school readiness and transition to elementary course held in different universities in Ankara, Turkey.

A mixed method approach was adopted and it is hypothesized that the school readiness and transition to elementary course would improve senior pre-service early childhood teacher' views regarding children's school readiness. In the current study the following research questions and sub questions were investigated;

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in senior pre-service early childhood teachers' views related to young children's school readiness before and after taking the "school readiness and transition to elementary school" course?
 1. a. Is there a significant difference among four different universities in the views of children's school readiness of pre-service early childhood teachers?
2. How does "the school readiness and transition to elementary school" course change senior pre-service early childhood teachers' views towards children's school readiness?
 2. a. How are senior pre-service early childhood teachers' views of the definition of school readiness, importance, skills, factors, assessment, activities, and transition to elementary school related to young children's school readiness

changed after having taken the “school readiness and transition to elementary school” course?

2. b. How do pre-service early childhood teachers gain knowledge about children’s school readiness prior to “School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School” course?

1.4 The Significance of the Study

This study aims to understand the possible changes of SRTES course on teacher candidates’ views of school readiness. The course content, instructional methods and materials affect directly the teachers’ views. The examination of the variables related to the school readiness will give an overview of what will be taught, how will be taught, and which strategies will be used with preschool children. SRTES course helps to construct early childhood education activities in accordance with the elementary school curriculum. The course aims to enable early childhood education teachers to learn how to introduce the objectives and methods of the process of elementary education and provide a bridge between elementary school and preschool. In this way children will be able to easily integrate into the next stage in education. In this study a review of the current literature on early childhood teacher education programs is undertaken and various examples of different pre-service training program are given. For instance, in the USA in Pennsylvania elementary school teacher education was changed in order to cover the early and middle childhood period, they created one program resulting in an early childhood teacher license and another in which the participants would be awarded a middle childhood license (Bornfreund, 2011). Correspondingly, in UK, France, Ireland and Jamaica, pre-service early childhood teachers are able to teach children up to the third grade in elementary school (Neuman, 2007). Given the observed trends of early childhood teacher education programs, it can be concluded that many countries organize

their curriculum to provide continuity between preschool and elementary school. Prior to teacher candidates begin their professional lives; the school readiness and transition to elementary school courses are necessary for the teachers to gain the knowledge and skills to develop children's school readiness and guide parents in these processes (MoNE, 2006).

Literature and evaluation reports demonstrated that pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, knowledge and skills can be developed by providing courses for pre-service early childhood teachers about school readiness (Mangione & Speth, 1998; Ciyer et al, 2010; Hundley, 2010). By becoming familiar with the literature about school readiness and understanding how to evaluate and assess the children in their care a school readiness course informs how pre-service teachers will transform their ideas into their practice professional life with the children (Turhan, Koç, Işıksal, & Işıksal, 2009). Especially, "Micro genetic process of representations are organized in social interactions, when people meet, talk, discuss for long periods and pay attention to instructions and lessons" (Corsaro & Molinari, 2005, p.141). As mentioned above, in Turkey, the school readiness and transition to elementary school course was integrated in the revised early childhood teachers' curriculum (MoNE, 2006), however, there is a lack of studies about the effectiveness of the courses. In order to prevent gaps among preschool teachers, policy makers and community can facilitate the spreading of the knowledge and comprehension of school readiness issue by means of teacher education developments (Ong, 2006). For this reason, the current study aims to investigate the changes of the school readiness and transition to elementary school course on pre-service early childhood teachers' views about young children's school readiness.

1.5 Definitions of the Terms

The followings are the key terms used in the current study:

School readiness: In this study, it refers to the skills and abilities of individual children as they start school. However, according to Centre for Equity & Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC), there are also ‘broader constructions of school readiness incorporate family, school and community elements as well as a focus on the preparedness of individual children as they start school’ (CEIEC, 2008, p. 11).

Transition to school: In this study, this means the transition from early childhood education to elementary school education which includes major changes in instructional, developmental and structured activities in school.

Early childhood: This denotes a developmental period from 0 to 8 years old.

Early childhood education: The period of education designed to prepare children aged up to 8 years old to improve their development and successful learning in elementary school. Early childhood education programs are provided for children aged from 36 to 72 months in kindergartens and pre-schools in Turkey.

Early childhood teacher education: Spodek (1994) defined early childhood teacher education programs as “designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to teach young children” (p. 71).

Pre-service early childhood teachers: Pre-service early childhood teachers who are in the process of completing final year in their training in a university department of early childhood teacher education.

Young children: In this study, the young children refer to children in the early childhood stage (between the ages of 0 and 8).

1.6 Assumptions and Limitations

1.6.1 Assumptions of the Study

The researcher expected that all the participants would fill the instruments accurately and honestly. The types of questions were assumed to be clear and easy to response. Moreover, the participants included in the qualitative part are expected to express the level of clarity of the questions. Also, as part of the data collection, interviews were conducted with the pre-service teachers.

1.6.2 Limitations of the Study

Although the researcher attempted to eliminate all the limitations of the study, there were several unexpected limitations. First, the pre-service students tended to respond to the questionnaire in the way that they thought were expected not in an open way that revealed their true feelings and opinions. Second, the teachers participated in the study were mainly female (n=25 for qualitative, n=165 for quantitative). Third, the difference in the way the course instructors taught and the materials they used might affect the results of the study. Finally, the course program and its implementation may differ compared to other European countries and thus a comparison with existing research outside Turkey could not be undertaken in any great detail.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents, a respective review of literature comprising definitions of school readiness and related theories, the five domains of school readiness, the core indicators, assessment, transition to elementary school, related research about preschool teachers' views of children's school readiness, professional development and higher education to develop qualified early childhood educators, and developing an early childhood teacher education curriculum related to school readiness and the transition to elementary school in Turkey. Finally, summary of the current chapter is provided.

2.1 Definition of School Readiness and Related Theories

Every child should have right to have appropriate education at early ages. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; children should be seen as individuals and a part of family and community, so each child has the right to access the appropriate education, the right to be respected to his age and his developmental milestones (Fabian & Dunlop, 2006). This is a critical period in child development and therefore early childhood education has a significant role in human life (Docket & Perry, 2008; Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995; New & Cochran, 2009; Shore, 1998; West, Denton, & Reaney, 2001). Also, taking action to encourage children's development in early ages is effective in providing them with the skills to adapt to the changes in the remainder of their education. Providing an adequate and caring environment and early childhood education in order to be ready for school, are essential to a child's development. Thus, the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) (1995) stressed that

“all children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school” (p.8)

Advocating children rights should be done by consulting their feelings and ideas, this is regarded as a part of each child’s human rights (UNICEF, 2004). While getting children ready for formal school, the children’s appropriate developmental ages and skills should be recognized. The purpose of early childhood education is to make the children ready to begin formal schooling (Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006). However, supporting children’s development is not the only aim of the early childhood education. Early childhood education is also responsible for supporting the continuity of the education by ensuring a smooth transition from early childhood education to formal schooling (MoNE, 2006). Furthermore, it was found preschool experiences affect children’s later school performance, educational attainment and propensity towards criminal behaviour. Reynolds, Temple and Roberson et al., (2001) analyzed that children who had attended preschool for 1 or 2 years gained high rate of school success, had good school attendance, were less likely to drop out of school or be arrested as a juvenile and display violent behaviour. In fact, the foundation of preschool experience is core indicator for children’s views about school. It is not only the children that need to be prepared for formal schooling but the schools themselves need to be ready.

Kagan and Rigby (2003) determined some of the duties of the receiving schools as striving for continuity between ECE programs and elementary schools; helping children make sense of their worlds; fostering a full commitment to the success of every child and teacher; using approaches that have been proven to raise attainment; and underscoring that schools are part of communities. In the literature various researchers advocated children’s perspectives about transition to elementary school and have presented ways of supporting children’s readiness in terms of continuity from preschool to the elementary school curriculum (Dockett & Perry, 1999; Dunlop, 2002a). Thus

school readiness is seen a key element in the structure of early childhood education and policy makers and institutions (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008).

Children readiness for school does not constitute only about their developmental spheres actually parent, teacher, peer and community which are children's social environment (Katz, 1991). Specifically in the current study, the construction of school readiness has arisen out of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, transition is one part of an ecologic concept in that children in their early years go through early childhood education which links home, nursery and school (Fabian & Dunlop, 2006). Elementary school starts after early childhood education, so children's school readiness and success of the elementary school are highly dependent on the experiences in the early childhood education. The environment and the experiences which support the physical, social, emotional, linguistic, literacy and cognitive development of infants, toddlers and preschool children provide for school readiness for elementary school (Oktay & Unutkan, 2003). Before continue to further explore the issues around ecological theory, the working definitions for school readiness require clarification. Among all the groups of theorists a common set of definition of children's school readiness emerge from the literature.

The definition of readiness is essential in order to take the next step which is constructing the dimensions of readiness. Vygotsky refers to readiness to learn in terms of his zone of proximal development (ZPD). In order to be ready to learn there must be competence at higher levels, these levels change as the learner is able to independently perform each competence. Vygotsky suggests that "these functions could be called the buds rather than the fruits of development" (Vygotsky, 1978 as cited in Bransford et al, 2000). The important point is that the current development stage that an individual has reached whereas the ZPD is concerned with the future (or potential) mental development.

According to the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, readiness to learn “involves a level of development at which the child has the capacity to learn specific materials” and readiness for school “involves a specific set of cognitive, linguistic, social, and motor skills that enables a child to assimilate the school’s curriculum “that is, school readiness entails skills that allow children to participate in the school curriculum.” (As cited in May, Kundert, Nikoloff, Welch, Garret, & Brent, 1994, p.9). Although different authors have emphasized different aspects of school readiness there is general agreement that it comprises specific developmental abilities and skills which are specified in the curriculum for formal schooling.

‘Readiness’ can also be defined as being able to begin a learning process easily and competently without facing emotional problems (Oktay & Unutkan, 2003). Children’s physical health, nutrition, physical skills, social- emotional development, learning approaches and emergent literacy skills are the significant dimensions in determining children’s readiness for school. However, researchers, schools and policy makers have conflicting ideas about the definition of school readiness; in particular there are two different theories; the broad ecological theory and academic skills theory.

Each of the environmental factors is highly connected to shaping a child’s development and school readiness. Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1993) combines both biological and environmental factors in order to explain the child development process and he claims that even religion, mass media or legacy of the country in which children live, can affect their development (Gonzalez-Mena, 2001). Thus, the child is surrounded by a system of relationships that constitute their environment, each relationship is a layer which affects the child both directly and indirectly (Berk, 2006) furthermore, and these layers interact. There are five different layers in Bronfenbrenner’s theory. Firstly, the microsystem; this is the closest layer to the child contains the structures with which the child has direct and frequent contact such as parents and teachers. The relationship

between these people and the child has the greatest impact on her/his development. Structures in the Microsystem include family, school, neighbourhood, and childcare environments. At this level, relationships have impact in two directions - away from and toward the child. For example, a child's parents may affect his/her beliefs and behaviours; and the child may also affect the behaviours and beliefs of his parents (Berk, 2006). Readiness for school begins in the child and physical environment such as home, child care and preschool settings and the interaction between these environments constitutes the next layer. The Mesosystem consists of the "connections between children's immediate settings and surroundings. Next, the Exosystem includes a larger social system in which the child does not function directly, it embraces the Mesosystem and refers to social settings that affect the child but do not include the child, such as the parent's workplace or health services in the community. The structures in this layer impact on a child's development by interacting with some of the structures in his/her microsystem (Berk, 2006). Finally the Macrosystem can be considered the outermost layer in the child's environment enveloping the other three systems. The Macrosystem consists of things that influence and sometimes support the child within the environment such as cultures, norms, and laws (Berk, 2006). There is one more aspect to Bronfenbrenner's theory, the Chronosystem this acts in a different way from the other four layers since it encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to a child's environments. In this system events can be either outside the child, such as the timing of a parent's death, or internal, such as the physical maturation process. As children get older, their reaction to changes may differ and they may be more able to determine more how that change will influence them (Berk, 2006). There are three main environment factors which affect the preschool child; family, community and school. It is the combination of these factors that contribute to the development of a child's school readiness and each one has particular roles but there is also an overlap in these roles. The

family has the responsibility to nurture, care and provide rich environment to children both parenting practices (e.g., reading to a child, being involved in a child's school experiences) and parent belief systems serve as important promoters of educational outcomes. (Huaser-Cram, 2009)

The community plays role in improving quality of early childhood education and offering financial support to the school and when needed, to the family. School is a more structured environment containing expected leadership, developing transition programs, family support/education, teachers' professional development, early childhood curriculum and instructional methods. Within the school it is the early childhood teacher that provides the direct support for the development of school readiness in the child, the teacher is the change agent. Children need highly skilled and experienced early childhood teachers to support their readiness by collaborating with families (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008).

In contrast to the Ecological model, the Academic Skills' model emphasizes the motor and cognitive skills as the determinants of a school readiness. These are related to the stages of children's development and use screening tests and taking account of the teachers' views of school readiness (Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006; Williamson, 2003). In this view, readiness to learn means that all children's expected skills should be achieved before school starts (Kagan & Rigby, 2003). Maturational theory focuses on the child's developmental level (Kagan, 2007; Kagan & Rigby, 2003) and takes the view that the chronological age of children is not a reliable predictor for the children's school readiness because it ignores children's individual differences. Gesell, the pioneer of the maturational theory explained that a child's individual time-clocks are as important as children's development levels and assessments (Kagan & Rigby, 2003). This brief overview of the two theories shows the overall direction of current policy responded that how to prepare children for school by setting predetermined skills and abilities to decide

whether that child is ready or not to enter formal schooling (Scott-Little et al, 2006). To sum up, foundations of children's readiness skills links five domains of children's development and learning.

2.2 The Five Domains of School Readiness

Recently, many studies have been conducted about developing early learning standards. The concept of the school readiness ties the notion of readiness for school to a standard of five main developments (physical, cognitive, socio- emotional, language and approaches to learning) that equip children to meet the demand of formal school and adapt to the school's learning environment. Researchers and policy makers see the meaning of readiness from different perspectives and they point out particular dimensions. For instance, Pianta (2002) there should not be a controversy about school readiness. Also, he explained that the readiness included not only literacy skills, knowledge or achieving a specific stage of developmental maturity, but also 'physical well- being', 'emotional maturity', 'social confidence', 'language richness', and 'general knowledge'. Another view of readiness was presented by Yazıcı (2002) who declared that there were expected developmental skills for school readiness. These were visual readiness, colour recognition, visual memory, and hand- eye coordination, auditory recognition, counting, following directions. Briefly, children's school readiness was divided into five domains; physical wellbeing and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, cognition and general knowledge (Groark et al., 2007). Unless children's emergent skills are developed, they are potentially at risk of not being ready for formal school. At this point, it is important to contemplate which skills should be considered as criteria for the school readiness (Pianta, Cox, & Snow, 2007). Before discussing the dimensions of school readiness, it is necessary to establish the main underlining factors rated to the potential

dimensions. Kagan, Moore and Bredekamp (1995) stated that “narrowly constructed, academically-driven definitions of readiness—heretofore widely accepted—need to be broadened to incorporate physical, social and emotional well-being” (p.1). Furthermore, Kagan et al. (1995) made the definitions of the domains of school readiness domains more explicit with the following domains.

Physical wellbeing and motor development (health status, growth, physical abilities)

Socio-emotional development (interaction with parents, friends and teachers, their own opinions and comprehension of, and response to other people’s feelings)

Approaches to learning (children’s natural learning style)

Language development (ability to communicate with others effectively and possessing emergent literacy)

Cognition and general knowledge (physical, logic- mathematical and socio conventional knowledge)

While conceptualizing these dimensions, apart from evaluating them separately it is essential to notice that there is a significant relation between them. Defining the school readiness domains contributes to the development of early learning standards for children’s success in elementary school (Halle, Zaff, Calkins, & Margie, 2000; Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006), therefore dimensions that define primary skills and abilities are outlined detail below:

2.2.1 Physical Well-being and Motor Development

Children’s physical wellbeing has important role in achieving learning goals. When children have problems with their health, this can be a handicap to their learning process such as absence from the school, physical disturbance or a need for special

support. These problems create challenges for the children to adjust their self-perception and lack of independence in school settings. The possible elements of school readiness are physical development, physical abilities, background and contextual conditions of children's physical development have important implications on children's later school success (Halle et al, 2000). Kagan and Rigby (2003) recommend that countries find ways of creating an interconnectedness between schools, early childhood institutions and health care systems covering such aspects as planning together, cooperating in teacher training initiatives and sharing information. While Kagan et al. (1995) focused explicitly on the classification for physical development and self-care skills standards. It is recognized that children's general health, nutrition, physical abilities, muscle and energy have not been sufficiently highlighted by kindergarten teachers (NCES, 1993). Actually, children's obesity rates have increased over the years and there is evidence that the absence of supporting physical exercises can affect children's academic achievement later in school (Scott- Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006).

2.2.2 Social and Emotional Development

One of the ways for a child to learn about the social environment is communication with their peers and teachers. In order to open and maintain communication channels a child needs social skills such as learning to take turns, working in groups, understanding other people's feelings, expressing their opinions and being self- confident and carrying leadership's characteristics or speaking assertively is what the child should do. This type of social behaviour facilitates the positive adaptation to the formal school system. These elements are essential to maintain positive relationships with preschool and elementary school and training of teachers who have a commitment to teaching children in early childhood and elementary school (Halle et al, 2000). While the early learning standards are used to define readiness in an operational

manner the socio-emotional development is generally demonstrated through social and self-control skills. However, a child's ability to understand relationships with peers and adults have received less consideration in terms of the social emotional standards for school readiness, but this skill should be recognized because children's relationships have a strong impact on their learning and development (Scott- Little, Kagan & Frelow, 2006).

2.2.3 Approaches toward Learning

When they are dealing with questions or assignments, children gain knowledge, abilities, capabilities and skills. A child's tendency towards learning (gender, temperament, cultural patterns and values) and their learning styles (curiosity, initiative, interpretation, cognitive styles, and imagination) affect their approach to learning (Halle et al, 2000). Unlike tendencies, a child's learning style is plastic and contains elements that impact on their attitude towards the process of acquiring knowledge and skills. For example, these variables affect how children accept and are interested in new tasks, the extent to which they use their ingenuity, assert themselves and approach the task with tenacity, their inventiveness and how they engage their imagination and utilize different cognitive methods to achieve a task or solve a problem (Kagan, 1995). In order to be able to acquire these approaches, children need to receive different kinds of support. Whereas the approaches toward learning dimension are emphasized on the minority of learning approaches, each of the four categories ('curiosity', 'task persistence', 'reflection' and 'imagination') needs to be broadened equally in the domains (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006).

2.2.4 Language and Communication Development

One of the important prerequisites for communication with teachers and peers in schools is language; it is a key component of cognitive development. Children are expected to differentiate between verbal language ('listening', 'speaking', 'social use of language', 'vocabulary and meaning', 'creative use of language') and language associated with emergent literacy ('understanding literature', 'print awareness', 'logic of story', 'writing methods') (Halle et al, 2000). Other studies demonstrated that many other important skills are present in children's school readiness skills. The National Early Literacy Panel (2004) defined the following skills as being strongly related to children's future reading skills; "alphabet knowledge", "concepts about print", "phonological awareness", "invented spelling", "oral language", "reading comprehension", "writing their own names", "remembering letters names quickly". These skills have strong links for children's emergent literacy skills, however the work of NEGP that set the agenda for school readiness dimensions did not recognize critical components of emergent literacy (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006).

2.2.5 Cognition and General Knowledge

Piaget (1964) described physical knowledge as the "knowledge about the properties of objects derived from observation and interaction" (p.9). He explained logico-mathematical knowledge as "related not only to physical properties of individual objects but also to similarities, differences and associations between objects, events or people"(p.9), and defined social-conventional knowledge as that which "reflects the agreed-upon conventions of society"(p.9). Children actively acquire create knowledge through interaction with physical objects and society. Furthermore, three types of knowledge regarded as significant components of school readiness characteristics (Kagan et al, 1995). Cognitive knowledge has been given more importance than the

other domains; however, physical knowledge and logico-mathematical knowledge are required. On the other hand, social-conventional knowledge is not commonly known in formal schooling. Social-conventional knowledge consists of learning rules and routine of schools and children need to comprehend and follow these socially approved rules. Preschools and parents should highlight the importance of this understand to prevent the children facing problems in school transition (Scott- Little, Kagan, & Frelow, 2006).

2.3 Core Indicators of School Readiness

Instead of placing children's age, developmental levels, behaviours or communication with others, children's school readiness is shaped by the children, parent, community and teacher perspectives. Therefore, following indicators of children's school readiness will take into account children, parent, teacher and community roles in children's school readiness and transition to elementary school.

2.3.1 Children's Perspectives on School Readiness

Apart from the theoretical perspectives, the other part of the issue is related to what children say about school and what they think about their school experience. Children encounter new situations (new educational environment, cultural difference) when they start formal school. Therefore, in order for parents, teachers and others to provide appropriate support for each child, the children's opinions about school should be given importance (Fabian, 2002).

Generally, a child's first impressions of the school are rules, attitudes towards, feelings about school and learning and in particular friendships. Children commented on the school environment and the differences between preschool and elementary school and they considered rules as ways of controlling the school environment (Docket & Perry, 2000). A study by Docket et al. (2000) found that children tended to obey rules

such as; not running in classrooms and putting rubbish in the bins. Rules were seen as negative and were about what they should not do rather than what they could do. The children were curious about who made the rules and what would happen if rules were broken, furthermore they were anxious about breaking the rules because the resulting punishment (Wong, 2003; Yeo & Clarke, 2005).

Also, the children who participated in Docket and Perry's (2007) study did not have strong positive or negative feelings about school, but they stated feelings toward school while talking about their experience at school. In another study, Griebel and Niesel (2001) collected data from nursery teachers, parents and 162 first born children aged 3 to 6. They used interviews to investigate the children's concept of transition which explains personality, position, relatives and their feelings about transition process apart from stress. Generally, questions were about children's views and feelings about school. They also asked specific questions about break time, reports, scores and homework. According to the results of the interviews, for most of the children their conception of learning was reading, writing and calculation however, a few children commented that learning was a mystical activity. The children in the study complained that playing, eating, talking with friends was not allowed in the lessons. However, the children appeared to be barely aware of reports and grades. Mostly, children become aware of school via their parents, preschool teachers, books and visual media. In that study since all the participants was first born, therefore; siblings' effects were minimized (Niesel & Griebel, 2001). The home environment comprises support from the family has a positive impact on a child's performance in preschool and elementary school. In addition to parents and other relatives, siblings can be instrumentally in the development of their younger brothers or sisters learning. This can be achieved by older children being positive models for example, being successful in school and also by assisting their younger siblings to do their homework or by engaging in other activities such as reading

to them (Kiernan et al, 2008). Aforementioned children's views, feelings about school are important factors in their readiness for school. Some of children's expressions about school experiences are summarized as follows; Difficulty in learning rules and obeying them, Making friends with other children, Constructing positive interactions with teachers, The length of the school day and their responsibilities, Preferring to learn while playing compared to formal learning, The routine of going to school every morning (Center of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, 2008).

They may lose their confidence to take part in activities even if they had high self-efficacy in their preschool years (Bromstrom, 2003). Moreover, a considerable number of studies indicated the impact of changes in the physical environment with respect to children's school readiness. In these studies, the researchers asked children about the physical appearance of the schools. The children's response were varied, for instance, the size of the school could be a problem in that it was difficult to find their way to a classroom, or playground, one child had negative feelings about the hygiene of the school, and others thought the school hall and yard were noisy and scary. Many studies emphasized the issue of friends in their first school years with children feeling fearful and anxious about making friends in their new schools (Docket & Perry, 2004; Griebel & Niesel, 2000; Ledger, Smith & Rich, 2000; Clarke & Sharpe, 2003). In addition, according to Ladd, Herald and Kochel (2006) certain aspects of attending a preschool can help prepare children for elementary school in terms, example using school, buses and finding their way through elementary school environment.

Within the disconnected programs of preschool and elementary school, teachers and parents role are changed (Niesel & Griebel, 2007). Children's expectation of teachers changed according to the country. For example; in an Icelandic study, preschool children thought teachers were strict and dictatorial (Einarsdottir, 2003). Some of the formal school teacher's punishment strategies were described by children such as being

sent to principal's office. Moreover, some of the children were under pressure because their teachers' attitudes towards the child's academic skills (numeracy or literacy) (Valeski & Stipek, 2001). Besides, children want to be appreciated by their parents and teachers during all different educational levels (O'Kane, 2007). A project carried out in South Australia (Potter & Briggs, 2003) reported that children believed that if the children and teacher had had good relationship ("being taught in fun ways, being rewarded or praised for their efforts and/or behaviour, being cared for and helped e.g., having tasks explained and educators being patient and being given free activities choices children's feelings of school).

Some of the children faced difficulties in formal school due to the change in the length of the school day, recess time and having no nap time. In Singapore, children attend kindergarten for two to four hours a day, but in their first year of formal schooling, they attend for five hours five day and a half hours a day - either in the morning [7.30am – 1.00pm] or in the afternoon [1.00pm – 6.30pm] (Yeo & Clark, 2005). Furthermore, children in Australia complained about the lessons (reading, writing and mathematics) and the homework owing to their struggle with challenging tasks. Also, they were not familiar with the strict learning programs they were used to play-based learning in the preschool. Therefore, they thought preschool as a playing centre and primary school as a learning centre. Children were aware that they must get ready (e.g., comb their hair, put on their school uniform, eat breakfast and collect their lunch box) in the mornings for school. The morning routine of preparation for school was significant requirement for children's school readiness (Docket & Perry, 2004).

2.3.2 The Parent's Perspective on School Readiness

The family's role in the child's transition to formal school is one of the factors that are important in relation to children's success in school (Docket & Perry, 2007). Families are responsible for preparing a child's transition to formal school (Griebel & Niesel, 2002). Research by Dunlop (2005) and Dockett and Perry (2005), focused on parents' experiences and expectations through their children's transition process. They examined children and parents, while they were going through transition to school over one year. Children's lives in school were the core of parents' concerns. They described their curiosity about what children did in school as 'I'd like to be a fly on the wall'. The parents also had concerns about choosing the appropriate school whether children's were old enough to start to start formal school, parents' factors in children lives, and anticipating school (Fabian & Dunlop, 2006). In these studies children were in preschool and were about to start the formal school. The parents' concerns were not limited only to expectations, participation or opinions about the school, but they were also aware of the school's demand for the readiness of the children. However, the parents' concept of school readiness focused on the children's skills of recognizing objects, (emergent literacy) letters and numbers and lack of inferential skills (Barbarin et al., 2008). According to the studies of Diamond, Reagan, and Bandyk (2000) and Portes, Cuentas, and Zady (2000); generally parents' understanding of readiness's skills were composed of turn taking, adapting directions, curiosity for learning, getting along with peers, expressing their ideas and self-care skills. Actually, parents can make great contribution to children's school readiness by providing appropriate materials and engaging the child in activities at home such as reading, encouraging children to develop relationships with others. Kostuch (2008) investigated three main domains; "Encouragement of literacy/numeracy development", "Promotion of social development" and "Physical development" for fostering children's school readiness (p.

39). While parents supported these domains, they were affected by their conceptions of children's self-confidence, school routine maintenance and school confidence. The results demonstrated that if children are prepared for routine of formal school by parents, they can adapt to school routine more easily.

Parents emphasized the importance of their children being able to interact and respond appropriately with unfamiliar adults such as being able to separate easily from the parent and join the teacher in class, and being able to. Parents were also concerned about the two-way nature of that interaction. A common question asked by the parents was "Will the teacher like my child?" On one hand, parents wanted for their child to adjust to school and to "fit in". On the other hand, they wanted the "specialness" of their child to appreciate their child in a positive and responsive way (Dockett & Perry, 1999a). Some of the parents in the study stated that they considered that their children's level of knowledge was a major issue in the process of starting formal school. The children also mentioned their knowledge, but some commented quite strongly that children should not start school until they could write their name or count to 10 (Dockett & Perry, 2007). A few of parents, too, were not overly concerned about the knowledge that children took with them to school (Dockett & Perry, 2001).

2.3.3 The Community's Perspectives on School Readiness

It is important to recognize the role of the community in children's readiness for school, but first the term 'community' should be defined. Rogoff (2003) defines community as "groups of people who have some common and continuing organization, values, understanding, history and practices" (p. 80). Kagan (1992) points out that child in the transition to formal school need collaboration between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' continuity. Horizontal continuity means the relations between home, school, and the services provided by the community. Vertical continuity indicates permanence and

completion among services which are infant care, preschool, and elementary school. Community services, school and parents are responsible for providing children with permanence and adjustment in the transition periods (as cited in Mangione & Speth, 1998). The need for investment in the education and training of people who work with young children to improve the quality of ECE was recognized in the recent report from a National Academy of Science.

Policy makers and the broader community are included in the community framework of school readiness. The community's attitudes influence educational policy and practice in kindergarten and elementary school. Promoting children's academic skills and abilities is one of the significant targets of early childhood education. However, this attitude changed into primary focus. Early childhood education should offer the possible opportunities for addressing children's academic success before they start elementary school. By community beliefs and forces, children are under the academic press in kindergarten and preschool years because media imposed programs, parent and teachers that children's basic academic skills help to have successful careers in their mainstream. For that reason, policy and practice in early childhood education are dominated by community for setting strict and serious academic instructions (Russell, 2011). Also, the community as a social, political and organizational power shapes parents decisions about how children are prepared for elementary school and when they should enter formal schooling. Children's social environment is regarded as a significant component in children's development (Boethel, 2004). If the parents do not have a relationship with the community, parents and children might face the problem of social isolation. In contrast, if parents resist participating in the community or choosing to participate in different activities, that the community does not support then they lacked of supports from community (Melton et al. 1999). A combination of social isolation and low economic status affect families negatively. Basically, communities are responsible for

providing families with physical resources such as schools, child care and health services. Moreover, while dealing with this issue, the family has its own problems, for example, they may be young, inexperienced for parenting, unemployed, and have low income (Dockett & Perry, 2007). Community should also establish strong relationships which not only protect, but also support families. In addition, fire and police stations, grocery stores and retail stores are used to screen children's health and safety within neighbourhoods. On the top of these institutional resources, neighbours are seen as additional resources for controlling role models, mentors, disciplinarians and supervisors in the neighbourhood. Cooperation between the parents and the society plays an important role especially in divorced families (Halle et al, 2002).

Physical, institutional and social resources are sustained by the communities in order to develop children's readiness for schools. Indeed, if children benefit from "playgrounds", "recreation" "facilities" and "libraries", children's motor and cognitive skills will be promoted (Halle et al, 2002).

2.3.4. Teacher Perspectives of School Readiness

The responsibility of the teachers is to decide the level of the children's school readiness and to support the development of the required skills (Pianta, 2002; Dockett & Perry, 2007). Preschool teachers must be fully aware of skills which are necessary in formal schooling, and they must also know how to provide the appropriate environment in which the children can acquire, develop and practice these skills (Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006).

According to Pianta (2002), that in relation to the term school readiness it is necessary to understand that children's skills and abilities take time to develop and that this development takes place in a context. Therefore, it is important to consider how the contexts that the child inhabits, such as home, nursery, and classroom. Thus, it is these

settings and the resources there in that constitute the board basis of the assessment and improvement of school readiness. Furthermore, the teacher needs to be skilled in the assessment and evaluation of the children's readiness for formal schooling with respect to children's pre-academic and social, self-regulatory skills in early childhood settings. After taking all these elements into account, a teacher thinks that a child is not ready to make the transition to elementary school then a range of interventions need to be considered such as the child staying in preschool for a little longer, or recommendation for special education. If a child progresses to elementary school before they are ready then this can result in more serious consequences later in academic life.

The responsibility of the teachers is to decide the level of the children's school readiness and to support the development of the required skills. (Pianta, 2002; Perry & Dockett, 2007). Preschool teachers must be fully aware of which skills are necessary in formal schooling, and they must also know how to provide the appropriate environment in which the children can acquire, develop and practice these skills (Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006).

In particular, preschool teachers should concentrate on the different dimensions of school readiness. Lewitt and Baker (1995) analyzed three national surveys which contained teacher and parent opinions about readiness. These surveys mainly focused on kindergarten teachers' beliefs and assessment of formal school readiness. After examining the results, the essential elements were noted such as being physically healthy, being relaxed and being sufficiently nourished. These results were supported by Lara-Cinisomo et al. (2008) in their findings of a study of early childhood educators' beliefs about school readiness. In both studies the teachers placed more emphasis on children's social interactions, emotional development and social abilities with academic skills being considered the least of the priorities for children's transition to formal school. For early childhood educators, social adjustment means that children are able to

operate as a part of a large group, sharing the teacher's attention, demonstrating independence as required, and being able to follow instructions. Early childhood educators who were interviewed in a study by Docket and Perry (2001) generally expressed the attitude that "we can teach them to write their name, but it's more important to have kids who can function in the classroom." (para.13). However, according to Pianta (2002), in the early years when defining readiness it is the literacy and language skills that are recognized in policy, programs and goals of early childhood education. Regarding children's competencies in literacy skills, a study by Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) found that children's difficulties in reading were related to insufficient pre-service and in-service training of early childhood teachers. In order to overcome this problem, teachers' views about readiness skills must be taken into account, in the reviewed literature related to school readiness did not attempt to investigate the reasons for the early childhood teachers' views and beliefs. Instead it investigated teachers' views, beliefs and perceptions of children's readiness. The teachers' education and experience need to be discussed in relation to the variation in belief system and how this is related to children's school readiness (Cappelloni, 2010).

The inconsistency in the identification and definition of children's school readiness within preschool programs is becoming an issue in teachers' education programs in terms of supporting children's success (Hundley, 2010). First, a teacher needs to be able to create a connection between the early childhood education program and the children, to do this teacher's need to have the pedagogical understand together with the requisite (Clifford, 1999). This is very important because teachers who have received high quality training tend to achieve positive results in the school readiness of the children in their care (Costley, 1996).

2.4 Assessment of the School Readiness

Teachers are expected to be competent in seven main elements when they start to teaching. These are ‘child centered’, ‘learning environment’, ‘parent involvement’, ‘methods of teaching’, ‘professional development’, ‘social adaptation’ and ‘assessment’ (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). Therefore, using assessment is significant prerequisite for the competencies of the children’s need to achieve the target goals in formal schooling. Educators use tests or other assessment tools to design activities and programs for children. May and Kundert (1992) substantiated four approaches to the evaluation of readiness for school. Generally, teachers and schools chose to use developmental screening tests, readiness tests, informal observations and tests which were developed by the schools (as cited in Panter & Bracken, 2009). However, all assessment techniques need to be carefully used. If an assessment is in appropriately selected or used, the results of the assessment may label children incorrectly. Furthermore, certain assessment techniques only focus on the children’s skills. School readiness includes specific principles to achieve its purposes. First, before the selection of an assessment procedure, a teacher should take into consideration the age, language, and culture of the children. Moreover, in order to obtain reliable data, various sources of information from sources such as; parents, teachers and the school should be utilized. Furthermore, teachers should be aware (La Paro & Pianta, 2000) that the selected assessment tools need to be reliable in the long term in order to accurately evaluate the children’s developmental progress.

Finally, school readiness assessment should not sole focus on academic skills (Zaslow, Calkins, & Halle, 2000) they should consider the five main domains of child development. Unfortunately, some readiness tests lack the appropriate instruments to measure children’s social and emotional readiness (Docket & Perry, 2007). It is essential that the child’s whole development including academic, social and emotional readiness

is measure and those appropriate, developmental screening tests and readiness measures are utilized. Moreover, those kinds of measures can help to predict children's school success (Gredler, 1997).

2.5. Transition to Elementary School

In the context of this study, 'transition' means the change in the educational environment and constructing familiarity between settings or period of education to another (Fabian & Dunlop, 2002). Educational transition focuses on two concepts which are learning and resilience of social environment. In that phase, the needs of the children can be fulfilled in transition programs which emphasize skills and abilities with curriculum continuity between the preschool and the elementary school (Docket & Perry, 1999).

2.5.1 Curriculum Continuity

Sustaining continuity between preschool and elementary school programs is one of the way of smooth transition. In order to provide connection between preschool and formal school in terms of care and physical facilities regarding children's transition to school, building consensus between teachers, programs and attitudes toward learning and teaching can be prolonged (Dockett & Perry, 2007). For example, the relationship between preschool and elementary school was investigated by a 7 year longitudinal study in schools in Columbia years. The study results showed that excessive early exposure to learning had negative effect on children's readiness to transition from preschool to elementary school. Children's success in academic skills and development were related to the way that child-initiated activities were integrated into early learning experiences. Children's development is deliberated by an "escalated curriculum", which means that children are forced to acquire formal learning knowledge too early for their

developmental stages (Southern Regional Education Board, 1994). Furthermore, parents and community are responsible for the transition from preschool and Grade I. Therefore, if they review the preschool and elementary school curriculum, they may be able to identify curriculum needs for children. Also they play important role in getting children ready for elementary school via supporting necessary skills (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). Instead of academic forces which are approved by adults, the developmentally appropriate practice can be more appropriate. This type of early childhood education can result in children being successful in fourth grade math, reading, language, spelling and science (Southern Regional Education Board, 1994).

2.5.2. Transition Practices

Starting formal schooling is a stage in growing up and in this transition phase, they are expected to change, at the same time, they can be anxious about transition (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). Transition practices are important in this period because, overcoming anxieties and related behaviour problems can be solved by priming activities (Corsaro & Molinari, 2000). Therefore, the importance of the children's transition to school is negotiated by teacher, parents and schools so that children's school readiness can be enhanced by various activities in the period of early childhood education.

The main themes of the activities for transition are links and continuity. Links and continuity can be enhanced by the collaboration of the staff. One of the effective ways of is by organizing field trips. For example; preschool children can visit to their future school and the primary children can visit preschool (Dunlop, 2002b). These kinds of activities build the children's independence, confidence, create a familiarity with the new environment for the preschoolers and provide them with opportunities to meet the elementary school teachers. Another activity is "progression in learning" for example a

school and a nursery school carried out a 'Once Upon a Time' project in which they developed the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. Preschool children talked, discussed and changed the story about primary school. The story had continued until children started the primary school. Children shared their ideas, feelings about their school and their families. After children's transition to primary school, school's decoration were changed and designed similarly as their preschool. The proposed transition activity showed that continuing to teach gives children the opportunity to predict the expected alteration in their lives (Corsaro, 1996).

It is stated in the literature that sometimes parents and teachers' visions related to transitions to formal schooling are not interdependent (Griebel & Niesel, 2009). Family and teacher's views of transition skills are in contradiction. Both parents and teachers could be confused about which skills should be gained for children before school starts. For instance, while parents focus on children's academic skills such as literacy or mathematics, the preschool teachers emphasize both social and academic skills (Piotrkowski et al., 2000). In order to handle this disagreement, communication between family and teachers is needed. The preschool maintains the continuity from primary school by sharing children's experiences in preschool. For example, preschool teachers allocate time for children's most favourite activities, their products and their interest areas and their friends are transmitted to primary teachers. This helps to develop programs related with the school readiness of children (Broström, 2002). Children who are confident and emotionally developed cope with new problems by this kind of transition activity (Fabian & Dunlop, 2006). Margetts (2000) notes that transition programs should be based on a philosophy that children's adjustment to school is easier when children are familiar with the situation, parents are informed about the new school and elementary teachers have information about children's development and previous experience. Certain continuities should be achieved such as continuity of peers,

expectations between settings (including teacher and child behaviours), and programming for children's learning.

2.6. Research about Preschool Teachers' Views on School Readiness

Preschool teachers in a number of studies (e.g., Fabian, 2002) commented that children's capacity to concentrate, sitting periods and the use of their initiative were important. They reported that for teachers, children being ready for formal school involved the ability to be part of a large group competing for the attention of one adult.

Many studies have also demonstrated that kindergarten teachers considered social interactions, communication's skills, self-care skills, academic skills as important indicators for school readiness. Similar to, Heaviside et al. (1993) and Piotrkowski et al. (2000) asserted that preschool teachers had tendency to focus on the improvement children's academic skills to make children ready for school.

In a related study, Perry, Dockett, and Tracey (1997) investigate the views of teachers in two suburban schools in Sydney, Australia. The aim of the study was to identify the dimensions of the school readiness. The researchers conducted focus group interviews. The researchers stated that teachers' perceptions, interpretations and beliefs were regarded as the primary roles in children lives. The results of the study showed teachers believed that adjustment (44%); disposition (26%), skills (17%) and knowledge (6%) were indicators of the school readiness. Physical size, age and birth order were less referred to in their responses. When teachers mentioned adjustment, they occasionally commented on the significance of social abilities, social interaction skills and communications with teachers, parents or peers. Teachers thought that children's interaction with parents and teachers and peers were the most important indicators of school readiness, because the fact that their school readiness shows sign of their social competence for leaving their family. They asserted that another aspect was children's

motivation to learn, adjustment to classroom rules, obeying teachers' instructions, concentration, and adaptation to school environment. According to the teachers, the children needed to be able to act appropriately in the classroom and 'fit in'. If the children did not have the skills and abilities to do this then the classroom would not function effectively, thus impeding the learning process of the children. Teachers stated disposition as learning abilities and skills. Children's curiosity about learning, exploring, reading was important for their school readiness. Teachers determined the school readiness included competence in self-care skills (toileting, dressing, feeding and so on.), fine motor skills (holding a pencil), and feeling responsibility about their belongings. As mentioned above, children's knowledge was not considered as priority. Additionally, familiarity with books, reading or identifying their names was recognized as important expectations according to teachers (Perry, Dockett, & Tracey, 1997).

In another study, Lin and colleagues (2003) examined the perceptions about the children's readiness for school held by kindergarten teachers who had different training experience. Moreover, they were within different school contexts (e.g., geographic region, school types, etc.). The participants were 3,305 kindergarten teachers from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study; the study was carried out in the 1998–1999 school year. Based on the findings, kindergarten teacher-reported readiness items focused on social skills and abilities. The children's age, gender, geographic region were also important factors according to the teachers' view of readiness. The results of the study showed that younger teachers emphasized academic skills more than older teachers. According to the researchers, younger teachers had more novel knowledge about school readiness owing to their recent graduation from higher education levels with bachelor degree teacher education program. Study of public school kindergarten teachers' views on children's readiness for school, conducted by The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1993), collected data from 1448 kindergarten teachers to understand

their views about children's school readiness. They rated 15 defined indicators of children's school readiness. The results demonstrated that 96% of the teachers stated that school readiness was related to the children's physical condition, in that they were rested and well nourished, 84% of the teachers thought that school readiness was related to the children's language abilities such as verbal communication, and their knowledge of the word, 76% of the teachers believed that children were ready for school when they were eager to participate in novel activities in classroom settings. They rated as less important items such as 'The child can count to 20 or above (67%)', 'the child can identify letters of the alphabet (57%)'. In addition; 88% of the teachers strongly believed that "Readiness comes as children grow and mature, you can't push it". However, 94% of the teachers stated that "sufficient supportive activities can enhance children's readiness"

The aforementioned research focusing on the community factors demonstrated that children's school readiness is embedded within the community. Mangione and Speth (1998) also examined aspects of the continuity of preschool education and young children's transition to elementary education. The researchers examined eight elements of transition; 'families as partners, shared leadership, comprehensive and responsive services, culture and home language, communication, knowledge and skill development, appropriate care and education, and evaluation of partnership success'. They conducted structured interviews and focus groups. The study comprised 36 people who worked with 0-8 year old children were included in the study. The aim of the study was to identify the essential elements of successful transition to elementary school. The structured interviews and discussion in the focus groups were analyzed through qualitative (the percentage of counted response) and quantitative (descriptive statistics) procedures. The results indicated that teachers mostly stated the research related to transition to school, development of the home, school and community linkages were limited. The findings demonstrated that teachers believed in the importance of a

framework for successful transition, and also in a partnership with the family. Teachers expected that the framework would include being informed about the transition issues and the ways of using education materials to support transition of children. Teachers felt lack of community partnership. Similarly, Williamson (2003) carried out a study with parents, preschool policy makers and teachers with the aim of identifying the gap among them concerning children's school readiness. The researcher interviewed six parents, six teachers and two preschool policy makers about school readiness. According to the results, parents, preschool policy makers focused on children's social, communication skills and enthusiasm. The preschool program was seen as a crucial element in readiness. The results demonstrated that the progress of the children's school readiness came from the communication, rich environment for learning and preschool education. Williamson (2003) concluded that if preschool teachers are to enhance children's competencies; they need to know what readiness skills are more significant for in the children's future school lives.

As can be seen studies of pre-service early childhood teachers and in-service preschool teachers have yielded important results for the current study. Cuskelly and Detering (2003) conducted a study with Australian preschool teachers and pre service early childhood teachers. The aim of the study was to examine preschool teachers' and pre service teachers' beliefs about raising children's school readiness, and to define school readiness skills, preschool retention and use activities to support children transition to school. The participants were 63 preschool teachers and 75 students enrolled in their final year of an early childhood teaching degree at a university in Brisbane, Queensland. The School Readiness Questionnaire (SRQ) was used to assess the participants' understanding of school readiness. As with previous findings, children's academic skills were regarded as less important for both teachers and pre-service teachers. In answer to the question 'Please explain your understanding of school

readiness' the participants gave the following responses; an interest in learning (14.3% and 5.3% of teachers and students respectively), problem solving ability (9.5%; 1.3%), creativity (3.2% of teachers), and decision making skills (2% of teachers). 'Social skills with peers and adults and emotional maturity' were regarded as the most important dimension of school readiness by 70% teachers with 60 % considering academic competence as important. The pre-service teachers rated social development and interaction as less important. Teachers stated the ways of enhancing school readiness were through encouragement, support and praise. In contrast, pre-service teachers did not offer any strategies. This study demonstrates that there were significant differences between the teachers and pre service teachers' understanding of school readiness.

There are also some studies that have been conducted to evaluate Turkish teachers' views about the school readiness issue. Ülkü (2007) investigated the perceptions of parents and early childhood teachers about the ways they prepare children for formal school. The study was carried out in Adana, Turkey with 350 parents of children in preschool, 400 parents of children in first grade and 50 preschool teachers and 40 first grade teachers. The researcher used a questionnaire which she had developed and a semi- structured interview form. The quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive study, and interview data were analyzed using content analysis. Based on preschool teachers' results, about half of them applied literacy activities in order to prepare children for elementary school but the first grade teachers advocated orientation activities for school readiness. The preschool teachers believed that children readiness can be described as children physical maturation.

In related study, preschool transition skills assessment was developed in order to determine preschool teachers' opinions about the transition skills that children were required to have for elementary school. 35 teachers evaluated developmentally normal 277 children and 21 children with developmental delay. Interviews with the teachers

were conducted by the researcher about understanding the children's background in preparation for formal school. In-service teachers gave more importance to self-care skills such toilet training, dressing and undressing one, eating and washing. However, social and communication skills were seen prerequisite by the teachers (Bakkaloğlu, 2008).

Based on the results of the studies mentioned above, it can be concluded that the views of in service and the pre-service teachers differ in terms of the necessary skills for a child's readiness for school.

2.7. Training and Development of Early Childhood Teachers

Teachers training are defined as structural variables (level of education, specialized early childhood knowledge and abilities, child ratios, class size) and process variables (warmth and responsive behaviours, facilitating family involvement, creating cognitive stimulations, recognizing the importance of readiness factors, developing children's social competence skills). Structural variables are concerned with establishing a program, defining credentials, required ratios, maintaining equipment and safe environment. On the other hand, process variables are stated as behaviours, actions of the teacher in the classrooms. These two characteristics are crucial indicators of the effects of the program on the teachers (Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006).

Most early childhood teachers' development is effected positively by the qualifications and revised programs. At least a decade ago studies showed that teacher quality, diplomas, licensing qualifications, content of the training were insufficient (Clifford, 1999). Therefore, teachers had difficulties upon entering the profession (Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006). A study by Hemmeter, Santos and Ostrosky (2008) confirmed that most pre-service early childhood teachers were capable of promoting children's socio- emotional developmental skills, cooperating with parents and

implementing “preventive practices”, but they were not competent in overcoming children’s undesirable behaviour. Naturally, one of the most important indicators of the children’s readiness for school is their success in socio-emotional skills; therefore, it is these skills that need to be supported by early childhood teachers. This raises the question as to whether preschool teachers are sufficiently prepared to meet children’s needs in relation to school readiness. Recognizing this issue, Early and Winton (2008) conducted a nationally representative survey of early childhood teacher preparation programs at two-and four-year colleges and universities in the USA under the auspices of the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) founded by the U.S. Department of Education. The research consisted of the pre-service teachers would be responsible for zero-40 months children in child care, head start and preschool programs. The differences in the levels of training teachers seem to be important for the preparation of teachers. In almost all countries, state kindergarten teachers complete the bachelor degree or higher degree of teacher education department in order to gain teaching credentials, however, in most of the pre-kindergarten and early school setting this is not required (Clifford, 1999). Among the courses, ‘General Teacher Education: pre-elementary/early childhood/ teacher education’ and ‘Promoting successful transitions to Kindergarten’ courses were related to school readiness and transition to elementary school. They found that most of the programs show a lack of excellence in preparing teachers to be qualified with specific age group on the contrary, teachers become competent to study with infants through elementary aged children.

2.8. Early Childhood Teacher Education Curriculum in School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School in Turkey

In Turkey, in order to adjust to European Union standards, the early childhood education curriculum was revised in terms of content, goals and objectives in 2006. One

widely accepted change in the early childhood education program is that the transition to the elementary school is included in the curriculum. Therefore; the dimensions of the new early childhood teacher education curriculum were unified with the elementary school curriculum. The new early childhood curriculum and the teacher curriculum served to support the smooth transition of children to elementary school. School readiness and transition to the elementary education course were added to the new curriculum in order to fill the gaps between early childhood teachers' knowledge of school readiness and their knowledge of the elementary school curriculum. The SRTES course aims to equip pre service teachers with information about school readiness and the relevant indicators, and provide training in assessment and classroom activities that will facilitate the easy transition to the elementary school of the children that will be in teachers' care (Turhan, Koç, Işıksal, & Işıksal, 2009).

In a study by Parlak and Erden (2009), the recent early childhood teacher education program was evaluated through content analysis of compulsory courses' syllabuses. They claimed that there is adequacy in content in terms of; "whole development of children, educational activities, creativity, planning, parent involvement, and assessment and evaluation" (p. 9) for promoting pre-service teachers' teaching skills. However, the early childhood teacher candidates did receive insufficient input in relation to some issues such as "inclusion", "behaviour management" and "school readiness". It can be concluded that the preparation of pre-service early childhood teachers lack important content in relation to children's development. At the time when Parlak and Erden (2009) carried out their study, the SRTES course had not yet begun to be implemented. Dereobalı and Ünver (2009) investigated the applicability of the courses in the early childhood teacher education programs after revisions, instructor views on courses. They indicated that the SRTES course could be redefined as development of language and reading. Also, they suggested that the early childhood

teacher education program course can be more related to early childhood education instead of elementary school education.

2.9. Summary of the Literature Review

There are many studies which are related to various indicators that have an effect on young children's school readiness. According to the studies, the school and teacher, family and family environment have an important impact on children's school readiness. Early childhood teachers' knowledge of the school readiness enhances the children's skills, knowledge and abilities before they start formal school. The literature points out the importance of the teachers' role in children's school readiness. According to the reviewed literature, early childhood teachers' views about school readiness focused on young children's socio-emotional skills. In contrast, some of the early childhood teachers emphasize the importance of the academic skills of the children. There is only one study (Cuskelly & Detering, 2003) which investigated the pre-service early childhood teachers' beliefs of school readiness. It also compared the perspectives of pre-service and in-service teachers' views.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate whether there is a change in the pre-service early childhood teachers' views related to young children school readiness for further schooling after attending the School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School (SRTES) Course. The current chapter contains details of the sampling, data collection instruments and procedures, data analyses of the study.

3.1. Design of the Study

In the current study before commencement of the 2009-2010 spring semester, the school readiness questionnaire (See Appendix A) were administered to a total 169 pre-service early childhood teachers who were at four universities in Ankara, about to complete their fourth year of an early childhood teacher education program. They attended the compulsory SRTES Course. Moreover, 26 of the 169 participants were interviewed using the Interview Protocol (See Appendix B). In order to fulfil the aim of the study on completion of the SRTES Course the school readiness questionnaires were re-administered, as post-tests, to the 169 pre-service early childhood teachers thus providing comparative data. In addition, the Interview Protocol was re-administered to the 26 pre-service early childhood teachers. Pre and post interviews were performed to gain further insight about pre-service teachers' views of school readiness at the end of the course.

This study comprises quantitative and qualitative methodology. Two data gathering and analysis methods were used. The data is collected from the questionnaire

and one-to-one interviews. This is a mixed method study according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007);

“Research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” (p. 5).

In this study the type of mixed method is an Embedded Experimental Design. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007). The Embedded Experimental model is used to analyze different questions relating to the qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). “In the embedded design a survey [is] conducted at one level to gather quantitative results about a sample. At the same time, qualitative interviews are collected to explore the phenomenon with specific individuals” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.219). Therefore, different instruments and procedures were used to meet the needs of the design. Pre and post assessments via questionnaire and interviews were administered immediately to the candidates to measure the change of their views prior to attending the school readiness and transition to the elementary school course and immediately on completion of the course. Thus, the mixed method design is more suitable for the current study.

3.2 Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to examine teachers' views changing after the recent development of 'School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School (SRTES)' course in early childhood teacher education programs.

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in senior pre-service early childhood teachers' views related to young children's school readiness before and after taken the "school readiness and transition to elementary school" course?
 1. a Is there a significant difference among four different universities in the views of children's school readiness of pre-service early childhood teachers?
2. How does "the school readiness and transition to elementary school" course change senior pre-service early childhood teachers' views towards children's school readiness?
 2. a How are senior pre-service early childhood teachers' views of the definition of school readiness, importance, skills, factors, assessment, activities, and transition to elementary school related to young children's school readiness changed after having taken the "school readiness and transition to elementary school" course?
 2. b How do pre-service early childhood teachers gain knowledge about children's school readiness prior to "School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School" course?

3. 3. Populations and Sample

In this study, the target population was the pre-service early childhood teachers attending a school readiness and transition to elementary school course in Turkish universities. The sample for the quantitative part was 169 pre-service early childhood

teachers and the qualitative part of the study was completed with 26 pre-service early childhood teachers (see Figure 1). All the participants volunteered to participate in the study and the necessary permissions were obtained from the departments in the universities.

In the quantitative part of the study, convenience sampling was employed to select three public and one private university in Ankara were selected. Initially 169 senior early childhood teachers that were enrolled on the school readiness course participated in the study; the participants were recruited through convenience sampling because according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2005), convenience sampling is acceptable if the sample has specific characteristics such as demographics. The current study was carried out in four different universities with pre-service teachers thus, the researcher needed to observe their lessons in their classrooms which were nearby. A total of the 250 pre-service early childhood teachers enrolled in the SRTES course, and since some were absent during application of the questionnaire. The data from any teachers who had completed the pre-test but not the post-test was removed. Finally, the study was conducted with 169 pre-service teachers. As shown in Table 3.2, the majority of participants were female. Although the quantitative method was considered to be the major primary form of data collection, this was followed by a qualitative study with 26 participants. The qualitative data was collected through interviews with the participants (N=26) after they completed the questionnaires. This was undertaken to gain a deeper insight concerning the impact of the SRTES Course on pre-service early childhood teachers' views of young children's school readiness. The instructors supplied a list of participants who had full attendance on the course and these were the ones who were interviewed. The researcher used purposive sampling as defined by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008). This strategy is used for selecting participants who meet the criterion of having a high rate of participation in the SRTES course because it was assumed that these

participants would gain more knowledge. Therefore, the sample selection was undertaken according to the pre-service teachers course attendance checked by their advisors and teachers.

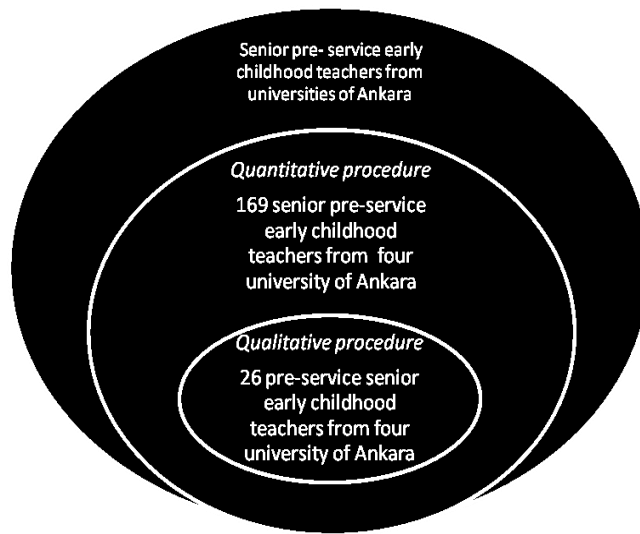


Figure 1. Summary of the qualitative and the quantitative study sampling.

For the 26 participants, who were interviewed one was male and 25 were female are presented at Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of the participants in the qualitative part of the study regarding gender and university.

| Gender | | |
|--------|--------|------|
| | Female | Male |
| A | 10 | |
| B | 5 | |
| C | 5 | |
| D | 5 | 1 |

As aforementioned, the sampling procedures of the quantitative and qualitative part of the study, the basic characteristics of the sample were as follows; all were between the ages of 20 and 25 (See Tables 3.2).

Table 3.2 Characteristics of the sample used in the quantitative part of the study regarding gender and university.

| University | | | | |
|------------|--------|---------------|----------------|---------|
| | Gender | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) | Missing |
| A | Female | 31 | 93,9 | 0 |
| | Male | 2 | 6.06 | 0 |
| B | Female | 20 | 100 | 4 |
| | Male | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C | Female | 14 | 100 | 1 |
| | Male | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| D | Female | 96 | 83.3 | 0 |
| | Male | 1 | 16.7 | 0 |

3.4. Instrumentation

In the current study, the data were collected using the Views of School Readiness Scale to measure teachers' views of school readiness (VSRS) (see Appendix A) and interview protocols (see Appendix B). The next section will present the quantitative and the qualitative instruments used in the study.

3.4.1. Quantitative instrument

The quantitative analysis was based on the collection of data using an instrument adapted from the "teachers and parents' views of school readiness scale" developed by Boz (2004). The original survey was used to identify six-year-old children's family, preschool and first grade teachers' view on children's school readiness. The scale was composed using, for the most part, the Metropolitan readiness, Kindergarten school readiness and psycho-social development, Daberon I and Denver Developmental Screen scales were utilized for the construction of the scale (Boz, 2004). She administered the scale to 117 preschool teachers, 97 first grade teachers and 258 parents. During the development of the instrument Boz (2004) consulted 22 experts and from their comments as to whether items were appropriate to children's school readiness skills. She rewrote some items and eliminated others.

The VSRS was chosen as the quantitative data collection instrument since the most recognized skills and abilities of children's school readiness were included in the VSRS. Furthermore, there was evidence of the validity of the instrument as original version. Also for reliability of instruments, according to Boz (2004); the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient results was 0.95. For the current study the researcher took appropriate permission to modify the format to this instrument. The items of scale were not changed; the adapted scale remained 46 items. Table 3.5 showed the four subscales

of the original VSRS which require the teacher to rate children's academic, social, concentration and reading and writing skills.

The format of the instrument was organized according to the clarity and size of the font, sufficient space to enter the responses (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Also, to determine whether the language and the clarity of the instructions could be easily understood, a pilot study was undertaken with three pre-service early childhood teachers in their third year at the early childhood teacher education department in Ankara. The outcome of the pilot study was that revisions were not needed in the current study. The reliability of the scale was regarded as acceptable and the reliability for each subscale reliability is presented in Table 3.5. A reliability analysis conducted for pre-service early childhood teachers and Cronbach's Alpha Value was found .93 for the current study.

The instrument of this study consisted of two parts. The first part contained questions to gain certain information from the participants such as age, gender, and id number. The researcher prepared a letter that explained the purpose of the study to the participants. The second part of this instrument was the VSRS, this is a three- point likert scale with responses ranging from (3) very important to (1) not important

Table 3.3 Subscales and Reliability Coefficients of VSRS

| Subscales | Description | Sample item | n of items | Cronbach alpha (Original Version) | Cronbach alpha (Present study) |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Academic Skills | Child's ability to recognize concepts and become an independent learner. | Able to count. | 18 | .93 | .91 |
| Concentration and Sustain Concentration | Child's ability to pay attention to activities and follow instructions. | Able to focus while dealing with a task. | 2 | .83 | .74 |
| Social Interaction Skills | Child's ability to get along with others and communicate appropriately. | Able to follow rules and directions. | 21 | .96 | .93 |
| Reading Writing skills | Child's ability to learn to read and write and to code units of letters and sounds phonologically. | Able to recognize alphabet. | 5 | .96 | .85 |

3.4.2 Interview Protocol

The qualitative instrument was designed by the researcher in the form of a semi-structured interview and employed an open-ended interviews approach. This provided the researcher with better control over the types of information received (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interview questions were designed by the researcher according to the research questions of the study and the related literature.

The research questions and the literature about school readiness (Docket & Perry, 2002; Heaviside & Farris, 1993; Lewit & Baker, 2003; Lin, Lawrence, & Gorell, 2003) were taken into consideration and the interview questions were designed according to the syllabuses of the SRTES courses in Turkey. The major domains of children's school readiness were chosen as shown in Table 3.4 together with sample questions from the interview protocol. The complete interview protocol is presented in Appendix B.

In the development of the interview protocols, the questions were examined by three academicians from the Early Childhood Education field. Following the feedback from the experts any necessary modifications were undertaken under the supervision of early childhood education researcher with a doctoral degree. After the modifications, a pilot study was conducted with three early childhood teachers. From the feedback of the pilot study the questions were reorganized and the final interview protocol consisted of 10 main questions.

Table 3.4 Major domains in the pre-service early childhood teachers' interview and sample questions

| Major domains | Sample questions |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Definition and Importance of children's School Readiness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does 'school readiness' mean? • What is the importance of children's school readiness? |
| School Readiness Skills. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is expected for children to be ready for school? |
| Background of knowledge regarding children's School Readiness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is knowledge of children's school readiness obtained? |
| Children's School Readiness' Activities, Assessments and Factors. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the activities, assessments and factors related to children's school readiness? |
| Parent and Community Roles in children's School Readiness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do parents and community affect children's school readiness? |
| Continuity between preschool and elementary school curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the preschool's goals and objectives prepare children for elementary school? |

3.5. Data Collection

In this study, in order to investigate whether the SRTES course changed the pre-service early childhood teachers' views about children's school readiness skills, the researcher implemented different data collection procedures; pre-post test and pre-post interviews and used the VSRS questionnaire (Boz, 2004). The researcher applied systematic observation to check the implementation of the SRTES course and collected the course syllabuses and catalogue descriptions of the courses. The researcher attended approximately 12 week SRTES courses in four universities of early childhood teacher education programs. In fact, the researcher tried to determine differences in the courses within the universities. In order to gain in depth knowledge of the SRTES course(s) the researcher observed lessons by taking notes on the activities and the contents.

Data collection was carried out during the 2009-2010 Spring semester. In the first part of the study, after the collection of the consent forms and an explanation of

the aims and study procedure the data collection involving the administration of questionnaire and interview protocol was implemented. Completing the questionnaire took about 15-20 minutes. The researcher collected the data herself in order to reduce the data collector bias and the instrument was given to the participants in their own classes. After collecting the data from the pre-test, interviews were carried out. In the qualitative data collection procedure; the researcher conducted face to face interviews with the participants lasting approximately 20-30 minutes with each interview being audio taped and then transcribed. Before starting the interviews, the researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study and asked the participants for their permission to use audio tape recorder. Interviews were conducted in an empty classroom of the universities. Within three months, the second parts of the study, the post-tests and post-interviews were administered and the researcher conducted each interview after administration of the questionnaires.

Ethics requirements were met before the implementation of the study through Middle East Technical University Human Subjects Ethics Committee. In addition, the required permissions were gathered from the four universities. Prior to each data collection process, the participants were asked to complete consent forms to confirm their voluntary participation in the study. To ensure confidentiality the participants' names were not recorded and the participants were told not to write their names on the questionnaires and to differentiate the participants codes were assigned to the information.

3.6. The School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School (SRTES) Course

The SRTES course is presented in the final year of the Early Childhood Teacher Education Programs with the Department of Elementary Education in each university. The aims of the program are to develop the candidate teachers in order to become social, professional, and competent to teachers of young children. In the

Early Childhood Teacher Education program in the universities there are 48 required courses and four electives. In 2006, many innovations were implemented in early childhood teacher education curriculum one of which was the development of the SRTES course (Higher Education Council, 2006) aiming to assist the teachers in supporting children's readiness for their transition to elementary schools.

The components of the SRTES course are identify descriptions of SRTES course as definitions of school readiness and related factors, dimensions of school readiness (Physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language and self-care skills), preparing school readiness activities, reading and writing exercises, characteristics of elementary school curriculum and comparison between preschool and elementary school, assessment techniques of school readiness (Higher Education Council, 2011).

Further information on the SRTES courses presented in each of the four universities is given below.

3.6.1. University A

According to university A, SRTES course require to contain factors related school readiness, expected necessities for first grade elementary school students, reading and writing skills of 5-6 years old children, parents role in readiness to elementary school and elementary school features. In the course of university A, apart from the books mentioned in the lesson the instructor did not offer any other book or materials. Neither the students nor the researcher were given the course syllabus or any detailed information about the course content. Therefore, in order to have an overview of the whole course the researcher attended all of the class sessions at this university and the information gained is summarized in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 University A SRTES course

| Week | Content | Assignments |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Weeks 1-2 | Teaching reading and writing | Observation of children |
| Week 3 | Emergent literacy practices | Observation of children |
| Week 4 | Phonologic and print awareness | Assessment of ECE environment |
| Week 5 | Introduction to materials for literacy activities | NA |
| Week 6 | Assessment tools and techniques | NA |

The first and second weeks of the course lesson is about preparing the children for the acquisition of literacy skills and information was given. The reading process for children should start at the age of four about early childhood education program standards and emergent literacy skills for elementary school were discussed. At the end of the lessons, the assignments were given requiring the observation of a child while investigating book and evaluating children in their process of reading in preschool. In the third week, the pre-service early childhood teachers worked with children who were practicing the emergent literacy for the elementary school. The assignment was to investigate the children's book awareness (observe children according to specific criteria such as children's identification of the introduction and the conclusion of a book and their interest in the book). In the following weeks, phonological and print awareness, maturation of preschool children, and children's educational environment for supporting children literacy was presented. The students were expected to assess a preschool in terms of its literacy environment for children. Then, the materials for the literacy activities were introduced. Afterwards, the different situations in preschool in different countries were presented together with the activities related to school readiness and the physical environments. In the final week assessment tools and techniques were examined. The pre-service early childhood teachers were evaluated by a midterm and a final exam, and the

submission of a portfolio which contained the course assignments. The SRTES course focused on the literacy and language development of children regarding school readiness. However, the instructor and pre-service early childhood teachers also discussed children's emotional and social problems about school readiness for preschool. For instance, the pre-service teachers shared their experiences about their practice in preschools in the class discussions. Thus, in the course the pre-service early childhood teachers had many learning opportunities to see children's skills of readiness to read and write for elementary schools.

3.6.2. University B

By university B, identify descriptions of SRTES course as definitions of school readiness and related factors, dimensions of school readiness (Physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language and self-care skills), preparing school readiness activities, reading and writing exercises, characteristics of elementary school curriculum and comparison between preschool and elementary school, assessment techniques of school readiness.

The students on this course were expected to read 'School Readiness & the Transition to Kindergarten in the era of Accountability' (Pianta, Cox, & Snow, 2007). The book consisted of 'Early education and opportunities in the United States, Domains of developmental functioning in the Pre-3 years and Families and Communities sections' (p. v). Each section contained related articles. This course was run over 13 weeks and the main topics were given as; Understanding school readiness and its importance, Framing school readiness, Core indicators of school readiness, Transition from early childhood education to elementary school challenges of transition, Identifying the major problems of transition period and strategies that will prevent or solve these problems, Working with families, Are schools ready for children?, Building community connections for a healthy transition, Elementary school curriculum and comparison of its characteristics with early childhood

education curriculum, Emergent literacy and strategies for supporting early literacy development’ and ‘assessing readiness.

The participants were assessed by weekly assignments in which they had to review an article, an activity presentation and a portfolio, and reflection papers for each week. In article; students were expected to find an article related to the topic of the week and wrote one page of summary. The activity presentation and portfolio required keeping a portfolio which consisted of activities regarding skills in elementary school program and goals in preschool program. Students were also expected to demonstrate their activities in the course. Lastly, for reflection paper, students evaluated the activities developed by their classmates and wrote a reflection paper about them. In addition to these, the pre-service teachers were expected to participate in the lessons regularly. All the assignments and the lessons aimed to enhance the pre-service early childhood teachers’ awareness about the importance of the school readiness, and prepare them to have ability of solving and preventing the problems related to transition to formal schooling (see Table 3.6)

Table 3.6 University B SRTES course

| Week | Content | Assignments |
|---------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Week 1 | Understanding S.R and its importance | article critique & presentation |
| Week 2 | Framing S.R | article critique & presentation |
| Week 3 | Core indicators of S.R | article critique & presentation |
| Week 4 | Transition from ECE to ELE | article critique & presentation |
| Week 5 | Challenges of transition | article critique & presentation |
| Week 6 | Identifying problems | article critique & presentation |
| Week 7 | Working with families | article critique & presentation |
| Week 8 | Readiness for school | article critique & presentation |
| Week 9 | Community role in transition | article critique & presentation |
| Week 10 | Comparison between program | article critique & presentation |
| Week 11 | Emergent literacy | article critique & presentation |
| Week 12 | Assessing readiness | article critique & presentation |

3.6.3. University C

By university C SRTES course' components are defined as; Definition of school readiness and contributing factors, different domains of school readiness; being physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively ready to school, construction of classroom activities supporting healthy transition to elementary school, examination of Elementary school curriculum and its comparison with early childhood education curriculum, supporting young children's emergent literacy skills, and assessment of school readiness

The researcher was unable to attend all the lessons on this course because the course at this university ran at the same time with the course University B. A course syllabus was obtained and the researcher was able to discuss the course content and the presentation with the students. Table 3.7 presents the content and assignments of the course. No main textbook was offered, however, the instructor suggested additional resources such as "Transitions to School Perceptions, Expectations, and Experiences" (Docket & Perry, 2007). The grading, requirement and assignments of the lessons were achieved through mid-term tests, presentations, classroom activities and a final assignment. In student presentations, they were expected to prepare emergent literacy and school readiness activities. Students were evaluated by their instructor who assessed students' performance in their activities.

Table 3.7 University C SRTES course

| Week | Content | Assignments |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Week 1 | Definition of SR | Observation of children |
| Week 2 | Factors of SR | Observation of children |
| Week 3 | Core indicators of SR. | Observation of ECE environment |
| Week 4 | Features of ECE | Presentation of S.R activities |
| Week 5-6 | Comparison of ECE and Elementary School systems | NA |
| Week 7-8 | Emergent Literacy activities | NA |
| Week 9 | Parents' role in SR and Assessment of SR | NA |

Note: SR=School readiness, NA: Not applicable, ECE: Early childhood education

3.6.4. University D

University D described SRTES course similar to B university descriptions which are identify descriptions of SRTES course as definitions of school readiness and related factors, dimensions of school readiness (Physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language and self-care skills), preparing school readiness activities, reading and writing exercises, characteristics of elementary school curriculum and comparison between preschool and elementary school, assessment techniques of school readiness. In this course, a text book (İlköğretime Hazırlık ve İlköğretim Programları' edited by Alisinanoğlu, 2010) was used containing the following eight parts; developmental characteristics of preschool children, the methods used for the identification of children, starting school and adaptation process, transition to elementary school and school readiness, early childhood education program, analysis of the 2004 elementary school curriculum, comparison between elementary school and preschool and the last part was the preparation children for emergent literacy in preschool education. The aim of the book was to meet the needs of the participants attending SRTES course in early childhood teacher programs in Turkey. The main contents and assignments of the course at university D are given in Table 3.8. The following additional sources recommended were 'Türkiye de Okul Öncesi Eğitim ve İlköğretim Sistemleri' (Özdemir, Bacanlı, & Sözer, 2007) and 'Okul Öncesi Eğitim Program ve Öğretmen Klavuzu' (Çelik& Daşcan, 2009). The requirements of the course were regular participation, assignment preparation, presentation of research and applications. Besides these assignments, the pre-service teachers were expected to work with a group of students to make observation and prepare observation notes to elementary school for one week, write reviews of two articles, design materials, create an assessment scale and make presentation to the other members of the class. In the observation assignment, they went to an elementary school, observed lessons and interviewed an elementary school teacher. After their observations, they were expected to share their experiences with their class mates in a class activity. Also, they were required to read and evaluate an article from Turkey and another country

and present a summary to the class. In the preparation of materials and assessment assignments, they were expected to develop and present activity materials related to school readiness skills and assessment tools. The participants were assessed by one midterm, one final exam and project assignment. In the course; problem solving, brain storming, case study, cooperative learning and field trip methods were used by the instructor.

Table 3.8 University D SRTES course

| Week | Content | Assignments |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Week 1 | Developmental characteristics of the preschool children | Observation of ELE school |
| Week 2 | Identification techniques of children | N.A |
| Week 3 | Adaptation of school | N.A |
| Week 4 | Importance of SR | N.A |
| Week 5 | Dimensions of SR | N.A |
| Week 6-7 | Comparison of ECE and ELE | N.A |
| Week 8 | curricula | Design materials |
| Week 9 | Emergent Literacy activities | Design SR assessment tools |
| Week 10 | Assessment of SR | Article review |

Note:N.A.=Not applicable

3.7. Data Analysis

In order to investigate differences on the pre-service early childhood teachers' views of children's school readiness after enrolling in SRTES course, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were applied. The quantitative data were entered into Predictive Analytics Software, a statistical analysis program (PASW Statistics 18). Initially, descriptive statistics were utilized; to obtain, frequencies and median for the categorical variables. For the continuous variables, the mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, skewness, and kurtosis were calculated. For the inferential statistics part, a repeated sample t-test was conducted to investigate any change in the pre-service early childhood teachers' views of children school readiness after taking a SRTES course. Moreover, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to examine any differences among participants attending the different

university courses. The practical significance of the study was calculated by using Eta-squared (η^2), as well.

For the qualitative analysis of the study, first, the audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were prepared for data analysis. Then, transcripts were read numerous times and a general understanding was gained. While reading transcripts, the researcher took notes about interpretations. After reviewing the data, the researcher went back over the data several times in order to process and orders it. In the coding process, a combination of the predetermined and emerging codes is used (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Correspondingly, in this method codes and categories were mostly derived from the conceptual framework. Besides, most of the codes were determined by research questions and key variables. Next, the qualitative code book was designed. In the code determining process, the researcher returned to the data and reviewed the transcripts for any possibility of finding new codes (Creswell, 2007). Later, the categories, codes and sub-codes were defined briefly; in order to enable other readers would be able to understand similar meaning used for codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested different researchers to read the data for reliability. Firstly, the researcher and a second coder who is a doctoral student in the department of early childhood education read the data and code the data by themselves. Then they meet and discuss on codes and themes. After the researchers reached an agreement on the themes, codes and sub-codes, a reliability analysis was performed using the following formula by Miles and Huberman (1994);

$$\text{Reliability} = \text{number of agreements} / (\text{total number of agreements} + \text{disagreements})$$

This method is used for the clarity of the codes as well as inter-rater (coder) reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After the completion of the coding process, the researcher discussed codes with the second coder and made decisions about the findings. As a result, the inter coder reliability was calculated and as .80 which is a desired level as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994).

3.8. Internal and External Validity

3.8.1 Internal Validity of the Study

Internal validity means that possible differences in the dependent variable are related to the independent variables apart from some other unexpected variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). In this section possible internal validity threats are discussed.

The current study was susceptible to different types of internal validity threats as follows; testing, subject characteristics, instrumentation, implementation, mortality, and location (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Firstly, testing was a possible threat for this study because participants were given the questionnaire and interviewed twice. The pre-tests and pre-interview might provide the participants with information about the readiness issues. However, since the study extended over four months and there was a substantial gap between pre and post administrations, the possibility of the testing threat was minimized.

The data collector characteristic threat was controlled by using the same data collector throughout the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The location threat was also controlled by the researcher. All the participants completed the instrument in their own classes which were similar in terms of the physical characteristics and available resources. Therefore, location is not seen to be a major threat for this study.

The subject characteristics threat could be seen in this study, because as mentioned before the design of the study was pre- post test to investigate the changes of pre-service teacher's views in four universities related to their SRTES course. The pre-service early childhood teachers spent their last semester at the university. Therefore, the sample was chosen purposively and the researcher tried to standardize the conditions before the implementation of the instruments. They took many courses related to early childhood education and in the same semester, they had teaching practice. The characteristics of the course run by the four universities and the individual characteristics of the participants were different. The participants were graduates of from different types of high school however; this was not seen to

influence their views because they had not previously attended any course on school readiness. In addition, in teaching practice, they did not prepare a plan or implement lessons related to school readiness. Moreover, the participants were asked about prior knowledge of school readiness and how they had acquired it in order to see existing differences before they enrolled in the course

The most crucial internal validity threat was the implementation because the courses were given by different instructors, this was taken into consideration throughout the study and various measures were taken to limit this effect of this variable. The researcher observed the lessons throughout the semester and described in detail, how lessons were conducted. Finally, the mortality threat could be considered as a threat, however since the administration of questionnaires were not pre-announced, absenteeism was not different from other days. The researcher could not obtain all the contact information of the participants in the quantitative analysis, so the researcher was not able to implement post-test all of the pre-service teachers who enrolled SRTES course among four universities. Therefore, the data from approximately 81 participants was lost, however, the researcher tried to do her best to reduce the loss of participants. Fortunately the 26 participants involved in the interviews were present for both pre and post sessions.

3.8.2 External Validity of the Study

External validity is the generalizability of the findings in the studies by a transition from a sample to a population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The selected sample size was sufficient for this study; therefore the external validity of the test was strong. The researcher tried to control external validity by selecting a representative sample according to the study and the population. Different universities of Ankara were included in the sample. For the ecological generalizability of the study, Higher Education Council defined SRTES course descriptions and features so in the SRTES courses similar assignments were given

and similar assessment techniques were applied by other universities course instructors therefore, this study can be seen to have ecological generalizability.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter is organized in two sections containing the quantitative findings and qualitative results. In the first section, the quantitative results are presented as descriptive and inferential statistics. The second section deals with the qualitative findings in terms of data transcriptions.

4.1. Quantitative Results of the Study

Pre and post questionnaires were analyzed by utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistics. The Paired Sample t-test was conducted to investigate the change in the pre service early childhood teachers' views about the importance of various school readiness skills before and after the school readiness and transition to elementary school (SRTES) course. Furthermore, in order to examine differences between their universities of pre-service teachers' views toward children's school readiness, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were examined to see the pre-service teachers' views of school readiness through the pre-test and the post-test results of subscales (see Table 4.1). In the current study there were 169 pre-service early childhood teachers. The View of Children's School Readiness scale was administered to all the pre-service teachers. The VSRS was a 3-Likert Type scale (1= not important, 2 = important, 3 = very important). The pre-service early childhood teachers had a mean score of 2.43 ($SD = .29$) on the pre-test, and their mean score in the post-test was 2.51 ($SD = .32$). The minimum score in the pre-test was 1.70 and the post-test was 1.80. However, the increase in the maximum score from pre-test to post-test only increased from 2.98 to 3.00. Also Table 4.1 shows the skewness and kurtosis values for the whole group.

Those values which are around (-1; +1) indicate that the distributions of the pre-test and post-test scores are normally distributed.

Table 4.1 Pre-test, Post-test Scores for the Whole Group

| Descriptive Statistics | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|-----|----------|----------|-------|------|
| | N | Minimum | Maximum | M | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis | | |
| pretest | 169 | 1.70 | 2.98 | 2.43 | .29 | -.319 | .187 | -.615 | .371 |
| posttest | 169 | 1.80 | 3.00 | 2.51 | .32 | -.385 | .187 | -.944 | .371 |
| Valid | 169 | | | | | | | | |

Table 4.2 shows the four sub-scales in the VSRS and indicates mean scores, standard deviation of sample for each sub-scale of the VSRS, the difference between pre-test scores and post-test scores. The mean score for pre-test Academic Skills subscale ($M = 2.47$); Concentration, and Sustain the Concentration subscale ($M = 2.41$); Social Interaction Skills subscale ($M = 2.57$); were above the scales' midpoints which means that participants of the study evaluated readiness skills as important. However, the Reading and Writing Skills subscale ($M = 1.58$) factors are rated less important than the other. As it can be seen from the mean values, the participants generally focused on more academic skills, concentration and sustain concentration skills, social interaction skills both pre-test and post-test compared to the reading and writing skills.

Table 4.2 Pre-test, Post-test Scores in the Subscales for the Whole Group

| Descriptive Statistics | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| | Pretest (A.S) | Pretest (C.S.C) | Pretest (S.I.S) | Pretest (R.W.) | Posttest (A.S) | Posttest (C.S.C) | Posttest (S.I.S) | Posttest (R.W.) |
| N | 169 | 169 | 169 | 169 | 169 | 169 | 169 | 169 |
| Minimum | 1.67 | 1.00 | 1.68 | 1.00 | 1.61 | 1.00 | 1.95 | 1.00 |
| Maximum | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| Mean | 2.47 | 2.41 | 2.57 | 1.58 | 2.51 | 2.51 | 2.65 | 1.91 |
| Std.Deviation | .352 | .557 | .317 | .516 | .381 | .495 | .352 | .603 |
| Skewness | -.396 | -.504 | -.643 | 1.12 | -.354 | -.519 | -.700 | .447 |
| Kurtosis | -.945 | -.623 | -.512 | .556 | -1.14 | -.657 | -.967 | -1.00 |

Note: A.S= academic skills; C.S.C= concentration and sustain the concentration skills; S.I.S=social interaction skills R.W= reading and writing skills.

4.2 Assumptions of Paired-sample t test Analysis

Before conducting the analysis, assumptions of paired sample t-test were checked. According to Tabbacnick and Fidell (2007) the paired sample t-test has four assumptions which are as follows;

- 1) Level of measurement; in the current study, all dependent variables were measured for the ratio level by using continuous scale. Therefore this assumption was met.
- 2) Random sampling; this was not appropriate for this research. So this assumption was violated.
- 3) Independence of observation; the process of obtaining data did not allow the participants to discuss their answers between themselves or with the researcher. For this assumption there has no violation.
- 4) Normality; to meet this assumption, the skewness and kurtosis values is presented in the descriptive analysis section and the following section so the

normality distribution of sample can be checked. In this study, these assumptions were met.

4.3. Inferential Statistics

The results of the paired sample t-tests were included with the corresponding research question below;

Is there a statistically significant difference in senior pre-service early childhood teachers' views related to young children's school readiness before and after taken the "school readiness and transition to elementary school" course?

In order to answer the first research question a paired samples t-test analysis was applied and the results are presented in Table 4.3. The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference in School Readiness Scale total scores between the pre-test and the post-test, $t(168) = -3.04, p < .003$.

Table 4.3 Paired Sample t-test

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | |
|--------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|----------------|
| | | 95% CI | | | | | |
| | | M(SD) | LL | UL | t | df | Sig.(2-tailed) |
| Pair 1 | Total pre-test score- Total post test score | -.077 (331) | -.128 | -.027 | -3.04 | 169 | .003* |

Note: CI = confidence interval; LL=lower limit, UL = upper limit. * $p < .05$

In addition, paired samples t-tests were conducted to evaluate the change of the SRTES course on pre-service early childhood teachers' views for children's school readiness skills related to each subscale of the VSRS; Academic skills Subscale, Concentration and Sustain Concentration Subscale, Social Interaction skills Subscale, and Reading and Writing Subscale (See Table 4.4). The results showed that there were statistically significant differences between pre-test & post-

test scores of the concentration and sustain the concentration skills subscale (CSC), $t(168) = -2.05$, $p < .042$, the social interaction skills (SIS) subscale from the pre-test to post-test $t(168) = -2.87$, $p < .05$, reading and writing skills subscale (RW) $t(168) = -6.09$, $p < .000$. However, there was no significant difference in pre & post test scores of the academic skills (AS) subscale $t(168) = -1.24$, $p < .216$.

While determining which scores were higher, the mean pre-test score was 2.43 and the mean score of post-test was 2.51. So, as concluded that there was an increase in views of children's school readiness skills scores from pre-test (prior to implementation the SRTES course) to post test (after implementation the school readiness course).

Table 4.4 Paired Sample t-test for VSRS Subscales

| | Pre-test/Post- test | Mean Difference | Std. Deviation | t | df | Sig.(2-tailed) |
|--------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------|-----|----------------|
| Pair 1 | A.S Score | -.039 | .413 | -1.24 | 168 | .216 |
| Pair 2 | C.S.C Score | -.098 | .620 | -2.05 | 168 | .042* |
| Pair 3 | S.I.S Score | -.084 | .382 | -2.87 | 168 | .005* |
| Pair 4 | R.W Score | -.334 | .712 | -6.09 | 168 | .000* |

* $p < .05$.

The calculated effect sizes are presented in Table 4.5. According to Pallant (2007), there are many ways to assess effect sizes, but most common are Cohen's d, Cohen's f and eta squared. While interpreting values of effect sizes Cohen's (1977) guidelines are regarded as .01 small, .06 moderate and .14 large effect sizes. The effect size of the total scores between the pre and the post test is small ($\eta^2 = .052$), and the effect size of the academic skills, social interaction and concentration and sustain the concentration skills are small ($\eta^2 = .009$, $\eta^2 = .047$, $\eta^2 = .024$). For reading and writing skills subscales, magnitudes of the difference were large. The small effect size demonstrated that mean differences between pre and post test in

SIS, CSC subscales were statistically significant but there is not a practical significance between the pretest and posttest scores of the preservice teachers apart from RW subscale.

Table 4.5 Effect Sizes of Paired Sample t test

| | Eta Squared |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Total Pre- Post Score | 0.052* |
| Academic skills | 0.009* |
| Subscale of SIS | 0.047* |
| Subscale of CSC | 0.024* |
| Subscale of RW | 0.181** |

Note. $*\eta^2 < 0.01$ "small" effect, $**\eta^2 < 0.14$ a "large" effect.

4.4. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Second research question is “Is there a significant difference among four different universities in the views of children’s school readiness of pre-service early childhood teachers?” For this question, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The VSRS was administered to participants on the SRTES course in each of the four different universities and analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare results of the groups (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics on VSRS between Groups

| Descriptive Post-test | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----|------|----------------|---------|---------|
| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum |
| A | 33 | 2.47 | .352 | 1.89 | 3.00 |
| B | 15 | 2.66 | .297 | 2.00 | 3.00 |
| C | 24 | 2.46 | .343 | 1.83 | 2.98 |
| D | 97 | 2.52 | .309 | 1.80 | 3.00 |
| Total | 169 | 2.51 | .322 | 1.80 | 3.00 |

The homogeneity of variance was checked by the Levene's test. To check the normality assumption, the variance in scores of the VSRS is presented in Table 4. 7. The significance value ($p=.398$) is greater than .05, thus this assumption was not violated.

Table 4.7 Levene's Test for the Homogeneity of Variance

| Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|------------------|-----|-----|------|
| .992 | 3 | 165 | .398 |

Despite achieving the normality assumption, there was no significant difference among the groups at the $p < .05$. The VSRS scores for the four universities [$F(3, 165) = 1.44$, $p=.233$] are given in Table 4.8

Table 4.8 Difference in Mean Scores for The Four Groups

| Posttest | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|-------|
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | .446 | 3 | .149 | 1.44 | .233* |
| Within Groups | 17.01 | 165 | .103 | | |
| Total | 17.46 | 168 | | | |

* $p > .05$.

4.5. Qualitative Findings of the Study

This study aimed to examine changes in teachers' views after the recent development of 'School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School (SRTES)' course in early childhood teacher education programs in Turkey. The qualitative data were collected through one to one interviews conducted with 26 final year pre-service teachers of early childhood education department. The 10 semi-structured questions in the interview protocol were analyzed qualitatively. The following sections of this chapter will report the analyses of the data collected. The research questions and sub-questions are given below.

2. How does "the school readiness and transition to elementary school" course change senior pre-service early childhood teachers' views towards children's school readiness?
 2. a. How are senior pre-service early childhood teachers' views of the definition of school readiness, importance, skills, factors, assessment, activities, and transition to elementary school related to young children's school readiness changed after having taken the "school readiness and transition to elementary school" course?
 2. b. How do pre-service early childhood teachers gain knowledge about children's school readiness prior to "School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School" course?

The following themes emerged from each research question and conceptual framework through the qualitative analyses in the study; Definition and importance of school readiness, School readiness skills, Background knowledge of school readiness, School readiness activities. School readiness assessment, Factors influencing school readiness, Parental and community role in school readiness, Physical environment, Transition to elementary school.

4.5.1. Definition and Importance of School Readiness

The pre-service early childhood teachers' views toward definition and importance of children' school readiness is investigated in the study.

Before the course; Pre Interview

In the interview process, the first question aimed to elicit the participants understanding of children' school readiness before the SRTES course. The most of the participants responded that school readiness comprises the necessary skills for elementary school which are cognitive, socio- emotional, self-care and fine motor skills, social competency, awareness of school and adaptation to school (n=14). In addition, the child's adaptation to the formal school environment, teacher and peers were seen as important indicators for school readiness. Some of the pre-service teacher's responses are presented below:

“School readiness is children's having the prerequisites (necessary skills) to adapt to an elementary school” (A3, pre.)

“It is helping preschool children especially beginning from the age of three to develop fully in every domain mentally and cognitively and to help to develop children's reading and writing and be ready for the school” (B3, pre).

“School readiness is associated with physical maturity which means the maturity of the children's fine motor muscles and the ability to hold a pencil appropriately. Moreover, they should leave the parents to go to school. They are princess or princes at home and they do not have any peers to interact with. Children should be ready to be separated from their parents, share, protect their rights and communicate with others in terms of school readiness (C1, pre).

“Readiness for school means to reach the sufficient level of maturity. I think this can be defined as the adequate cognitive, linguistic and mental development (D2, pre.)

Several participants attending the SRTES course in university B expressed their idea of school readiness as being connected with language development and the experience of preschool education. One of the responses stated this clearly:

“Children’s readiness in terms of language development is also important. I think early childhood education is necessary for children to adapt to elementary school, teachers, social environment and classes, and express themselves verbally” (B₃, pre).

In summary, all the participants from universities A, B, C, D defined school readiness as social adaptation to school (n=25) and using pencil (n=26) which was related to physical maturity. Therefore, it was seen that before the course, the majority of the participants (n= 24) saw school readiness as the ability to use fine motor skills and the transition to school with sufficient emotional maturity to adapt to the new environment.

The participants were also requested to state their views related to the importance of children’s school readiness. All of them answered this question by stating the significant role of children’s school readiness in their future lives. Most of the response centred around two main themes; facilitating the easy adaptation to elementary school (n=16) and developing the foundation for academic success in the elementary school life (n=17). Besides, some of the pre-service teachers emphasized the importance of different aspects of school readiness. They stated that helping children become ready for school can help equate the development levels of the children. Also, the pre-service teachers mentioned that the importance of the school readiness could only be seen over time by examining children’s relationships with peers, their social interaction with teachers and other children. Other comments were as follows:

“Children who are ready for school can establish social relationships with their friends more easily; otherwise they are left behind. Consequently, they will definitely face with problems and this will affect other periods of their lives” (A₄, pre).

“In elementary school, they will start to read and write in order to learn literacy easily with their peers at the same time, so school readiness is necessary. Otherwise, the child will fail (B₂, pre)

“The child will adapt to the school more easily and the relationship with his/her peers will be maintained and he will be eager to learn new things at school” (C3, pre)

“If a child does not achieve maturity in mental, cognitive, linguistic development for example, in his ability to write, he may not develop this writing skill at the same time as his peers and he may feel that he is not successful and see himself as incompetent.” (D2, pre)

After the course; Post Interview

The pre-service teachers’ definition of school readiness after taking the SRTES course elaborated participants’ views in terms of children’s readiness characteristics (age, cognitive, physical, emotional, fine and gross motor skills, and academic skills, adaptation to elementary classrooms, emergent literacy skills, self-care skills and following instructions). Some of the pre-service teachers in this study were more concerned with the academic aspects of school readiness such as literacy and math skills. The views of some of the pre-service teachers in relation to school readiness were:

“School readiness emerges when a child’s all developmental domains comes to an elementary school level. These are the cognitive, social, emotional domains. The child should be ready fully” (A₄, post).

“To be ready for school means that children have some of the skills and abilities which are related with cognitive, socio emotional, physical areas without feeling difficulty (A₅, post)

“It is the knowledge that a child needs to have in order not to have trouble when starting first grade and through their whole academic, school life” (B₂, post).

“When children are seven years old and start elementary school, they should be able to focus on something for a specific time and they should be in a good physical health. These elements demonstrate children’s school readiness and the school readiness is a significant factor in children’s development” (D₁, post)

Furthermore, the participants commented on the cooperation between parent, school, community and school readiness:

“School readiness does not only consist of children’s physical, social-emotional, cognitive or attention skills. The preparedness of parents, community, teacher and school are included in the definition of the school readiness” (C1, post)

During the post interview process, the pre-service teachers were asked about the importance of school readiness. The post interview results revealed similar views to the pre service teacher’s comments prior to the SRTES course. The pre-service teachers believed that school readiness promoted the adaptation to learning, served as a facilitator in the academic success in school, and supported children in easily making friends with their classmates. Finally, all the participants from the four different universities continued to state that they gave “importance” to children’s school readiness, and it was the consensus of all the pre-service teachers during the pre and post interviews that school readiness had an important role in children’s adaptation processes. To illustrate:

“Being ready for school has an effect on the children’s success on school lessons” (A2, post).

“First, if a child is not ready for school, s/he will face with problems in school adaptation. Then he will fall behind because of not being able to understand the teachers’ instructions. He may have communication problems with his peers. So these are problems for the child because he will fail and cannot express himself. Moreover, it is a problem for the teacher because s/he will need to take care of that child and the classes are overcrowded. For me, this creates a problem for both the child and teacher” (B1, post).

“School readiness is starting and continuing with the acquisition of knowledge that will bring both academic and practical success in elementary school life. The child who is ready for school can easily handle that process, and this contributes greatly to the academic success. In other words, school readiness can be regarded as the foundation of the children’s learning and knowledge, after they gained knowledge; they can put into the practice” (C10, post).

“Based on the light of the research, children who had early childhood education are successful in math skills and examining visual materials in elementary school. Therefore; school readiness assists the elementary school teacher because the child entering first grade already knows numbers, can use a pencil and is used to making friends” (D3, post).

In addition one of these pre-service teachers highlighted the importance of the school readiness in terms of the children reaching a common level. One of the participants explains her reasoning in the following statement:

“Children would fall behind their peers being literate” (B4, post)

4.5.2 School Readiness Skills

The pre-service teachers were asked about the various skills required in order for children to be ready for school in order to see the difference between their views about children’s school readiness and transition to elementary before and after the SRTES course in order

Before the course; Pre Interview

One of the aims of the study was to discover the pre-service teachers’ expectations of the preschool children in terms of their school readiness skills. When the participants’ responses concerning these skills were analyzed, it was seen that they were parallel to the skills mentioned in the early childhood program in general. The participants tended to define children’s school readiness skills in relation to the information presented in the national early childhood education program which places equal emphasis on academic skills, developmental skills (motor skills), literacy and language skills, self- care skills and social skills. Extracts from the participant’s comments are as follows:

“I think a child should have a very good level of motor skills, for example able to hold a pencil, these motor skills are already seen in the aims of early childhood education programs” (A4, pre)

“The children should possess self-help skills during the transition to elementary school. Before starting elementary school, children’s

comprehension of objects, concepts such as little-much, colours and numbers demonstrate children's readiness for school"(B3,pre)

"I think most important is children's adaptation to a social environment. In addition, if children have academic skills, this will be beneficial for them" (C7, pre).

"First, holding the pencil is important. Moreover; to be ready for school, a child should be able to take responsibility, be able to share with their peers, cooperate, have social skills, perceive cognitively and focus their attention for a specific time" (D5, pre)

After the course; Post Interview

After the SRTES course, post interviews were carried to discover if there were any differences between the pre-service teachers' views of various school readiness skills prior to and after the course. Each participant on the SRTES course at the universities was asked to create a list of skills to identify when a child is ready for school. They mostly stated that school readiness skills were divided into four categories; socio-emotional skills, fine motor skills, literacy and cognitive skills (n=25). In particular, the participant pre-service teachers of A and B Universities, changed views in relation to literacy but not cognitive and fine motor. In the development of fine motor skills they emphasized writing ability which was writing with a pencil, drawing lines and cutting papers with scissors. Moreover, after the course the participants gave more examples about the social skills, however, prior to course those explained social skills as peer relationship, social competence. After the course, they mentioned the relations among developmental skills such as self-control (paying attention, able to sit quietly, developing independence, not totally dependent on parents, with social skills such as having self-esteem, following rules, communicating their feelings, takings turns and getting along with others). When the skills listed by the pre-service teachers were analyzed, it was seen that they were parallel with the skills of the early childhood program in general. Their expressions on skills are not changed, however they adopted new terms and gave more details.

They stressed the socio-emotional development and academic knowledge of children, improving skills, raising awareness of school and easing their adaptation process. Below are extracts from the participants:

“They should be interested in the written materials that exist in the environment; in fact the children should have the awareness. S/he should write his/her own name, classification of the letters, use paper, pencil, and pencil sharpener. S/he should see these materials in the environment. The interest in books should be enhanced” (A3, post)

“For me, school readiness goes beyond the academic success as the sole expectation of children because children will eventually progress to the academic tasks. However, the important thing is the child’s capability to understand basic instructions. Some specific cognitive skills are also important such as the ability of differentiating left and right and comprehending what has been said. A child can learn letters and counting academically in one way or another, for me the most important question is whether the child can communicate, express himself and understand what the teacher says” (B1, post)

“In my opinion, the most important thing is a child knowing himself and presenting himself. By recognizing himself, the child will be aware whether he is ready or not. The child’s motivation and the willingness for enhancing his consciousness are important requirements (C3, post)

“For me, the most important thing is self-help skills because a child who has not been given the toilet education should not go to elementary school. A child should already know this when he comes to formal schooling. In addition, hand eye co-ordination and the skill of holding pencil are important” (D6, post)

4.5.3 School Readiness Activities

Before the course; Pre-Interview

This theme was based on the type of activities that should be developed by the pre-service teacher in order to facilitate the process of the children’s transition to elementary school. The pre-service teachers’ responses demonstrated that their way of preparing children for elementary school was carrying out regular planned daily activities from the preschool education national curriculum. More specifically, they

stated that academically they provided students with hands on learning centres, multi- sensory activities, promoted print and story awareness, and introduced math concepts. Also, they gave importance to children's free expression activities in preschool education. They had emphasized motor skills, such as using pencil, in the interviews prior to the SRTES course and maintained this opinion following the courses. The majority of the pre-service teachers regarded school readiness activities as literacy activities which are dependent on cognitive and small motor dimensions. For example:

"We know that we do not teach reading and writing. Teachers implement activities in knowing exactly what is expected of children a teacher should with knowing this. This is the first condition but I think more activities should be done about it." (A4, pre)

"In the transition from the early childhood period, I would like to do drama activities. In addition to drama, I think that science and nature activities are important. They contribute to the physical and cognitive domains and to all domains. I would focus on these two types of activities and maybe I would initiate foreign language education in the early childhood period." (B5, pre)
"We don't do free time activities with children. I think we should organize activities that help children prepare for reading such as a book, line drawings as writing exercises" (C2, pre)

"For this, we have a lot of early childhood program activities; we prepare our training plan according to it. Art activities can be done as sustaining readiness for gave tasks." (D6, pre)

After the course; Post Interview

One of the main aims of the study was to discover to what extent the pre-service teachers could transfer what they learned from the SRTES course to their future classroom activities To achieve this aim, the pre-service teachers' responses in the pre-interview and the post interview were compared. The course had given the participants a better and deeper understanding of school readiness activities they reported practices such as using and drawing attention to print, phonological sensitivity, promoting book awareness, engaging in dialogic reading, as well as letter

identification. Furthermore, the participants in the study gave specific activities which were related to school transition process, for instance, a field trip to an elementary school or a classroom and receiving visits from the elementary school teachers or students. Furthermore, they indicated that maintaining discipline speeded up the adaptation to elementary school. At the end of the SRTES course, they expressed their awareness of how those transition activities helped the students' cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development for the elementary school. This has been illustrated by the following exchange:

“There may be writings that are open to communicate, posters, bulletin boards and writings that are open to communicate. I want to do reading activities that help children to gain a library reading habit. There may be once a day line drawing exercises. I want to organize field trips to the first grades; I want my children to see the first grade environment. I can guide children to be able to write their own names by themselves by the end of the term.”(A3, post)

“In the transition to elementary school, the knowledge of classroom rules and classroom environment will affect school readiness” (B2, post)
“I would organize a picnic for preschool student's first and second grade students” (C1, post)

“The child should become accustomed to the recess times, for this I may take children to the garden after hearing the school bell.” (D3, post)

4.5.4. School Readiness Assessment

Before the course; Pre-Interview

Considering all the components of school readiness, during the pre-interview, the pre-service teachers were asked what types of assessment methods were necessary to evaluate children's school readiness. The responses to this question revealed a consensus between the four groups in that they strongly agreed that observations were more useful than the other assessment procedures since they involved classroom activities (n=26). Thus, they suggested observing children while they were accomplishing tasks in classroom activities and observing their behaviour

in their peer relations. Moreover, all the pre-service teachers attending the SRTES courses in the four universities did not mention having separate school readiness assessment tools such as questionnaires, checklists or tests. Each pre-service teacher indicated that it would be better if they had standardized tests. On the other hand, most of the pre-service teachers mentioned the benefits of portfolio assessments which include separate activity-products for each child. Apart from the assessment techniques for assessing children's school readiness; some pre-service teachers also questioned the applicability of the school readiness assessment tests because they thought they were not sufficiently realistic.

“In fact, children are not really ready due to the individual differences, I do not know how much I should teach or where to stop” (A4, pre)

“Certainly a six-year-old child should be assessed from time to time. In particular, the school readiness of the children who are five and six years old should be evaluated by mutual talks and portfolios. If a child has great deficiency, he should remain in preschool for an extra year.” (B3, pre)

“In my opinion, observation is very important in an evaluation process. You cannot collect data without observation. Knowing a child is important, I should pay attention to the individual differences. Moreover, note taking is also important.” (C1, pre)

“If a child is ready for school, he is able to hold a pencil and he can focus his attention. I pay attention to child's daily life and try to understand whether the child has hyperactivity or other illnesses.” (D1, pre)

After the course; Post-Interview

In relation to school readiness assessment, three issues emerged after the participants had attended the SRTES course; the observation of the children's skills, performance activities and process assessments such as portfolios or other assessment methods i.e. video records, interview and standardized tests. Observation was considered to be an important factor in classroom activities. The pre-service teachers said that children could be evaluated by specific activities especially literacy and mathematic activities. Assessments were often described as informal, such as

teacher observations or samples of children's work, but some of the pre-service teachers preferred more formal assessments. The content of the assessments should be closely tied to the preschool activities. However, they did not clarify which tests should be undertaken during the assessment procedure. In the post interview, pre-service teachers gave more importance to determining children's readiness skills. Generally, they stated that they preferred to screen children's development and determining the specific needs and enabling to give special care for them.

The participant pre-service teachers were asked about the appropriate level the children should reach at the end of preschool. Some pre-service teachers stated that almost all the children should reach a common standard and most of the readiness skills should be mastered. The pre-service teachers also commented on the variability of the results of children's assessment. They stated that discrepancy among children's skills show individual difference, not a failure. They also mentioned that not all the children would be at the same level therefore, a standardized assessment tool did not seem to be applicable to all children. The following are some sample statements from the participants.

"I observe whether the child can write his name on activity papers, I pay attention to the child's interest to written materials in the environment. Also, I observe whether or not the child understands the riddles and rhymes while speaking, and asks his teacher or friends about the unknown words. I try to evaluate the child by setting some criteria like this."(A3, post)

"Using early childhood developmental portfolios and child history folder may give the primary school teacher information about the child's level in the transition process."(B2, post)

"The evaluation process should be long-term and cover the whole semester. Since saying that "if a child write the letter A, he knows it" does not make sense to me. It is necessary to evaluate a child by considering his family and environment."(C3, post)

"In the course, we prepared child behaviour evaluation scale and generally we use them. We unify the skills of letter cognition, holding a pencil and drawing lines. We can apply these evaluation scales so they can find the different

ones. We start to teach a child addition and subtraction, how to recognize letters and write his own name, he can find the difference between the two pictures, and he can describe what is happening in the picture. We can ask questions about the picture and evaluate the child in this way.” (D4, post)

4.5.5. Factors Influencing the School Readiness

In order to determine the participants’ understanding about the links between child, family, schools, peer, kinship and neighbourhood in relation to children’s readiness for school, factors of children’s school readiness were asked to the participants.

Before the course; Pre-Interview

In order to express their views about the possible negative or positive changes on a child’s readiness for school, pre-service teachers were asked if they could talk about the effects of the factors. The pre-service teachers described both the internal mechanism and external mechanism factors. Children’s psychomotor abilities, learning abilities, social maturity, and so forth were mostly emphasized. The majority of the pre-service teachers emphasized the external factors (that were responsible for school readiness) parents, teachers, friends and preschool experiences.

“The most important factor that has a positive impact is parental involvement, I think. The parents should support children’s school readiness only a teacher in the school is not enough. The more the parents involved, the easier the transition from primary will be.”(A2, pre)

“A child that does not have early childhood education is a negative factor, of course, or if the class is very crowded, it has a negative impact.” (B1, pre)

“A child’s nutrition, health and self-confidence are among the factors that affect the child’s development.” (C9, pre)

“In my opinion, the early childhood program and all the activities in it are positive factors. On the other hand, if a child lacks sufficient muscle skill, maybe because of an illness, this will have a negative effect.” (D1, pre)

After the course; Post-Interview

In the post-interview, most of the pre-service teachers expressed broad views about teacher responsibilities in relation children's school readiness. They thought that teachers' attitudes towards children increase the children's involving for working. Post interview responses revealed that the pre-school teacher is important in motivating children to learn new things. Moreover, they stated that teachers were responsible for arranging the environment so every child could be successful by individualizing the instruction. They especially emphasized that the children and preschool teachers' relationship is underpinning of the formal school life of a child because, pre-service teachers in the study considered that the ability of following instructions and attending to learning activities influenced the children's competence in the elementary school. Participants also commented on the influence of the quality of a preschool education or prior academic experience, instructional experience and low or high expectations of school on children's readiness for school. Moreover, pre-service teachers referred to children's low developmental age in contrast to their chronological age as an important factor. Lastly, according to all of the pre-service teachers, the parents had the primary responsibility for developing children's school readiness. In addition, peer relationships and extended family members/siblings were mentioned as having an influence because they offered significant factors in the school readiness of the children

“The teacher, his peers, whether or not he has had early childhood education, the preschool's physical circumstances, in other words, the school's general quality and the opportunities offered to the child all have an effect on the child's readiness.”(A5, post)

“I think the teacher can have a great effect on children both negatively or positively.” (B2, post)

“The child may be the first child of the family. Due to the fact that the first child is more dependent on the family, there may be a negative effect here. If education is not the focus in the school setting and if the child just plays, this will affect the child negatively.”(C6, post)

“For me, an early childhood teacher should know the elementary school program in detail and she should support the child’s readiness accordingly. In addition, I think many children are overloaded in early childhood education. ” (D3, post)

4.5.6. Parent and Community Role in School Readiness

When the pre-service teachers were asked about the effective factors of the children’s school readiness, all the participants (n=26) responded that it was the parent. In the interview process, the question “what is the contribution of the parents and the community to children’s school readiness” revealed the pre-service teachers’ views of parents and the community’s role in children’s school readiness.

Before the course, pre-Interview

When the question about the roles of the parents and the community in children’s school readiness were asked, pre-service teachers mentioned family/home life; family structure, parent education level, family relationships, number of siblings and community. Most of the pre-service teachers focused on the collaboration between the parents and the teachers which ensured the promotion of the preschool activities and specific behaviours in both home and preschool. All of the pre-service teachers viewed the role of the community as a significant factor in children’s school lives. However, the majority of the pre-service teachers in the study did not comment on community responsibilities or the features in school readiness issue.

“The school, the teachers and the parents should collaborate on every topic. If the teachers try to collaborate with parents when the parents do not mind, this will not be fruitful or healthy for the children.”(A3, pre)

“A conscious family can support his child’s school readiness very well. The child goes further with his parents’ encouragement and interest.”(B3, pre)

“If the child’s older sisters or brothers have had good school experiences, this will have a positive impact on the child.” (D2, pre)

In the pre-interview process, the pre-service participants emphasized the significant role of the parents in children's school readiness. However, only one participant shared the MoNE, she stated the importance of leaderships of the national education's curriculum as a community role as follows;

“When I think about community, MoNE regulations come to my mind. There is a program, a system that directs community. Every single domain that is related to the child will affect his school readiness, for example, even something that the child has seen in a supermarket will affect him. Since community is a broad concept and it will be effective.” (C7, pre)

After the course, Post- Interview

In relation to parents, two issues emerged: who parents are and what parents do. ‘Who parents are’ was expressed in attitudinal, cultural, socio- economic, educational level and so forth. In contrast, ‘What parents do’ was regarded as the behaviour of the parents, for instance; parents’ engagement in the children’s school success or their expectation of school and school readiness skills. In particular, the pre-service teachers stated that the parents’ beliefs and attitudes towards school influenced their children’s school adjustment and progress. Also, parents’ expectation of the children being at a specific developmental point or having specific experience at school entry was indicated. Furthermore, the pre-service teachers said that undesirable consequences can be attributed to the parental attitude and they commented these major issues as the cause of the lack of a child school readiness. The pre-service teachers’ concerns about some of the factors that made children's transition more difficult were the different physical and emotional learning environment, parents’ expectations and differences between parent and teacher’ style.

“There may be some activities that the child and parents can do at home and the parents can prepare the child for the school in the time they spend with their child.”(A2, post)

“If the first and second grade curriculum in the elementary school is parallel with the early childhood program, the transition of a child will be easier. Because, children transit to the lesson environment from the playful environment.”(B2, post)

“If the parents are aware that their child should know specific things before going to school and this knowledge will help the child and he will be one step further forward. However, if some people in the community think that it is not necessary for a child to know or learn, the child will underestimate himself and his potential skills will not develop. The child will be affected negatively.” (C3, post)

“There were two girls in my internship school, they both had leadership skills but they did not get along well. The problem was not the children but the parents, because the children’s parents did not get along well. The teacher tried to reduce the problem by separating them. I think this was not right thing to do. He should have talked with the parents. However, at the end of the term, the teacher succeeded in making peace between the two children’s parents. This affected the children.” (D5, post)

One pre-service teacher thought that the culture of the children can affect the children before they start school. As she explains;

“The first place where learning occurs is the child’s family and then his immediate environment if a person who is in the child’s environment is afraid of going to school, this will affect the child and he will be afraid of the school, too.”(D3, post)

4.5.7. Physical Environment

To investigate their views of the factors on the children’s school readiness, the pre-service teachers were asked about the role of the physical environment on children’s school readiness.

Before the course; Pre-Interview

In relation to the physical environment, four issues emerged from the pre-service teachers: the difference between the preschool and elementary school environment in terms of physical features, the outdoor facilities, classroom size, furniture, and materials in the classroom. Actually, in the pre-interview period, there was no dominant issue apparent in the transcripts of the interviews. In particular, the pre-

service teachers mentioned the home-school difference effects on children's school readiness. In addition, some of the pre-service teachers stated that activity centres should be equipped with individual student desks.

"I think many preschools have spacious area, but the elementary schools have more crowded, narrow and disadvantaged classes." (A3, pre)

"There must be activity corners such as block corner, play house corner. They offer the opportunities to socialize. If they are absent in their environment, the child's knowledge will be low."(B3, pre)

"The classroom setting and even the colour of the walls can affect a child. When I first started teaching at the school, my classroom's walls were gray. That is why I felt bad and I had negative feelings. I think they have effects on a child."(C5, pre)

"In an article, it was written that the walls of the first grade's class were painted pictures in order to adapt the children who started to the elementary school. These physical changes may affect children and they may ease the school transition process."(D4, pre)

After the course; Post-Interview

The pre-service teachers in the study emphasized the influence of the physical environment on children's school readiness. It was observed that there were some important differences between the responses in the pre and post interview. To illustrate, while the pre-service teachers mentioned the difference between preschool and elementary school classrooms in the pre-interview, they indicated a high degree of need to modify the features of the elementary school classroom in terms of developmentally appropriate materials for children. On the contrary, the pre-service teachers described the influence of large class size in preschool classrooms and the small movement area of elementary school classrooms. First, they stated that an overcrowded elementary classroom resulted in the teachers' less interest in children's needs; on the other hand, they stated that the preschool environment which let children move freely made the complicated classroom management easier. For instance; the pre-service teachers stated in order to sustain a smooth transition from

preschool to elementary school, physical changes should be made in preschool classrooms. Some pre-service teachers advocated that they did not see any changes in the preschool classrooms, because they were designed to be developmentally appropriate for young children. However, there was no a consensus between the pre-service teachers from the four universities. In particular the SRTES course participants in, universities A and D stated that the preschool classes of children aged five and six should support literacy development and they should be designed according to the transition process to the elementary school. Also, teachers needed to reorganize continually the class furniture. On the other hand, most of the pre-service teachers on the course in universities B and C stated that furniture and material reorganization was time consuming. Moreover, they criticized the elementary school physical environment for not being appealing to the children. Other different issues emerged such as the duration of the lessons and the recess breaks. The pre-service teachers expressed that children had recess time and outdoor activity in preschool, for that reason in the first grade children needed to learn how to sit still and work, when the outdoor time was and the short 15 minute breaks at school.

“Sending the activities’ products to home with children and sustaining collaboration with the family can be beneficial and this can organize the children’s own environment.”(A4, post)

“The classrooms are different although the number of the students is the same. In the elementary school, there are desks and break times while there are no break times or recesses in early childhood education. This is very different, I think.” (B1, post)

“The teacher can use more stimuli about the numbers and shapes on the walls. I believe that the early childhood education environment should include many breaks.”(C6, post)

“The early childhood environment is affected by the existence or the absence of a garden and by the noise in the corridor. When children start elementary school, they are still playful and they are still living their childhood. I am in favour of changing the atmosphere of the classes of the elementary school instead of putting desks in the early childhood classrooms.”(D1, post)

4.5.8. Transition to the Elementary School

When the participants in the study asked were asked: “How relevant is the aims and goals of the preschool curriculum to the elementary school curriculum?” Pre-service teachers’ views and knowledge about elementary school curriculum was explored through this question. Also, it named the extent of connection between the aims and goals of the preschool curriculum and the elementary school curriculum.

Before the course; Pre-Interview

The comments elicited from the pre-service teachers revealed that they were not satisfied with certain components of the elementary school program and it required some improvements. Most of the pre-service teachers expressed their lack of satisfaction with their knowledge of the elementary school program. The pre-service teachers also questioned the applicability of the preschool program because they thought that preschool teachers were not sufficiently realistic to achieve goals and objectives. The pre-service teachers focused on making children sit at desks and do pencil and paper activities. The following responses expressed these concerns clearly.

“Of course the child has problems when he just starts to the first grade. The child leaves the playground all at once and he comes to a different atmosphere where they do homework. This is the greatest reason for the child’s problem. I think early childhood teachers should be in contact and collaboration with the elementary first and second grade class teachers. I think the goals and the objectives should overlap.” (A4, pre)

“To tell the truth, I have not thought to what extents the elementary school can make it go on. I do not know if goals of the early childhood curriculum are beneficial to first grade and I think it is supported in second grade but I do not think the same for the third and fourth grades.”(B5, pre)

“In the first grade, there are more tendencies towards academic work. Children can play games in physical exercise lessons or at breaks but it should be supported as much as possible. The transition to elementary school period is said to in the grades one-two-three. In the first three years, the

children should be taken from the play environment to the lesson environment smoothly; I mean there must be a transition period.” (C7, pre)

“The elementary school curriculum programs are continually changing so I cannot follow them. However, the teachers are more effective in the classroom environment, they have more dominant attitudes in classes and they work in a theme-centred way.” (D1, pre)

After the course; Post-Interview

While the pre-service teachers were talking about their knowledge regarding the elementary school program and its applications, assignments, most of them stated that they acknowledged that they gained from the SRTES course. For those who answered this question positively, assignments contributed to their improvement in terms of the program knowledge and school transition. However, the remainder of the participants had some concerns about the continuity from preschool to elementary school for children development. In general, they were concerned about the aim, goals of elementary school curriculum they got on the course. After the course, they were informed about the elementary school context conceptually, but what the elementary school teachers were expecting from the preschool children was not clear to them. Participants focused on different skills such as classroom management, and materials development and usage. In addition, most of the participants were not sure about the level of literacy that the children should reach and what the elementary school teachers would expect from their students. However, all of the participants in the study are agreed about the need for continuity and compatibility between the preschool and elementary school programs.

The comparison of the pre-service teachers’ from different universities responses and the responses from those on the SRTES course at universities A and D revealed that all the participants agreed on the necessity of focusing on the practical teaching skills to be implemented in children’s survival skills that would ease the adaptation period of the pre-service teachers. One of these participants stated;

“There are target behaviours, such as “He is aware of his feelings, he is aware that he and other peers can make mistakes” I think these issues are supported in elementary school in terms of socio-emotional development. Moreover, there are behaviours such as a being able to dress oneself, able to wash his hands so in general it exists. It is flexible by means of the teacher but the early childhood education meets the demands of the elementary education.”(A5, post)

“I think a child becomes ready when the goals, aims, target behaviours are in early childhood education. In fact, I do not know about the complete elementary program but as far as I know it has been shown that early childhood programs do prepare children for elementary school.”(B3, post)

“In the [SRTES] course, we examined the goals and the target behaviours of the elementary school. The goals and the target behaviours of the early childhood and elementary programs resemble each other. Elementary schooling is the continuation of the early childhood education.”(C7, post)

“I have been undertaking observations for two months and I have realized that there are many differences between the child who has early childhood education and the child who has not, the differences are very obvious especially in psychomotor development.”(D3, post)

“Once we observed first grade children and the class teacher had said that the children who had early childhood education were more compatible than other children even in lunch time.”(D4, post)

Lastly, interviewees were asked if they wanted to make any additional comments concerning the issue of children’ school readiness and the SRTES course. Generally, the comments were positive with the common responses including statements such as:

“I think the preparation for school regarded as the foundation of the school so classroom teaching, elementary teaching and early childhood teaching should not be isolated from each other. They should be related and in co-operation.”(B4, pre)

4.5.9 Background Information of School Readiness

In this study, pre-service teachers' views about SRTES course were elicited with the following question: "What are the sources of pre-service early childhood teachers' prior knowledge of children's school readiness?" It was seen that the sources of their knowledge about school readiness was mainly taken from their course experience in early childhood teacher education departments.

Before the course; Pre-Interview

However, participants stated that they only had knowledge of child development. Moreover, they also gained knowledge from their interaction with in-service teachers during their teaching practice. The pre-service participants expressed that they lacked sufficient prior knowledge and practice of children's school readiness before the course. On the other hand, they claimed that they were familiar with this subject after having read books, articles, and internet.

"I gained knowledge by means of my observations and experience while on teaching practice. Also, I benefited from the information from the internet, articles, books and other sources" (A5, pre)

"I already have information about school readiness. Because the main object of early childhood education is to prepare the child for elementary school. A child should have already gained specific skills when he starts primary school. We know because this is the aim of the early childhood education."(B1, pre)

"I am studying in an early childhood education department so our theoretical courses cover this. In addition, we gain experience from training about school preparation and transition to elementary school."(C2, pre)

"It is covered by the early childhood education department courses. Generally it is taught as preparatory work for reading and writing. Apart from this, other courses that we take in Early Childhood Education support it."(D4, pre)

Some of the participants declared that they felt they would lack practice when they graduate.

"It was mentioned many times in my courses and in the teaching practice. We do not do observations in terms of school readiness. Maybe it can be observed

by the cooperative work of early childhood and elementary first grade teachers.”(C3, pre)

After the course; Post-Interview

The SRTES courses in the universities seemed to have the greatest impact on the pre-service participants’ views about children’ school readiness. As they said, most of their knowledge was based on these courses. However, when comparing the universities, this impact was not changed notably according to the four different universities in this study. Participants stated that they were underprepared regarding the children’s school readiness before the implementation of the SRTES course in the ECE program. Hence, they mostly referred to their course experiences when explaining their views about school readiness. Most of the participants said that course assignments, field trip and practicum experiences contributed to their improvement of understanding school readiness and transition to school. Almost all of the pre-service teachers in the study indicate that teaching practice was the most important in influencing their views about school readiness For example;

“I learned it in the elementary preparation course. We got the general knowledge from other courses but we learned it in detail in this course.” (A2, post)

“We had a course about this topic in this term but apart from this we did not take any course.” (B1, post)

“In university, I took a course called “Readiness for Elementary School” I learned it from the reading on this course.” (C6, post)

“We learned it from our readiness for elementary school course, our experiences in the training schools, our teaching practice and observations that we made in the elementary school first grade classes.”(D3, post)

Summary of the Results

The sample population gave more importance to academic skills and reading and writing skills after the SRTES course. Their views of children’s school readiness dimensions which were skills, factors, roles of family and community were described. The participants claimed that they mostly benefited from the SRTES

course and the teaching practice in the program. They gave more details and enriched their ideas about indicators of children's school readiness and activities related school readiness as well as transition activities. Some teachers stated that some of the key elements of children's school readiness were not focused on in all the courses in the study, namely, standardized assessment tools for evaluating children's school readiness level. Related to difference in pre- post interview findings, it can be seen that most of the pre-service teachers emphasized the importance of the continuity of the curriculum between preschool and elementary school. However, they did not feel that they had sufficient information about the curriculum, setting, and teachers' characteristics in the elementary school setting. As a result, the SRTES course affected the views of pre-service early childhood teachers in the study.

The most significant findings are summarized as follows;

- In the quantitative part of the study, there is significant difference between the pre-service early childhood teachers' views about children's skills before the "SRTES" course and their views about children's skills after the course. The school readiness skills are stated as concentration and sustaining concentration skills, reading and writing skills, and social skills. Moreover, the results of the descriptive statistics demonstrate that the participants give more importance to children's academic and social skills.
- Related to children's school readiness skills, the pre service teachers gave more details about children's social development and adaptation to school and no change was seen in their views about all developmental areas.
- After the SRTES course, the participants' stressed the children's later school success and meeting children's development on a common standard while describing the importance of children's school readiness.
- The participants' views on teaching reading and writing are meaningfully different after the course. When the pre-service teachers elaborated on

children's school readiness, they emphasized children's literacy development. They focused on fine motor exercises, print awareness and reading books for children in order to prepare them for elementary school.

- The participants' prior knowledge was mostly based on the basic undergraduate courses in early childhood department, and practice courses.
- To address children's school readiness, the participants concentrated on children's social and intellectual development, but after the course, they suggested transition activities for bridge the gap between elementary and preschool.
- After the SRTES course the participants took into consideration the roles of the parents and teachers in children's school readiness when considering children readiness for school in terms of learning read and write.
- Most of the pre-service participants were not aware of the school readiness assessment tools, they stated their lack of knowledge about the standardized tests, and mentioned that they were not sure about how, or whether to use them in their future classes.
- The physical environment in preschool and elementary school were discussed and the participants indicated that modifications were required as part of the children's smooth transition to elementary school.
- The pre-service teacher's views about the elementary school curriculum aims and goals had not significantly changed after the course their views were derived from varying different sources apart from their experience on the SRTES course.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter; the major findings derived from the method of quantitative and qualitative research questions and the design of the current study are discussed. The implications and recommendations for the policy and practice are also discussed. In the final section, suggestions for future research are given.

5.1. Discussion

The current study was conducted to examine teachers' views changing after the recent development of 'School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School (SRTES)' course in early childhood teacher education programs in Turkey.

The quantitative and the qualitative findings of the study revealed teachers' views changing after the recent development of 'School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School (SRTES)' course in early childhood teacher education programs in Turkey. The aim of the course is to prepare pre-service early childhood teachers to identify, describe and support children's school readiness and transition to elementary school. The 'Pre-service Teachers' Views of Children School readiness' questionnaire and an interview protocol provided information on the possible outcomes of the SRTES course on the pre-service participants in the study.

5.1.1 Pre-Service Early Childhood Teachers' Views towards Definition, Skills, and Importance of Children's School Readiness

In the findings from this study, to answer the question of whether children were ready for formal schooling the pre-service early childhood teachers focused on the children's skills. This finding together with those from other studies contradicts the definition of children's school readiness being connected to children's skills and abilities, parents, school and community (Noel, 2010).

Differences between pre-service teachers' views found in the comparison from the data obtained in the pre-test and the post-test, and the pre-interview and the post-interview. The quantitative results showed the pre-service early childhood teachers' views about children's school readiness skills which were concentration and sustaining concentration skills, social skills and reading and writing skills. This result was also supported by the qualitative findings in particular, the children's reading and writing skills listed by the pre-service early childhood teachers were given more importance after the SRTES course. Also, concentration and sustaining concentration skills and social skills were emphasized and their views changed after the course. On the other hand, from the results of the pre-test and post-test the participants' views related to the children's academic skills for school readiness did not show any change. Therefore, it could be concluded that the courses influenced participants' views about children's reading and writing skills rather than their academic skills. One of the reasons why the participants' views on academic skills had not changed might emerge from their awareness of the academic skills' importance for the children's entrance to the elementary school. In fact, researchers such as Valeski and Spidek (2001) found that the early childhood teachers thought that children's academic skills were linked to their school readiness. Moreover, the tendency worldwide is that most teachers and parents take children's academic achievement into consideration while determining their school readiness (Blair et al, 2007). Throughout human history, academic skills and success have never been overestimated as much as today owing to the "crucial idea driving the educational revolution that children can only become fully developed adults through lengthy and successful school careers" (Blair et al, 2007, p. 167). Similarly in the current study, participants focused on cognitive and academic skills in terms of their responses to the definition of children's readiness for school and the skills they required. Correspondingly, Cuskelly and Detering (2003) did not find any significant difference between the pre-service early childhood teachers and the early childhood teachers' views about children's academic skills for readiness to school. In addition,

the findings of the study related to the participants' views about the children's academic and social skills had a great similarity to the findings of the study conducted by Docket and Perry (2002), in which early childhood teachers' views about children's academic skills and social skills were found to be one of the highest mean of the readiness skills. According to the researchers, the purpose of the study was to interpret the similarity between their findings and those of Cuskelly and Detering (2003) because many teachers, including the pre-service teachers perceived the children's readiness as possessing an appropriate level of academic (reading-writing) and social skills to sustain success in formal schooling (CEIEC, 2008).

When the transcripts of the interviews from the current study were examined there was a noticeable tendency of the pre-service early childhood teachers to focus on the children's literacy skills. In fact, after the SRTES course all the participants from the universities gave more importance to children's literacy in preschool years. Since in university A the students had more lessons about the emergent literacy, some of the participants stated that they would arrange their preschool environment with respect to reading and writing materials in order to sustain the transition to elementary school classroom environment. These findings confirmed some findings in previous research. For instance, there was an increased understanding about the importance of literacy skills in that children needed to know how to use pencil (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). Actually, review of the related literature demonstrated reasonable explanations for the massive attention to the literacy skills. For example; Lin et al (2003) concluded in their study that school readiness skills has been about ultimate academic achievement of children in elementary school by the early childhood teachers. Most of the participants in their study recognized that the skills of reading and writing were an indicator of the school readiness. However, in both pre and post interviews in the present study, the pre-service teachers indicated the importance of the emergent literacy, but most gave inadequate examples and activities for fostering children's literacy. In fact, most of the participants commented that enhancing fine motor skills, reading books and showing pictures were literacy

activities. Also, after the course, they stated the importance of adding print materials in the preschool environment. When the context of the study was considered, it was noticed that the lack of the necessary knowledge about literacy might be a plausible explanation while asking them about how they develop children's school readiness for school. Alisinanoğlu, Bay and Şimşek (2008) mentioned that there was no literacy course in early childhood education. Alisinanoğlu, Bay and Şimşek (2008) recommended that preschool teachers should learn how to enhance children's literacy however, in the teacher education program in Turkey there was a lack of opportunity to gain the knowledge children's literacy and to put that knowledge into practice. The result of the National Research Council Report (1998) indicated a gap in the adequate preparation of early childhood teachers. Moreover, the studies of Isenberg (2000), and Early and Winton (2001) also demonstrated that early childhood teachers did not receive sufficient education about teaching specific content knowledge to children. All these findings clearly revealed the need for pre-service teachers to foster children's reading and writing.

5.1.2 Pre-Service Teachers' Views about Transition to Elementary School and School Readiness Activities

In addition, in the Turkish education system this is a problem since children are not expected to start to learn to read and write until elementary school. According to MONE (2006) early childhood teachers should be able to develop the prerequisite skills for reading and writing and they are expected to enhance physical environment to encourage children's emergent literacy skills. In Turkey, the early childhood teacher education programs do not include literacy goals and objectives apart from the emergent literacy activities, but teacher education programs have continuity and compatibility with the early childhood education program which was developed by MoNE (2006). On the other hand, according to Hamre and Pianta (2007) children in their kindergarten, preschool and first grade of elementary school mostly dealt with language and literacy activities which presented by the teachers. There was a stress

by the local, state and federal reading initiatives on setting the stage the implementation of literacy activities in the United States of America. The early childhood teachers are responsible for sustaining the early academic activities such as literacy, numeracy and science to prepare the children for formal schooling in all countries in Europe (EACEA, 2009).

There are also implications from the findings of the current study that can have a powerful effect on changing pre-service early childhood teachers' views of transition activities. In fact, other researchers such as Turhan et al. (2009) stated that the aim of the SRTES course was to inform pre-service teachers about how to transform their ideas into practice in their professional life. This conceivable explanation for the increased transition activities were proposed by the participants of the study after the course.

5.1.3. Pre-service Teachers' Views on the Assessment of School Readiness

The present study also aimed to examine the influences of the course in terms of school readiness assessment being the most important issue. During the interviews, the participants stressed similar assessment techniques for assessing the children's readiness such as using portfolios or developing checklists. Most of the pre-service teachers set several standards for the children. They all agreed that most of readiness skills should be mastered before starting elementary school. According to Meisels (1999), teachers stated their concerns about whether the children would have or reach the same level of developmental skills. Therefore, they preferred documenting the children's work and defining some of the skills and abilities which were expected from all the children. Also, they preferred not to use standardized assessment tools for school readiness because of concerns about validity and the reliability of assessments for preschool children's school readiness skills and abilities (Meisels, 2001). Moreover, early childhood teachers' reaction to non-standardized and standards test are ranged from both negative and positive sides. Teachers drew attention to the indirect evaluation of a child's performance, but that it is open to

teacher' bias or expectations on the other hand lack of teacher knowledge about early childhood and elementary school children's demographic characteristics may lead to drawing the wrong conclusions from the assessments (Olgan, 2008).

According to the findings of the present study was that participants could be influenced by the field experience, assignments and different instructors in relation to their views on process of child's transition to elementary school. For instance, field experience consisted of visiting an elementary school and meeting with the first grade children enhanced the pre-service teachers' knowledge of elementary school more than the SRTES course.

5.1.4. Pre-Service Teachers' Views on Physical Environment Factor on Children's Readiness

Actually, one of the important elements of the children's school readiness was the link between the elementary and the preschool environment (Fabian & Dunlop, 2008; Oktay & Kotil, 2010). The participants of the study stated that, according to their observations, the facilities of the elementary class did not assist the adaptation and the transition process for children according to their observations. The literature gave an important explanation for this situation. According to Oktay and Kotil (2010) there was limited time between preschool and first grade elementary school and the elementary school class environment was designed more formally such as place of desks. In fact, 6 and 7 year old children demonstrate similar characteristics, but in the preschool environment the 6 year old will meet a semi-circle type of seating arrangement, learning centers, play materials are required, but for the 7 year old none of these will exist in the elementary classroom (Oktay, 2010). This explanation seemed to be valid for the participants in the current study because during a visit to an elementary school, they were able to observe the huge difference between the preschool and the elementary school environment.

5.1.5. Pre-service Teachers' Views on Elementary School Curriculum

Apart from the quantitative results of the current study, the most evident findings came from the qualitative part of the study when participants were asked about their knowledge of the elementary school curriculum and transition practices. Their knowledge of elementary school was highly important because as Fabian (2002) stated children's readiness for school requires a set of skills and abilities which include large group activities, sustaining concentration and sitting on chair for the duration of the lesson, being self-efficacy and taking responsibilities. The aims of preschool education do not include children having to do homework or sit at desk. Therefore, in the present study, the SRTES course had an effect on the pre-service early childhood teachers' views by means of introducing transition activities for the children and familiarizing them with the elementary school curriculum. The analyses of the interviews in relation to the questions about the elementary school curriculum, and the differences and similarities between preschool and elementary school were recognized as one of the important aim of the SRTES course. The pre interviews revealed that the most of the participants were unaware of the features of the elementary school curriculum, but even after the course they did not feel that they had sufficient knowledge of the aims and goals of the elementary school curriculum. This finding clearly demonstrated that the preparation process for early childhood teachers needed to include more lessons about the elementary school curriculum. So, perhaps another explanation is that the content of the SRTES course and applications are not sufficiently targeted to required practices which help to understand what experiences children are having in the elementary and preschool classroom. According to Kagan (1992) if pre-service teachers have the opportunity to observe the daily practices of children and then prepare research project related to what they see this can be beneficial for existing their prior views and images. Therefore, in early childhood teacher education, from preschool to third grade children should be given more attention in order to maintain learning experiences throughout their schooling (Hamre & Pianta, 2007).

Furthermore, pedagogic continuity and school environment issues emerged from the pre-service early children teachers in both the pre and post interviews. This showed that they were concerned about elementary school teachers' instructions and use of different theoretical frameworks in their classroom practice and they stated they were affected negatively when they encountered strict elementary teachers. The courses of the early childhood teacher and elementary school teachers' programs require to be given coherence for controlling dilemma between expectation and assumptions of role of the teachers.

In order to the preschool and elementary school teachers progressed independently, in Turkey in 2006, the revised elementary school curriculum and preschool curriculum attempted to reduce the differences between the preschool and the elementary school in curriculum content, teacher role, and approaches to assessment, but there is still a gap in continuity between preschool and elementary school in terms of guidance, discipline, classroom activities and classroom settings. There are some good examples for Turkey in other countries. For example, Scandinavian countries and, in some parts of Italy, for instance, recognize that early childhood education is an important period of life instead of a preparation period for formal school. The communications between the early childhood education and formal schooling were seen as important elements of education as well as sustaining continuity between sectors (Neuman, 2001). Consideration of homogeneity in preschool and elementary school teachers' practices yielded good results from children's transition period. Related to this issue, many pre-service early childhood teachers in the current study mentioned that they could transfer the assessment records of the children to the elementary school and they could visit elementary classes with their pre-school pupils. These kind of practices brought broader constructions of transition to school into focus (La-Paro, Pianta & Cox, 2000; Petriwskyj, et al., 2005). For this reason, it could be said that the SRTES course played an important role in positively developing early childhood pre-service

teachers views of transition practices and importance of contiuty for the children's school readiness.

5.1.6. Pre-Service Teachers' sources of Knowledge about Children's School Readiness

The teachers stated that prior to enrolling on the SRTES course; they had information about children's readiness for elementary school in relation to the skills required. The teacher's said they had obtained this information from the lecturers in their undergraduate early childhood teacher education; furthermore they gained more knowledge from other resources and through teaching practice. The child development course provided the pre-service teachers with an understanding of the stages in a child's maturation and this is important in providing the foundation for a child's school readiness. Furthermore, they acquired more information from teaching practice, learning about curricula and developing lesson planning skills (Mogharreban, McIntyre, & Raisor, 2010). Similar to the findings, generally the content of the early education teacher training programs to support teachers in acquiring an adequate knowledge of the content of the elementary school curriculum and the assessments undertaken. Mogharreban, McIntyre, and Raisor (2010) commented that in the training of the early childhood teacher there is a need to include courses about primary education. In this way the early childhood teacher's understanding of school readiness will be enhanced.

5.2. Implications for Policy and Practice

This study aimed to examine teachers' views changing after the recent development of 'School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School (SRTES)' course in early childhood teacher education programs in Turkey. The results indicated that early childhood education program content, instructional methods and materials directly affect prospective teachers' views. Preschool teacher education needs to introduce elementary schools' objectives and methods in order to enhance

the continuity and flow of children's transition to elementary school. School readiness skills and abilities, school readiness dimensions, problems of school readiness and transition activities should be emphasized in the School Readiness and Transition to Elementary School (SRTES) course to help and prepare pre-service early childhood teachers for their future profession. Early childhood teachers are required to be able to support children in their transition to formal schooling (Shore, 2009) therefore, it is essential that they need to know what goes on in both preschool and elementary classrooms from grade to grade. For instance, in England, France, Ireland and Jamaica pre-service early childhood teachers can teach children from preschool through to the third grade (Neuman, 2007), however, in Turkey early childhood teacher education encompasses children aged zero to six (Öztürk, 2008). In other countries, early childhood teacher license is applicable to teaching children from birth to eight years old in accordance with early childhood period which was defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) (File & Gullo, 2002). The early childhood education curricula and early childhood teacher education curricula should be aligned to cover the education of children from zero to eight years old. This would facilitate continuity between preschool and elementary school which is the case in many countries. Therefore, in order to implement this system in Turkey early childhood teacher education program would require the inclusion of courses about elementary school curricula. Furthermore, before entering professional life, the SRTES courses aim to develop teacher candidates' knowledge and allow them to gain experience in prepare children for school and their transition to elementary school furthermore, the teacher will be able to guide parents in these processes.

In Turkey, the school readiness and transition to elementary school course is integrated in the revised early childhood teachers' curriculum (Higher Education Council, 2006) and the major finding of the current study is that this course has had a positive impact on the views of final year pre- service early childhood teachers' about young children's school readiness. The literature suggests that teachers can

have different perceptions about young children's readiness for formal schooling and these disparities may have an impact on children's preschool experiences and in their future educational lives (Ong, 2006). For example, some teachers' expectations might focus on different primary skills and abilities while interpreting about children's standardized tests scores for school readiness, they may also underestimate the importance of parent involvement, community partnerships, and the school environment in order to achieve an appropriate level of school readiness in the children (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). There should be a middle way to reach a consensus about the teaching style in preschools. According to Carlson (1999), compatibility and connectivity between teachers with various professional areas enhance children's readiness for school grade by grade (as cited in Öztürk, 2008). National Education Councils (Council Nr: 14) (TTKB, 1993) decided that primary class teachers' training programs and early childhood teacher education programs in the faculties substituting courses related to the provision of primary and early childhood teaching.

This study has also illustrated the differences in pre-service early childhood teachers' views related to school readiness. In order to assess the changes that the SRTES has on education and development of early childhood teachers it is important to understand their competence levels and to provide a common ground in the way they support children's school readiness. The SRTES course is able to provide information about children's literacy and the characteristics of the elementary school curriculum. The findings obtained from the study data suggests that teachers need a greater understanding of content areas such as science, mathematics, and reading and writing skills for elementary school are necessary for the pre service teachers and this should be taken into account in the design of future SRTES course. Following the analysis of the SRTES course syllabus and structure schedules, assignments and evaluations implemented by the four universities were analyzed, it was found that the SRTES course increased the pre-service teachers' competency and ability to assist

children become ready for school and for them to make an easy transition to elementary school.

In order for an early childhood teachers to be able to adequately prepare the children in her/his care for the transition to elementary school, she/he needs to understand the requirements of formal schooling. Furthermore, it is essential that the teacher has a good command of the socio-emotional, cognitive, language, physical and self-care milestones. However, when considering of the child's development, the early childhood teachers must be aware of the impact of the children's social environment. There is ample of research showing that parental involvement in activities in children's school lives enhances children's educational success (Halle et al, 2000, Lopez & Cole, 1999; Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple & Peay, 1999). Moreover, when the father actively participants in his child's education this has a greater impact on readiness for formal school and success in later schooling (Halle et al, 2000). So, early childhood teachers not only are entrusted with being the first teachers of children but they are also the first teachers that the parents encounter when their children start school. Thus, it is essential that SRTES courses include discussion about, and an investigation into the parents' role in children's school readiness and how to involve the parents in transition activities. The current study demonstrated that there were significant changes following the course in the pre-service teachers understanding of the importance of the roles, relationships and interactions between a wide range of actors, such as the children, the family, the teacher, the school and the community in terms of the development of a child's readiness for formal school.

Although there are many similarities in the syllabi of the SRTES courses implemented in each of the four universities, there were also are many significant differences. So, further research should be undertaken to investigate the reasons for the differences such as gender, age, educational experience, school settings and qualities of pre-service teachers. It is essential that the early childhood teacher education departments in the universities should work to the same standard and

ensure that all the required content is included. Furthermore, this study has shown that although pre-service early childhood teachers need content knowledge in order to boost children academic skills for the transition to elementary school according to regulations in Turkey, instead of receiving education on content knowledge, they are expected to increase their knowledge on teaching. However, the early childhood pre-service teachers in Turkey take the highest number of courses on content knowledge rather than practice on teaching (Küçükahmet, 2007).

Most of the participants in the current study making meaning of school readiness in children's quality of the preschool experiences and academic preparedness i.e. emergent literacy, mathematical knowledge and adaptation to school, on the other hand, according to Ulku (2007) the in-service preschool teachers viewed the most important prerequisite for the school readiness as age appropriateness, physical, cognitive, social and emotional maturity. This appeal for the in-service and pre-service teachers' views are inconsistent interpretation of children's school readiness, so there is an immediate need to determine and decide on criteria for school readiness skills. In order to take the responsibility on their shoulders to prevent these possible gaps confusion and lack of knowledge about school readiness, there is a lack of instructional tools in college courses and professional development of in-service teachers. Recently, the connection between the preschool program and elementary school program, teachers and the school settings has become the vital concerns of Turkey in order to prepare children for formal school. These findings show that preparation of early childhood teachers needs to focus on the problems which stem from their tendency of underestimating some of the important experiences during transition from the preschool to elementary school. Subsequently, the SRTES course content may place more emphasis on the elementary school program and foster transition between preschool and elementary school. That could be enhanced by the connections and compatibility between the departments of the elementary school teacher education and early childhood teacher education throughout the teacher training courses. It can be concluded that the SRTES course could be more beneficial

for the pre service teachers, if both preschool and elementary school teachers attended the course and together they could create and support more transition activities and practice by means of creating common understanding of children's readiness for school. Consequently, early childhood educators may feel more secure in developing children's school readiness and guide parents in these processes to better prepare them to provide instruction in learning and social skills of children to be ready for school.

5.3. Recommendations for Further Studies

The qualitative and the quantitative findings of this study show that participant teacher's views on the children's school readiness and transition to elementary school were positively affected by the SRTES courses. Replication of the current study in other universities in different parts of Turkey may be helpful to understand other pre-service early childhood teachers' experiences in the SRTES courses. Moreover, a longitudinal study can be conducted with early childhood teachers from when they start teaching determine the influences of the SRTES courses on their teaching.

While dealing with changes in policy or preschool's curriculum, some other influences such as teachers' education, views of the community and are needed to be considered. So, future research would benefit from gathering information from those involved in designing degree programs of early childhood and elementary teacher education. Thus, the components of the SRTES courses can be designed in line with the content of other courses in order to increase compatibility in teacher education programs. In addition, most research in teachers' professional development consists of qualitative analysis, so there is a need for quantitative analysis to understand teachers' development during their training (Kagan, 1992).

The effects of quality of early childhood education in terms of curriculum, settings, staff development is very important, but the role of family is far more important. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that extensive research is

undertaken to investigate the impact of family interaction with children when they are preparing to enter elementary school, and how this affects success in their future education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Çocukların Okula Hazırbulunuşluk ile İlgili Öğretmen Adayı Görüş Anketi

Değerli Okulöncesi Öğretmen Adayı,

Bu anket sizin okulöncesi öğrencilerinin okula hazırbulunuşluk düzeyleriyle ilgili görüşlerinizi öğrenmek amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Sorulara vereceğiniz yanıtlar, araştırma amacıyla kullanılacak ve gizli tutulacaktır. Adınızı belirtmenize gerek yoktur. Ankete vereceğiniz samimi ve doğru yanıtlar, araştırma bulgularının gerçeğe uygunluk derecesini yükseltecektir. Yardımlarınız için teşekkür ederim.

Berna SİCİM

BÖLÜM 1: KİŞİSEL BİLGİLER

1. Öğrenci no:

2. Not ortalamanız:

3. Cinsiyetiniz:

☐ Kadın ☐ Erkek

4. Yaşınız:

5. Mezun olduğunuz lise türü:

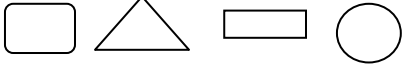
☐ Öğretmen lisesi

☐ Diğer (Anadolu lisesi, Fen lisesi, Genel lise, Meslek lisesi, Özel

lise, vb.)

**BÖLÜM 2: ÇOCUKLARIN OKULA HAZIRBULUNUŞLUK İLE İLGİLİ
ÖĞRETMEN ADAYI GÖRÜŞ FORMU**

| Aşağıdaki verilen ifadeleri dikkatle okuyup, herbir ifade için verilen önemlilik derecelerinden sizin görüşünüzü en iyi ifade eden seçeneği bularak size ayrılan bölüme (x) işaretleyiniz. | Önemsiz | Önemli | Çok önemli |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|------------|
| 1) Varlıkların boyutları ile ilgili bazı kavramları doğru olarak kullanabilmeli (kısa –uzun, büyük- küçük, ince- kalın vb.) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2) Miktar ile ilgili gelişimine uygun bazı kavramları doğru olarak kullanabilmeli (az- çok, bütün- yarım, ağır- hafif, tek- çift vb.) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3) Zaman kavramlarından bazılarını doğru olarak kullanabilmeli (gece- gündüz, sabah- öğlen-akşam, dün-bugün-yarın vb.) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4) Varlıkların mekanda konumları ile ilgili bazı kavramları doğru olarak kullanabilmeli (altında- üstünde, içinde- dışında, uzak- | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5) Yön kavramlarından bazılarını doğru olarak kullanabilmeli (sağ-sol,ön-arka,ileri-geri, aşağı-yukarı vb.) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6) Duyu kavramlarından bazılarını doğru olarak kullanabilmeli (soğuk-sıcak, sert- yumuşak, tatlı-acı, sesli-sessiz vb.) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7) Rakamlar gösterildiğinde yada sözel olarak ifade edildiğinde tanıyabilmeli (1-9 a kadar Örn; bu kaç?/ Bana göster 4’ü göster.) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8) Rakamları çizebilmeli (modele bakarak) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9) Sayabilmeli (1-20) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10) Varlıkları çeşitli özelliklerine göre gruplayabilmeli (kırmızı balonlar, küçük kaşıklar) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11) 1 ile 10’a kadar sıralanmış rakam dizisinde eksik olan rakamı/rakamları bilmeli (Gösterilen herhangi bir rakamın ardından gelen yada daha önceki rakamı bilme) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12) Sözel olarak belirtilen sayıdaki nesneyi getirebilmeli (Bana 6 tane elma getir) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13) 1’den 10’a kadar sayıdaki nesneleri kullanarak toplama, çıkarma yapabilmeli. | 1 | 2 | 3 |

| Aşağıdaki verilen ifadeleri dikkatle okuyup, herbir ifade için verilen önemlilik derecelerinden sizin görüşünüzü en iyi ifade eden seçeneği bularak size ayrılan bölüme (x) işaretleyiniz. | Önemsiz | Önemli | Çok önemli |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|------------|
| 14) Basit problemleri çözebilmeli (Annem 2 ekmek aldı. Babamda eve 4 tane ekmek daha getirdi. Kaç ekmeğimiz oldu?) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 15) Geometrik şekilleri isimlendirebilmeli  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 16) Şekilleri çizebilmeli (modele bakarak) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 17) Sözcüklerin başlangıç ve bitiş seslerini bilmeli (örneğin; <u>K</u> ALEM sözcüğünün başlangıç sesi <u>K</u> İTAP ile aynıdır) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 18) Renkleri tanıyabilmeli (ana renkler, kırmısı, sarı, mavi- ara renkler; turuncu, yeşil, mor) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 19) Dikkatini yaptığı yada yapılan işe en az 15 dakika odaklamalı | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 20) Yaptığı işi bitirene kadar dikkatini sürdürmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 21) Kendi duygu ve düşüncelerini sözel olarak ifade edebilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 22) İstek ve ihtiyaçlarını söyleyebilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 23) Arkadaşları ile olumlu ilişkiler kurabilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 24) Yetişkinlerle ile olumlu ilişkiler kurabilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 25) Konuşulanı dinleyip anlayabilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 26) Gösterilen seçenekler arasından seçim yaparak, kararını belirtebilmeli (oyuncak, kitap, kıyafet vb.) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 27) Başkalarının duygularına karşı duyarlı olmalı | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 28) Arkadaşları ile olan bazı sorunlarını konuşarak kendi başına çözebilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 29) Bağımsız hareket edebilmeli (yemek yeme temizlik, gibi ihtiyaçlarında) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 30) Arkadaşları ile eşyalarını paylaşabilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 31) Arkadaşları ile işbirliği yapabilmeli (birlikte oyun oynamak) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 32) Başarısızlıklarının üstesinden gelebilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |

| Aşağıdaki verilen ifadeleri dikkatle okuyup, herbir ifade için verilen önemlilik derecelerinden sizin görüşünüzü en iyi ifade eden seçeneği bularak size ayrılan bölüme (x) işaretleyiniz. | Önemsiz | Önemli | Çok önemli |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 33) Grupla birlikte hareket edebilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 34) Günlük aktivitelere katılmada istekli olmalı | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 35) Kurallara ve yönergelere uymalı | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 36) Kalem, silgi ve defter gibi araç ve gereçleri uygun kullanabilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 37) Zamanı çoğunlukla iyi kullanabilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 38) Az destekle verilen görevi başarabilmeli | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 39) Gün içinde karşılaştığı problem durumlarına çeşitli çözüm yolları bulabilmeli (üzerine bir şey döküldüğünde çözümü kendisinin bulması) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 40) Kendi yeterliliklerinin farkında olmalı (ayakkabının bağcığını çözebileceğini ama bağlayamayacağını söylemesi) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 41) Sorumluluk alma davranışını göstermeli(sofraya bardakları getirmek istemesi) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 42) Kendine güven duymalı | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 43) Harfleri tanıyabilmeli (büyük-küçük) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 44) Alfabeyi sırasıyla bilmeli (sıralanmış olan harflerden eksik olanı/olanları bilir) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 45) Okuyabilmeli (tek heceli sözcükler) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 46) Yazabilmeli (tek heceli sözcükler) | 1 | 2 | 3 |

APPENDIX B

Görüşme Formu

Görüşmeci:

Gün-saat:

Süre:

Yer:

Değerli öğretmen adayı,

Bu çalışma “Okulöncesi dönem çocuklarının ilköğretime hazır bulunuşlukları ile ilgili okul öncesi öğretmenliği öğretmen adayları görüşleri” tez çalışması kapsamında okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının görüşlerinin farklı etkenlere bağlı olarak incelenmesi amacıyla yapılmaktadır. Görüşmemiz yaklaşık olarak 15 dakika sürecektir. Hem daha fazla zamanınızı almamak, hem de aktardığınız bilgilerinin tam ve doğru olarak kaydedebilmek için, eğer izniniz olursa ses kayıt cihazı kullanmak istiyorum.

1. İlköğretime hazırolmak ne demektir ve önemi nedir?
2. Hazırbulunuşluk açısından çocuğun hangi becerilere sahip olması beklenir?
3. Siz Okul öncesi dönemdeki çocukların ilköğretime hazırlıkları ile ilgili bilginizi nereden edindiniz?
4. İlköğretime geçişte çocukların hazırbulunuşluklarını desteklemek için ne gibi etkinlikler yaparsınız?
5. Okul öncesi dönemdeki çocukların okula hazırbulunuşluklarını nasıl değerlendirirsiniz?
6. Çocukların okula hazırbulunuşluklarını olumlu ya da olumsuz etkileyen faktörler nelerdir?
7. Aile ve toplumun okula hazırbulunuşluğu nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsunuz?
8. Okul öncesi sınıflarının fiziksel ortamı çocukların hazırbulunuşlukları üzerindeki etkisinden bahseder misiniz?
9. Okul öncesi programının amaç ve kazanımları ilköğretim için gerekli becerileri kazanılmasına hazırlar mı ve bu beceriler nelerdir?
10. Görüşmemizin sonunda sizin eklemek istediğiniz bir şeyler var mı?

Katılımınızdan dolayı çok teşekkür ediyorum.

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

Bu çalışma Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Öğretim üyelerinden Refika Olgan danışmanlığında Berna Sicim tarafından yürütülmektedir. Çalışmanın amacı, okul öncesi öğretmenliği üçüncü ve dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerinin, okul öncesi öğrencilerinin okula hazırbulunuşluk düzeyleri ilişkin görüşleri yönünden incelemek ve öğretmen eğitimi programlarının okula hazırbulunuşluk derslerinin yeniden düzenlenmesine yardımcı olmaktır.

Çalışmaya katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Uygulama sürecinde kimlik belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Uygulama yaklaşık 10 dakikalık bir zamanı alacaktır. Cevaplarınız tamamıyla gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırmacılar tarafından değerlendirilecektir; elde edilecek bilgiler bilimsel yayımlarda kullanılacaktır.

Görüşme, genel olarak kişisel rahatsızlık verecek soruları içermemektedir. Ancak, katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz cevaplama işini yarıda bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda görüşme yaptığınız kişiye, görüşmeyi tamamlamak istemediğinizi söylemeniz yeterli olacaktır. Görüşme başında ve sonunda, bu çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız cevaplanacaktır. Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz.

Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için araştırmayı yürüten yüksek lisans öğrencisi Berna Sicim (Ofis: efa-29, Tel: 210 75 05; E-posta: berna@metu.edu.tr) ya da tez danışmanı Refika Olgan (Ofis: EF 104, Tel: 210 3671; E-posta: rolgan@metu.edu.tr) ***Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarıda kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayımlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.*** (Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad

Tarih

İmza

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