

PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER CANDIDATES' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS COMMUNITY SERVICE COURSE

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to determine how physical education teacher candidates in Physical Education and Sports Higher Schools in different universities perceive the Community Service Course and to find out whether their perceptions change depending on several variables. The population of the study is composed of 146 fourth-year teacher candidate students who take the community service course in Physical Education and Sports Higher Schools in Ahi Evran, Aksaray, Kastamonu and İnönü Universities in 2011-2012 academic year. The data is collected through "Teacher Candidates' Perceptions towards Community Service Course Scale" developed by Elma et al. (2010), and the alpha reliability coefficient of the scale is .88. Frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, t-test and one-way analysis of variance are applied on the data collected. SPSS 15 statistical package is used to analyse the obtained data in computer environment and a significance level of 0.05 is taken into consideration for relationships and differences between variables. According to the physical education teacher candidates' average points on the scale; it is observed that their perception towards the course is positive. According to the analysis of study results in terms of the independent variables of the study, there is a significant relationship in the sub-dimension of personal development of teacher candidates according to their universities. However, according to the analysis in terms of the variables of gender and membership to non-governmental organisations, no significant relationship is found in any sub dimension ($P > 0.05$).

Keywords: Community Service Practices, Community Service, Teacher Candidate.

BEDEN EĞİTİMİ ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ TOPLUMA HİZMET UYGULAMALARI DERSİNE İLİŞKİN ALGILARI

ÖZET

Bu araştırmanın amacı, farklı üniversitelerin beden eğitimi ve spor yüksekokullarında öğrenim gören beden eğitimi öğretmen adaylarının topluma hizmet uygulamaları dersini nasıl algıladığını belirlemek ve algıların çeşitli değişkenler açısından farklılık gösterip göstermediğini ortaya koymaktır. Araştırmanın evrenini 2011-2012 eğitim ve öğretim yılında, Ahi Evran Üniversitesi, Aksaray Üniversitesi, Kastamonu Üniversitesi ve İnönü Üniversitesi Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Yüksekokullarında dördüncü sınıfta öğrenim gören ve topluma hizmet uygulamaları dersini alan 146 beden eğitimi öğretmen adayı olmuştur. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak, Elma ve ark. (2010) tarafından geliştirilen "Öğretmen Adaylarının Topluma Hizmet Uygulamaları Dersine İlişkin Algıları" ölçeği kullanılmış olup, ölçeğin alfa güvenirlik katsayısı .88'dir. Toplanan veriler üzerinde frekans, yüzde, aritmetik ortalama, (t) testi ve tek yönlü varyans analizi testi yapılmıştır. Araştırmadan elde edilen verilerin analizi bilgisayarda SPSS 15 istatistik paket programı ile yapılmış olup değişkenler arasında ilişki ve farklarda 0.05 önem düzeyi dikkate alınmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda; Beden eğitimi öğretmen adaylarının ölçekten aldıkları puan ortalamalarına göre ders hakkındaki algılarının olumlu olduğu görülmektedir. Araştırmanın bağımsız değişkenlerine göre analizinde öğretmen adaylarının öğrenim gördükleri üniversitelere göre kişisel gelişim alt boyutunda anlamlı ilişkiye rastlanırken, cinsiyet değişkenine göre ve sivil toplum örgütlerine üye olma değişkenine göre tüm alt boyutlarda anlamlı ilişkiye rastlanmamıştır ($P > 0, 05$).

Anahtar Kelimeler: Topluma hizmet uygulamaları, Topluma hizmet, Öğretmen adayı.

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INTRODUCTION

The main objective of a society's education system is to protect and develop cultural values of the society, to transmit them to future generations and to develop every individual's ability to know his/her environment which constitutes the society, to adapt to it and to control it. This main objective is applied in the educational methods of schools. The most important element of a school system is the education personnel, in other words, the teachers. Teachers, having the role of developing and shaping the future generations, must receive a proper education (Kamer, 2008). For this reason, universities should identify the needs and expectations of the society and provide an education adapted to society's values and morals. Given the fact that teaching is one of the professions with great social responsibility and that teachers have such duties and responsibilities as integration with the society and social leadership, it is highly important for teacher candidates to gain experience in order to develop such skills during their education (Gonzales, 1993).

Universities aren't only establishments which produce information and enrich people's knowledge but they are also establishments which influence, change and guide the culture of the society with which they interact (Nas et al. 2008). When considered from this point of view, in order for teacher candidates to cope with difficulties and to act as a driving force behind the advancement of their society, they should receive proper education which will develop their creativity, self-confidence, independent thinking, self-control and problem-solving potential. Today, curricula are being revised and classical education approaches and methods are questioned with the purpose of development (entürk, 2008). The Community Service Course is appeared in the curriculum as a result of this revision.

As of the academic year 2006-2007, the idea of balancing theoretical courses in teacher formation programmes with practical courses has been embraced and within this framework, the Community Service Course is created. The description of this course is the following according to the Council of Higher Education (YÖK): The objective of this course is teaching basic knowledge and skills concerning the importance of community service practices, defining the current problems of the society and developing projects for their solution, participating in scientific events such as convention panels, conferences, congresses, symposia as audience, speaker or organizer as well as volunteering in various social responsibility projects and community service practices in schools (YÖK, 2011).

The Community Service Course is a mandatory 3-hour and 2-credit-course which includes 1 hour-theoretical and 2 hour-practical education, and this course is taught in all departments. This course is taught during autumn or spring semesters of third or fourth years of university education according to the characteristics of departments' curricula. This is a course where students do most of the work and perform active missions during theoretical and practical studies under the guidance of a teacher. The teacher remains in the background for observing the studies of students and providing them with guidance (Sönmez et al. 2009).

One of the reasons why the Community Service Course is added to the new curriculum is that intellectual teachers should have the capacity to identify current problems of the society and to create projects for their solution. The fact that teacher candidates should develop their sensitivity and awareness towards social problems is also among the reasons of existence of the Community Service Course. This is because teaching is one of the professional fields with great social responsibility. By means of this course, it is targeted to establish a link between

universities and the society (Alaba et al. 2009).

Community service practices can highly contribute to not only students' academic success but also their problem solving skills. These practices can enable them to internalize the sense of social responsibility and social citizenship values, to develop their self-sufficiency and to raise their awareness about social problems (Demir, 2009).

Within this framework, following qualities are expected to be acquired by teacher candidates from community service practices (Yaşar et al. 2008);

- Apprehending the personal and social benefit of serving the society,
- Understanding on what subjects regarding their field they can help the society,
- Being able to organize events in their field with the purpose of serving the society,
- Developing their community service competences through various activities,
- Developing themselves by sharing their experience acquired through community service activities with their friends and teacher.

When the relevant literature is examined, it can be seen that there is a limited number of studies in this subject with regard to teacher candidates given the fact that the Community Service Course is relatively a recent matter in teacher formation curricula of higher education establishments. A general evaluation of physical education teacher candidates' perceptions towards the Community Service Course is conducted in the present study.

The aim of this study is to determine how physical education teacher candidates perceive the Community Service Course and to find out whether their perceptions change depending on such variables as their gender, university and their membership to non-governmental organisations.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Study Model and Study Group

In this study, descriptive survey model is applied. Descriptive studies aim to describe the situation in question. On the other hand, the survey model is based on presenting the existent situation as it exists with an objective approach (Karasar, 1999).

The study group is composed of 146 physical education teacher candidates at Physical Education and Sports Higher Schools of different universities. 43 of these individuals were studying in Ahi Evran University, 34 in Aksaray University, 33 in Kastamonu University and 36 in Sivas Cumhuriyet University during the academic year 2011-2012. Only fourth-year teacher candidates who received the Community Service Course are included in the study group.

Data Collection Tool

In this study, the data is collected through "Teacher Candidates' Perceptions towards Community Service Course Scale" developed by Elma et al. (2010). The scale is composed of 28 items and 5 sub-dimensions. Sub-dimensions and items of the scale are as follows; 8 items in "Socialisation" sub-dimension, 6 items in "Personal development" sub-dimension, 8 items in "Perception towards the course" sub-dimension, 4 items in "Organisation" sub-dimension and 2 items in "Supervisor" sub-dimension. A five-point likert scale is used in the Community Service Practices scale in order to determine physical education teacher candidates' perceptions towards given statements. Following evaluation intervals are taken into consideration for obtained average scores; Strongly agree (5 - 4.21), Agree (4.20 - 3.41), Neutral (3.40 - 2.61), Disagree (2.60 - 1.81) and Strongly disagree (1 - 1.80).

Item (21) of the scale which states "I think that this course is unnecessary" is recoded during data entry.

As for the alpha reliability coefficient of the scale, alpha coefficient for internal consistency is .88.

Data Analysis

SPSS 15 statistical package is used in the computer analysis of data obtained from this study. Frequency, percentage, t-test and one-way analysis of variance are applied on the data collected through "Teacher Candidates' Perceptions towards Community Service Course Scale". A significance level of 0.05 is taken into consideration for obtained results and interpretations.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Average Scores Obtained By Physical Education Teacher Candidates on the Community Service Course Scale.

Sub-dimensions	N	\bar{X}	Ss.	Min.	Max.
Socialisation	146	3.79	.768	1.00	5.00
Personal development	146	3.60	.855	1.00	5.00
Perception towards the course	146	3.59	.543	1.00	5.00
Organisation	146	3.40	.689	1.00	5.00
Supervisor	146	2.85	.888	1.00	5.00

According to the findings indicated on the table above, average scores obtained from sub-dimensions of the physical education teacher candidates' perceptions towards the Community Service Course scale are as follows from the highest to the lowest; Socialisation ($\bar{x}=3.79$), Personal development ($\bar{x}=3.60$), Perception towards the course ($\bar{x}=3.59$), Organisation ($\bar{x}= 3.40$) and Supervisor ($\bar{x}= 2.85$).

According to these averages, it is observed that perceptions of teacher candidates towards the Community Service Course are positive with regard to the sub-dimensions of socialisation, personal development and perception towards the course while their perceptions towards the sub-dimensions of organisation and supervisor are neutral.

Table 2. Differences in Physical Education Teacher Candidates' Perceptions Towards the Community Service Course According to Their Gender

Sub-dimensions	Gender	N	\bar{X}	Ss.	t	p
Socialisation	Female	56	3.79	.776	-.075	.940
	Male	90	3.80	.768		
Personal development	Female	56	3.67	.859	.713	.477
	Male	90	3.56	.855		
Perception towards the course	Female	56	3.64	.569	.925	.356
	Male	90	3.56	.527		
Organisation	Female	56	3.55	.628	1.35	.179
	Male	90	3.40	.721		
Supervisor	Female	56	2.96	.755	1.19	.223
	Male	90	2.78	.960		

When the table presented above is examined, all t values of differences between female and male students' opinions with regard to the sub-dimensions of socialisation, personal development, perception towards the course, organisation and supervisor of the perceptions towards the Community

Service Course scale are found to be insignificant ($P > 0.05$). These findings show that there isn't any difference between the perceptions of female and male students towards the Community Service Course.

Table 3. Differences in Physical Education Teacher Candidates' Perceptions Towards the Community Service Course According to Their University

Sub-dimensions	University	N	\bar{X}	Ss.	F	p
Socialisation	Ahi Evran	43	3.59	.831	2,001	.117
	Aksaray	34	3.93	.736		
	Kastamonu	33	3.96	.746		
	nönü	36	3.75	.705		
	Total	146	3.79	.768		
Personal development	Ahi Evran	43	3.46	.962	2,804	.042
	Aksaray	34	3.97	.770		
	Kastamonu	33	3.48	.838		
	nönü	36	3.54	.741		
	Total	146	3.60	.855		
Perception towards the course	Ahi Evran	43	3.61	.506	.074	.974
	Aksaray	34	3.59	.635		
	Kastamonu	33	3.60	.536		
	nönü	36	3.56	.519		
	Total	140	3.59	.543		
Organisation	Ahi Evran	43	3.50	.784	1.658	.179
	Aksaray	34	3.55	.714		
	Kastamonu	33	3.55	.669		
	nönü	36	3.24	.522		
	Total	140	3.46	.689		
Supervisor	Ahi Evran	43	3.11	1.09	2.366	.074
	Aksaray	34	2.79	.905		
	Kastamonu	33	2.84	.723		
	nönü	36	2.59	.625		
	Total	140	2.85	.888		

When the table presented above is examined, no significant difference is found between different groups in the sub-dimensions of socialisation, perception towards the course, organisation and supervisor of the perceptions towards the Community Service Course scale ($P > 0.05$). On the other hand, following average scores are observed in the sub-dimension of personal development from the highest to the lowest; Aksaray

University ($\bar{x}=3.97$), nönü University ($\bar{x}=3.54$), Kastamonu University ($\bar{x}=3.48$), and Ahi Evran University ($\bar{x}=3.46$). According to these averages, no significant difference is found in the sub-dimension of personal development ($P < 0.05$). With Tukey's-b test, it is detected that a difference exists between Aksaray University and other universities.

Table 4. Physical Education Teacher Candidates' Perceptions Towards the Community Service Course According to Membership to Non-governmental Organisations

Sub-dimensions	Membership	N	\bar{X}	Ss.	t	p
Socialisation	Yes	30	4.02	.460	1.89	.060
	No	115	3.73	.823		
Personal development	Yes	30	3.75	.724	1.05	.294
	No	115	3.56	.886		
Perception towards the course	Yes	30	3.68	.458	.1.08	.282
	No	115	3.56	.562		
Organisation	Yes	30	3.65	.631	1.68	.095
	No	115	3.41	.700		
Supervisor	Yes	30	3.11	.837	1.84	.068
	No	115	2.78	.896		

When the table presented above is examined, all t values of differences between the opinions of students who are member and non-member of non-governmental organisations with regard to the sub-dimensions of socialisation, personal development, perception towards the course, organisation and supervisor of

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

In addition to acquiring a profession, university students have the possibility to develop their community service skills during and after their education thanks to community service education which is also a type of learning method. Therefore, today's universities aim to guide their students in their search for a meaning of life. American universities see raising awareness of their students about community spirit and participatory citizenship as a part of their duties besides providing scientific education (Akt. Saran et al. 2011). Since last twenty years, all over the world, particularly in the United States of America, Community Service Courses which start to take their place in university curricula and to capture the attention of researchers (Eyler, 2000) were added to

the perceptions towards the Community Service Course scale are found to be insignificant ($P > 0.05$). These findings show that there isn't any difference between the perceptions of students who are member and non-member of non-governmental organisations towards the Community Service Course.

the Turkish curricula during the academic year 2006 – 2007, and their application since the academic year 2008 - 2009 still continues.

In this study, physical education teacher candidates' perceptions towards the community service course are tried to be identified. For this reason, opinions of fourth-year students who study at Physical Education and Sports Higher Schools of Ahi Evran, Aksaray, Kastamonu and İnönü Universities are analysed.

According to study results and table 1, it is found that physical education teacher candidates' perceptions towards community service practices have an average score of ($\bar{X}= 3.79$) in the sub-dimension of "Socialisation", and this shows that there is a positive perception towards this course. According to item averages in the sub-dimension of

socialisation, teacher candidates develop such social skills as communication, solidarity, building relations with different people, taking over responsibilities, providing solutions to problems and developing human relations thanks to the Community Service Course. Küçüko lu and Kaya (2009) indicate in their study on community service courses as a learning method based on community service practices that teacher candidates express themselves better in the social life thanks to this course which contributes to the increase in their social awareness. Çetin and Sönmez (2009) find in their research on opinions of teacher candidates in social studies on the goal and content of the community service course that 78 % of teacher candidates think that the content of the Community Service Course activities enables them to integrate with the society. According to these results, it can be seen that this course has a positive influence on development of teacher candidates with respect to socialisation and human relations.

It is understood that physical education teacher candidates' perception towards the Community Service Course is positive in the sub-dimension of "Personal development" with an average score of ($\bar{x}=3.60$). According to item averages in the sub-dimension of personal development, it can be seen that the course contributes to human relations, leadership, self-confidence and empathy skills of teacher candidates. Yılmaz (2011) expresses in his research on the social responsibility and community service practices of education faculties that this course helps teacher candidates to know the characteristics of the society and thus to have the possibility to solve possible problems, to acquire social responsibility awareness and to have better behavioural qualities concerning cooperation, solidarity, problem solving, creativity and self-confidence. Küçüko lu and Kaya (2009) underline in their research on the Community Service Course as a learning method based on

community service that this course contributes to the personal development of teacher candidates with regard to their skills, attitude, respect for labour, awareness about the value of time and ability to question their priorities as individuals. According to these results, it is possible to say that this course has a positive impact on personal and professional development of teacher candidates.

It is understood that physical education teacher candidates' perception towards the Community Service Course is positive in the sub-dimension of "Perception towards the course" with an average score of ($\bar{x}=3.59$). According to item averages in the sub-dimension of perception towards the course, they indicate that teacher candidates desire to be more active in the determination of projects and practice groups and that they wish the course duration to be longer, that they enjoy the course and consider it to be necessary. Vernon and Ward (1999) find in their research that insufficient duration prevents community service courses to reach their goals. Ayvaci and Akyıldız (2009) underline in their research on the benefits of the Community Service Course to individuals and to the society and the expectations of the society that 77 % of teacher candidates find the course to be necessary and efficient and that this is a very important course for the increase of social awareness and raising conscious individuals. Tilki (2011) reaches to the conclusion in his research on perceptions of students of Physical Education and Sports Higher Schools towards the Community Service Course that students' perceptions are positive. According to these results, it is possible to say that physical education teacher candidates' interest and attitude towards the course tend to be positive.

It is understood that physical education teacher candidates' perception towards the Community Service Course is neutral in the sub-dimension of "Organisation" with

an average score of ($\bar{x}= 3.40$). According to item averages, it is found that teacher candidates find the chance to know different organisations and understand how they function and that officers in official organisations think positively of this practice. However, a number of teacher candidates express that they have encountered some problems in the organisations where they went because of the fact that they couldn't explain the goal and content of the course well enough. Özdemir and Tokcan (2010). In their research on the evaluation of the Community Service Course based on the opinions of teacher candidates, it is found that the managers and other officers working in organisations where the participants went support them. Tannriseven and Yelken (2011) indicate that teacher candidates are neutral with respect to recognition of social service organisations and that they are negatively influenced by the insensitivity of organisation members and bad attitudes of managers towards them. According to these results, it is possible to say that it would be beneficial for teacher candidates' future careers to familiarize with State institutions and organisations and to have knowledge about their operation.

It is indicated that physical education teacher candidates' perception towards the Community Service Course is neutral in the sub-dimension of "Supervisor" with an average score of ($\bar{x}= 2.85$). According to item averages in the sub-dimension of supervisor, teacher candidates indicate that teachers giving this course should be from the same department as theirs and that their supervisors don't perform their duties fully during practices. Tannriseven and Yelken (2011) and Küçüko lu and Kaya (2009) confirm in their research on teacher candidates that there are certain problems with regard to lack of information about the course, lack of report preparation for projects, lack of time and poor communication between the supervisor and the group. Saran et al. (2011) find in

their research on community service practices that students demand from coordinators and supervisors to determine the stages of projects, presentation, measurement, evaluation methods and reporting system standards to be applied for this course. According to these results, teacher candidates demand from their supervisors to spend more time for planning, project design and evaluation works for their students.

No significant difference is found in physical education teacher candidates' perceptions towards the Community Service Course according to the gender variable for the sub-dimensions of socialisation, personal development, perception towards the course, organisation and supervisor ($P > 0.05$). Tilki (2011) finds no significant difference in any sub-dimension according to the gender variable in his research on perceptions of students from different departments of Physical Education and Sports Higher Schools towards the Community Service Course. Elma et al. (2010) indicate in their research on teacher candidates' perceptions towards the Community Service Course that there is no significant difference in the sub-dimensions of personal development, perception towards the course, organisation and supervisor. These findings support our study results. This shows that teacher candidates have similar opinions in sub-dimensions according to the gender variable.

No significant difference is detected in physical education teacher candidates' perceptions towards the Community Service Course according to the variable of "their University" in the sub-dimensions of socialisation, perception towards the course, organisation and supervisor ($P > 0.05$) while significant difference is found between groups in the sub-dimension of Personal development ($P < 0.05$). From the Tukey's-b test, it is detected that this difference exists between Aksaray University and other universities. According to these findings, it is possible to say that

students of Aksaray University are influenced in a better way from the Community Service Course in terms of their personal and professional development.

No significant difference is found between groups with respect to physical education teacher candidates' perceptions towards the Community Service Course according to the variable of membership to non-governmental organisations for the sub-dimensions of socialisation, personal development, perception towards the course, organisation and supervisor ($P > 0.05$). No significant difference is found in any sub-dimension according to the variable of membership of teacher candidates to non-governmental organisations in the research conducted by Elma et al. (2010) on teacher candidates' perceptions on the Community Service Course. Çuhadar (2008) indicates in his research on formation of benevolent citizen teachers with the Community Service Course that the Community Service Course has the quality to develop citizenship skills of teacher candidates in terms of membership to non-governmental organisations, participation and volunteering. It is observed that the rate of teacher candidates who are member to non-governmental organisations is relatively low and that they generally become member to such non-governmental organisation after being teacher. In our research, it is found that physical education teacher candidates' membership to non-governmental organisations doesn't change their perceptions towards the course.

According to study results, it is found that physical education teacher candidates'

perceptions towards the community service course are positive with regard to the sub-dimensions of socialisation, personal development and perception towards the course while their perceptions towards the sub-dimensions of supervisor and organisation are neutral. No significant difference is detected in any sub-dimension according to the gender variable while significant relationship is found in the sub-dimension of "personal development" according to average sub-dimension scores in terms of university of teacher candidates. No significant difference is found between groups in any sub-dimension according to the variable of membership to non-governmental organisations. In compliance with these results, following recommendations can be proposed;

- 1- Efficiency can be increased by spreading the Community Service Course to at least two semesters.
- 2- Particular attention should be paid to the compatibility of activities included in the Community Service Course with the goal and content of the course as well as the field in which teachers are trained.
- 3- Relations and solidarity between the stakeholders of community service practices, in other words, between teacher candidates, supervisors, higher schools and organisations should be strengthened in order for the course to be more efficient and to reach its goal.
- 4- Evaluation works should be conducted in order to understand whether students internalize the course activities or not, whether they see these services as an academic necessity or as important responsibilities with regard to social life.

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