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## Creativity in early childhood education program

Asli Yildirim<sup>a\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Anadolu University, Faculty of Education Department of Primary Education, Eskisehir 26470, Turkey*

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### Abstract

Creativity is a critical concept for the successful implementation of educational programs. It is expected that teachers put forth both children's and their own creativity in all activities. In this respect, a teacher guide book was prepared for the purpose of guiding teachers. In this teacher guide book, there are annual and daily plans only to lead teachers the way. In this study, activities recommended in early childhood education program and teacher guide book were examined in terms of creativity. In the study, the qualitative research method, "document investigation" was used. As the examples of activities were examined, they were compared depending on the developmental areas adopted while the guide book was designed. It is found as a result of the study that activities towards daily life skills are more effective in developing creativity.

*Keywords: Early childhood education; early childhood education program; creativity;*

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### 1. Introduction

Creativity is as old as history of humanity. However; the importance of creativity in education processes has recently been considered. While conventional education approaches generally try to develop convergent thinking, one of the basic purposes of contemporary education approaches is to raise creative individuals (San, 2009).

Several different definitions have been made for the concept of creativity. Torrance defines creativity as "sensing the gaps, disturbing or missing elements and develop ideas about these, form assumptions, test these, compare the results, change them and retest them" while Barlett uses the expression as "leaving the main road, being open for experimentation and getting rid of the patterns". The most contemporary approach that we can use for creativity is as follows: "the ability to form associations among relations that weren't formed before and hence putting forth new experiences, opinions and products within a new thinking scheme". Based on this definition, it can be said that a creative process or an event involves elements as innovation, originality, being unusual, exceptional and different and all these aspects are in harmony and a synthesis (San, 2009).

Creativity is a comprehensive concept including cognitive processes such as perception, sensitivity, flexibility, rationalism, intuition and discovery, which are commonly used in our daily lives (MEB, 2006a). Supporting creativity in education process has a great significance in each of the steps of formal education. Raising creative

\* Asli Yildirim. Tel.: +90 535 5122577; fax: +90 222 3350573.

E-mail address: [ayildirim@anadolu.edu.tr](mailto:ayildirim@anadolu.edu.tr).

individuals is only possible by supporting children's creativity from the early ages. In this respect, supporting creativity in early childhood period gains a great importance.

Creativity is one of the traits that a person has since birth. As creativity is not a learnt behavior, it is easy to observe it in children. Children are not aware that they have the stimulating power to create. Imagination, emotions and thoughts come together with an internal motivation and express themselves freely (Ozden, 1993, cited: Erdogdu, 2006).

It is particularly necessary that suitable emotional and physical environment be arranged, necessary tools and equipment be provided and teacher have the attitudes supporting creativity to foster it in school settings (Oren, 2009). In addition to providing these conditions, it is also expected that the program implemented has the properties supporting creativity. Creativity is adopted as one of the basic features of the program in the Early Childhood Education Program for children 36-72 months of age, which started to be implemented in Turkey in 2006. Accordingly, no field or purpose as "creativity" or "developing creativity" was identified. However, it is expected that teachers use children's and their own creativity in all activities they implement in line with the goals and acquisitions because creativity is a critical concept for the success of the program (MEB, 2006).

While the Early Childhood Education Program was made ready for implementation, Teacher Guide Book was prepared for the purpose of guiding teachers (MEB, 2006b). In the Teacher Guide Book, there are examples of annual and daily plans as well as activities. Teachers can choose among these activities and use them or they can change or develop the activities they choose according to the properties of the student group.

Supporting individuals to be creative starting from the young ages will contribute in forming societies that are creative and think freely in the future. Raising creative individuals who can think freely can be made possible when creative teachers implement programs improving creativity. Therefore, the competency to support creativity of the education programs that guide the teachers becomes important. In this respect, the general purpose of the study is to evaluate the Early Childhood Education Program for children 36-72 months of age and Teacher Guide Book in terms of creativity. Answers for the following questions were searched in line with this purpose:

- How is the distribution of acquisitions in Early Childhood Education Program that aim at improving creativity in terms of developmental areas?
- How is the distribution of activity examples in Teacher Guide Book in terms of developmental areas?
- What kind of properties do the activity examples in Teacher Guide Book have in terms of improving creativity?

In the study, activity examples in Early Childhood Education Program for children 36-72 months of age and Teacher Guide Book were examined and evaluated in terms of improving creativity. The activity examples prepared for psycho-motor, socio-emotional, language, cognitive and self-care developmental areas were examined comparatively.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Research model*

Since it was aimed at evaluating the Early Childhood Education Program for children 36-72 months of age and Teacher Guide Book in terms of creativity, this study was designed in survey model. Survey models are the research models describing the situations that were present in the past or are still present (Karasar, 2006). Qualitative research approach was adopted in the study and document evaluation technique was used in assessing the program and guide book.

### *2.2. Data gathering*

In order to gather data in the study, Early Childhood Education Program for children 36-72 months of age and Teacher Guide Book were examined. A checklist developed by the researcher based on literature was used in data

gathering. The checklist was completed after the items were reviewed one by one by the researcher as well as an expert in the field. The program and teacher guide book were evaluated considering this checklist and data were gathered.

### 2.3. Data analysis

Document investigation technique was used in examining the Early Childhood Education Program for children 36-72 months of age and Teacher Guide Book in terms of creativity. The goals and acquisitions in the program, explanations with regards to creativity and the activity examples in the Teacher Guide Book were considered while examining the program and the guide book in terms of creativity. These elements of the program and the guide book were assessed independently within the scope of the checklist developed by the researcher and an expert in the field. Next, the researcher and the expert reached an agreement. Data of the study were analyzed and interpreted by indicating percentages (%) and frequencies (f) based on the research questions.

## 3. Findings

In this section, findings obtained as a result of the study were shown under three headings based on the research questions.

### 3.1. Acquisitions in the Early Childhood Education Program aiming at improving creativity

The distribution of acquisitions in Early Childhood Education Program according to the developmental areas is given in Table 1.

Table 1. The distribution of acquisitions in Early Childhood Education Program towards improving creativity according to the developmental areas

Developmental Area	Total Acquisition (F)	The Number of Acquisitions that provide and opportunity for creativity emergence (f)	Percentage (%)
Psycho- motor area	46	4	8.69
Social-emotional area	58	15	25.86
Language area	37	2	5.40
Cognitive area	97	12	12.37
Self-care skills	26	0	0
Total	264	33	12.50

As seen in Table 1, 8.69 % of the acquisitions in psychomotor developmental area, 25.86 % of the acquisitions in social-emotional developmental area, 5.40 % of the acquisitions in language area, 12.37 % of the acquisitions in the cognitive developmental area directly express the development of creative skills. Besides, no expression that can support creativity was found in any of the acquisitions in self-care skills. The acquisition in the psychomotor area stating as; “combines objects in a way that they form new shapes”, the acquisition in the social-emotional area stating as; “expresses his/her feelings with various ways as music, dance, drama...etc.”, the acquisition in the language area stating as; “forms compositions like events or stories by using visual materials” and the acquisition in the cognitive area stating as; “forms an original pattern with objects” can be given as examples of providing the opportunity for the development of creativity. When Early Childhood Education Program is generally assessed, it is seen that in 12.50 % of all acquisitions the development of creativity is directly stated. When the “The Child and Creativity” section of the Early Childhood Education Program is examined, it can be said that the program is sufficient in terms of developing creativity. Moreover, that there are clues for teachers for material selection with regards to supporting development of creativity and concrete examples for practice in this section contributes effective implementation of the program.

### 3.2. The distribution of activity examples in the Teacher Guide Book according to the developmental areas

There are 53 activity examples in Teacher Guide Book in total for the 5 different developmental areas. The distribution of activity examples according to the developmental areas is given in Table 2:

Table 2. The distribution of activity examples in the Teacher Guide Book according to the developmental areas

Developmental Area	The number of Activities (F)	Percentage (%)
Psycho- motor area	13	24.53
Social-emotional area	12	22.64
Language area	10	18.86
Cognitive area	15	28.30
Self-care skills	3	5.67
Total	53	100.0

As seen in Table 2, 24.53 % of the activities in the Teacher Guide Book were prepared for psychomotor developmental area, 22.64 % of them for social-emotional area, 18.86 % for language area, 28.30 % for cognitive area and 5.67 % for self-care skills.

### 3.3. The properties of examples of activities in Teacher Guide Book in terms for developing creativity

The 53 activities in Teacher Guide Book were examined in terms of creativity indicators that the researcher identified based on literature. The distribution of the creativity indicators that the activities in Teacher Guide Book have are given in Table 3.

Table 3. The distribution of activities in Teacher Guide Book in terms of creativity indicators

Indicator	Psychomotor area		Social-emotional area		Language Area		Cognitive Area		Self-care skills		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Continuity	5	38.46	1	8.33	5	50.00	10	66.66	2	66.66	23	43.40
Flexibility	9	69.23	7	58.33	7	70.00	3	20.00	2	66.66	28	52.83
Originality	8	61.53	5	41.66	6	60.00	2	13.33	1	33.33	22	41.50
Elaboration	5	38.46	7	58.33	8	80.00	13	86.66	3	100.0	36	67.92
Dreaming	8	61.53	8	66.66	6	60.00	3	20.00	2	66.66	27	50.94
Risk taking	4	30.77	2	16.66	6	60.00	10	66.66	3	100.0	25	47.17
Curiosity	4	30.77	3	25.00	4	40.00	7	46.66	1	33.33	19	35.85
Complexity	7	53.84	4	33.33	8	80.00	11	73.33	3	100.0	33	62.26

As seen in Table 3, while 69.23 % of the activities in psychomotor area in the Teacher Guide Book have the property of “flexibility”, only 30.77 % of them have the properties of “dreaming” and “complexity”. 66.66 % of the activities in social-emotional area includes the indicator of “curiosity” and the “continuity” property is seen only in 8.33 % of the activities. 80 % of the activities in language area have the indicators of “elaboration” and “risk taking” while only 40 % have the property of “complexity”. 86.66 % of the activities in cognitive area have the indicator of “elaboration” while only 13.33 % have the “originality” indicator. 100% of the self-care skills have the indicators of “elaboration”, “dreaming” and “risk taking” while “originality” and “complexity” are seen in 33.33 % of the activities. The activities in Teacher Guide Book are examined regardless of the developmental areas and it is seen that it has the indicator of “elaboration” mostly with a percentage of 67.92. The following indicators are “complexity”, “flexibility”, “dreaming”, “risk taking”, “continuity” and “originality” respectively. Also, it is seen that 35.85 % of the activities have the “curiosity” indicator with the least ratio.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the results of the study, it can be said that the number of acquisitions that directly express development of creativity in Early Childhood Education Program is quite low. However, creativity in Early Childhood Education Program is adopted as the most fundamental aspect of this program. In this respect, in “The

Child and Creativity” section (MEB, 2006a, p. 56-58), the importance of creativity for the child is emphasized. Additionally, teachers are guided in terms of choosing the materials supporting creativity and clues are given to them regarding the attitudes supporting creativity. The Early Childhood Education Program was prepared and made ready for practice in such a flexible way that it allows teacher to use her own creativity. What teachers should do is to consider the properties and needs of the children in their classrooms and prepare creative experiences suitable for them under the guidance of this frame program.

As a result of the research, it can be said that the activity examples in the Teacher Guide Book are mostly for supporting cognitive developmental area. In addition, when activities for all developmental areas are individually examined, it is seen that the activity examples include all of the creativity indicators. However, it was found out that creativity indicator ratios differ depending on developmental areas. The indicator of “continuity” exists mostly in activities in cognitive and self-care areas. “Flexibility” exists in language and “dreaming” exists in both social-emotional and self-care areas. The indicator of “originality” comes to the forefront mostly in activities in the psychomotor area. “Curiosity” is an indicator which is rarely seen; nevertheless, it appears in activities in cognitive area. Moreover, it is seen that all of the activities for self-care skills possess the indicators of “elaboration”, “risk taking” and “complexity”.

In conclusion, although the number of activity examples for self-care skills in Teacher Guide Book is low, it is seen that it has more than one creativity indicators at the same time. Based on this result, it can be said that activities planned for improving children’s life skills are also useful for emphasizing children’s creativity. It is also found out that it facilitates the development of creativity that activities planned by the teacher are based on the things children can experience in real life.

The following recommendations can be made in line with the results of the research:

- Creativity can be emphasized more at institutions where early childhood teachers are educated and practices for developing creativity of teacher candidates can be made.
- In service trainings that can be helpful in associating creativity with all developmental areas and types of activities can be designed.
- Research can be done on to what extent the program fulfills its function of improving creativity by conducting classroom observations.

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