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## Examining The Lifelong Learning Levels Of Prospective Special Education Teachers

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## **Abstract**

This research aims to examine the lifelong learning levels of prospective special education teachers in means of various variables. 132 prospective special education teachers, 82 females and 50 males studying at Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University joined the research. The study has been designed with a single survey model and data were gathered with the Lifelong Learning Scale. To decide on the tests to analyze the lifelong learning characteristics of the participants, the kurtosis and skewness values and the normalcy of the scale scores were examined with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. As a conclusion, participants' scores were found to be high in general. No significant differences were observed in participants' scores by gender, secondary school graduated and the grade level. However lifelong learning levels of the participants diverged significantly by their age and the age had a wide effect on the prospective special education teachers' lifelong learning levels. The lifelong learning level of those aged 18-22 is more than those aged 28-32 and those aged 33 and over. Suggestions for practice and further research were included.

**Keywords:** Lifelong learning, pre-service teacher, pre-service special education teacher.

## **Introduction**

In today's rapidly developing world, individuals tend to improve themselves and increase their knowledge, skills, and social and cultural levels. This is a lifelong process. The fact that individuals need to constantly renew their knowledge and themselves and need to use their skills and knowledge in all areas of life has been effective on the disclosure of the concept of lifelong learning (Lambeir, 2005). In the 1800s, the concept of lifelong learning was newly used. While lifelong learning was shaped as adult education in the first years and was considered a process in which the importance of vocational education was emphasized (Koç, et al., 2009), it has recently been considered a process that covers all segments of society and all stages of education (Uysal, 2009). Lifelong learning is one of the key skills for people to adjust and accomplish in labor markets and societies shaped by longer life expectancy, high-speed technological developments, globalization, and change in population, as well as sudden crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Lifelong learning is a process that begins in childhood and youth and continues throughout lifetime. Lifelong learning includes formal learning in environments such as schools and education centers, all kinds of learning from colleagues and trainers, and spontaneous learning resulting from social communications (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021). According to MoNE (2019), lifelong learning is described as all learning facilities people participate to enhance their knowledge, competences, interests, and abilities related to personal, social, community, and occupation.

The demands of a changing working life require workers to know more and more. Therefore, lifelong learning is an essential skill for building the future of our societies. Lifelong learning is explained as a mindset and habit that people need to acquire, rather than a classical adult education. Therefore, in today's world, educational institutions need to be transformed in a way that allows people to gain comprehension, skills, and abilities to adapt to various changes and developments (Demiralay & Karadeniz, 2008).

The pandemic has caused major disorganizations in tertiary education programs and the provision of occupational education, creating problems during the transition from compulsory education to adulthood, thereby reducing participation in adult learning (OECD, 2021). Undoubtedly, universities have a crucial role in promoting lifelong learning. Accrued the ongoing process of

globalization, demographic changes, and the technological progress, higher education institutions need to expand access to lifelong learning opportunities. It is through continuity of learning and lifelong learning that individuals can adapt to constant differentiation (Borat, 2012). Wider access to higher education should not be restricted to the continuous occupational development required by a rapidly changing labor market. It should also meet the growing demand for the opportunities for personal development and cultural enrichment that higher education offers. Tertiary education organizations' part in encouraging lifelong learning is not restricted to what they provide to students. Continuing education opportunities for teachers, lifelong learning research, and community learning opportunities are also seen as crucial (Yang et al., 2015).

Lifelong learning aims to keep up with the information society in which the individual lives and to actively join in all phases of both economic and social life to control his/her life. Teachers play a crucial role in the lifelong learning perspective. As the teachers' task is to educate students at all levels and ages (Aleandri & Refrigeria, 2014). Teachers need to guide students on where to get information and how to access information. In a rapidly changing information society, teachers need to acquire new knowledge, become more qualified, develop and enrich their skills, and transfer them to their students in a good way (Yurdabakan, 2002). Teachers ought constantly to update their knowledge in the face of constantly changing and renewed information. For this reason, higher education institutions are expected to create contexts that support teachers' and prospective teachers' lifelong learning habits and include regulations for this purpose.

To be effective teachers, teachers, and prospective teachers must first take responsibility for their learning. In particular, individuals with special needs need effective teachers to achieve the desired results in their lives after school. It is important to train prospective special education teachers to take responsibility for their learning when they enter the classroom (Brownell, 2021). Working with students with special needs requires teachers to use many skills and requires continuous training. The fact that the special education process is teamwork requiring the cooperation of families, teachers, psychologists, doctors, and other professionals related to people with special needs increases the training needs of teachers (Tamášová, 2015). In ensuring active learning for students with special needs, teachers should have the skills to use different strategies, critical thinking, high-level problem-solving, and self-regulation skills (Koç, 2007). It should not be forgotten that the fact that teachers who implement education programs have these qualities and data and successfully fulfill their duties as facilitators of learning are related to their lifelong learning skills (Evin- Gencil, 2013).

As the lifelong learning literature was investigated, studies conducted with teachers to determine their lifelong learning levels (Kılıç, 2014; Şahin & Arcagök, 2014; Yaman & Yazar, 2015; Ayaz & Ünal, 2016; İleri, 2017; Çam, 2017; Aydın, 2020), and many studies conducted with prospective teachers were found (Coşkun & Demirel, 2012; Evin Gencil, 2013; Beytekin & Kadı, 2014; Gür Erdoğan, 2014; Karaduman, 2015; Oral, 2015; Özçiftçi & Çakır 2015; Yıldırım, 2015; Tunca, Şahin, & Aydın, 2015; Ayra, Kösterelioğlu, & Çelen, 2016; Ergün & Cömert-Özata, 2016; Akran & Özdemir, 2018; Boztepe & Demirtaş, 2018; Kozikoğlu & Altunova, 2018; Aykaç & Aslandağ, 2019; Bulaç, 2019; Satıroğlu, 2019; Çavuşoğlu & Acar, 2020; Erdoğan, 2020; Kaya, 2022). However, no study was found with prospective special education teachers. It should not be forgotten that determining the extent of teacher candidates' lifelong learning skills is important in planning the next steps and taking the necessary measures (Evin- Gencil, 2013). Furthermore, knowing the lifelong learning levels of prospective special education

teachers and the variables that affect them will help to make inferences about enriching lifelong learning opportunities for prospective special education teachers in higher education. Based on these considerations, this research in general aims to examine prospective special education teachers' lifelong learning levels. The sub-objectives determined in line with this general purpose are as follows:

1. What are the lifelong learning levels of prospective special education teachers?
2. Is there a difference among the lifelong learning levels of prospective special education teachers by age, gender, graduated secondary school type, and grade level?

## Method

### Research Model

This research was designed with the single survey model. Research models applied to determine the occurrence of variables individually, in terms of kind or extent are called single survey models. In single survey models, the variables belonging to the event, item, individual, group, etc. unit, and situation are described separately (Karasar, 2002). Since the lifelong learning levels of prospective special education teachers were examined concerning various variables and the results affiliated to each variable were described separately, it can be said that it is suitable for the functioning of the single survey model.

### Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of prospective special education teachers studying in Special Education Departments in Turkey, and the sample consisted of 132 prospective special education teachers studying in Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University Special Education Department, which was reached by convenient sampling technique. The convenience sampling technique is one of the non-probability sampling techniques are frequently appropriate to population studies and clinical research. Convenience sampling is based on multiple forms of prejudice and allows for statistical evaluation of sampler error. Analysis of convenience sampling results can only be applied to the study group (Stratton, 2021). The profile of participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1. *The profile of the participants*

		N	%
Age	18-22	84	63,6
	23-27	27	20,5
	28-32	14	10,6
	33 and above	7	5,3
Gender	F	82	62,1
	M	50	37,9
Graduation	Anatolian Secondary School (ASS)	79	59,8
	Anatolian Imam Hatip Secondary School (AIHSS)	10	7,6
	Science Secondary School (SSS)	5	3,8
	Social Sciences Secondary School (SSSS)	8	6,1
	Vocational and Technical Anatolian Secondary School (VTASS)	17	12,9
Grade	Other	13	9,8
	1	22	16,7
	2	40	30,3
	3	30	22,7
	4	40	30,3

According to Table 1, 84 of the participants were between the ages of 18-22 (63.6%), 27 were between the ages of 23-27 (20.5%), 14 were between the ages of 28-32 (10.6%), and 7 were 33 years and older (5.3%). Of the respondents, 82 were female (62.1%), 50 were male (37.9%). The secondary school that 79 of the respondents graduated was AHS (59.8%), 10 graduated from AIHSS (7.6%), 5 graduated from SSS (3.8%), 8 graduated from SSSS (6.1%), 17 graduated from VTASS (12.9%) and 13 participants graduated from other types of secondary schools (9.8%). Of the respondents, 22 were in the 1st grade (16.7%), 40 in the 2nd grade (30.3%), 30 in the 3rd grade (22.7%), 40 in the 4th grade (30.3%).

### **Data Collection Tools**

Demographic Information Questionnaire (DIQ) and Lifelong Learning Scale (LLS) were used for data collection.

DIQ: The Demographic Information Questionnaire consisted of questions asking variables such as age, gender, type of secondary school graduated from, and grade level of the prospective special education teachers.

LLS: Originally designed by Wielkiewicz and Meuwissen (2014) to assess the lifelong learning of several groups of people, the standardization of the scale under Turkish conditions was applied by Engin et al. (2017). The Turkish adaptation study of the scale, which originally consisted of 16 items and one dimension, was applied to 727 university students, 346 of whom were female and 381 of whom were male. By the factor analysis, a scale form including 15 items and a single dimension was acquired by removing item 1, which had a value below .30. According the confirmatory factor analysis, the model and data fit was found to be high. The Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.936. The scale scores vary between 15 and 75.

### **Data Collection**

DIQ and LLS, which were organized on the online survey form, were delivered to the participants through mobile sharing groups and asked to fill them in.

### **Data Analysis**

To decide on the tests to analyze the lifelong learning characteristics of the participants, the kurtosis and skewness values and the normalcy of the scale scores were examined with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (Can, 2017), which is applied when the group size is greater than 30, and the results are below in Table 2.

Table 2. *Kolmogorov smirnov test*

	Z	Kurtosis	Skewness	p
LLS Scale	,984	,536	-,762	,284

As seen in Table 2, when we look at the data collected with the LLS Scale [(Z=0.984; kurtosis=-0.536, Standard error=.419; skewness=-0.762, Standard error=.211);  $p>.05$ ], although the Z statistic satisfies the normality condition, the kurtosis and skewness values do not. The data indicate negative skewness as seen in the histogram graph below.

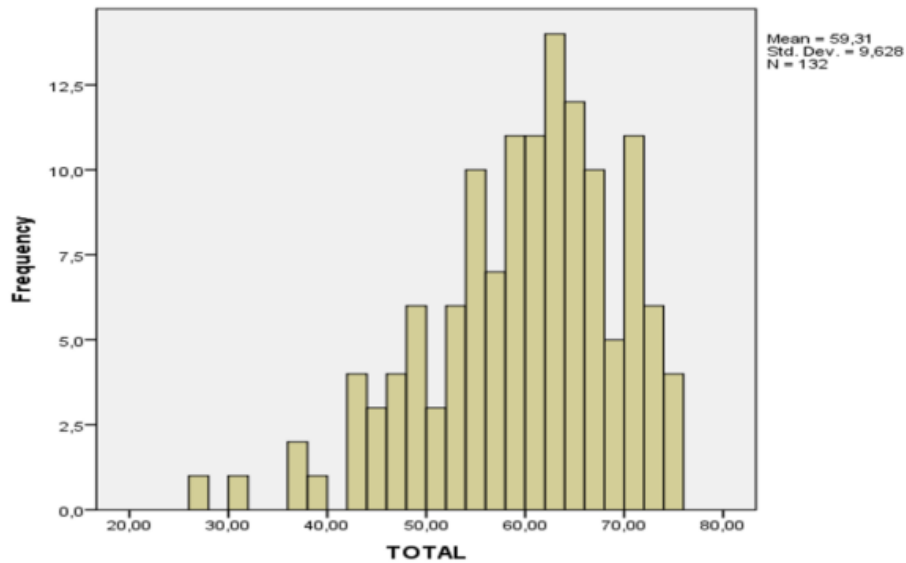


Figure 1. The histogram graph

Accordingly, the square root transformation process, which is one of the data transformation processes applied for negative skewness in the data, was applied. The outcomes of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test applied after the square root transformation process are given in Table 4.

Table 3. Kolmogorov smirnov test after square root transformation

Scale	Kolmogorov Smirnov Z	Kurtosis	Skewness	p
LLS Scale	,499	-,162	-,066	,964

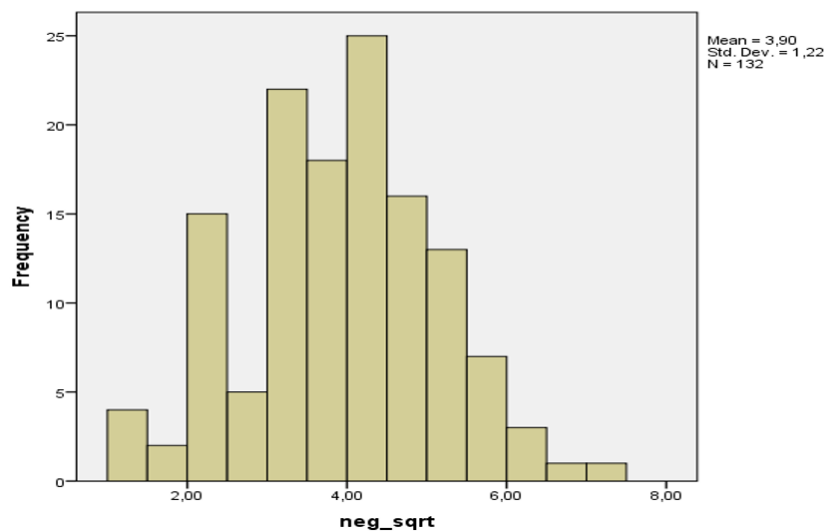


Figure 2. The histogram graph

Subject to Table 3 and reported by the results of the Kolmogorov Smirnov Test applied after square root transformation, it is seen that the normality condition is met when looking at the data collected with the LLS Scale [(Z=,499; kurtosis= -,162, Standard error=,419; skewness=-,066, Standard error=,211);  $p > .05$ ]. The normalcy of the data is confirmed by the histogram above.

Accordingly, the Independent Sample t-Test has been applied when the distribution is normal and the number of groups are two, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) has been applied when there are

more than two groups. Statistical significance level .05 was accepted. The eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) value calculated for the effect size analysis was calculated with the formula  $\eta^2 = t^2 / (t^2 + (n_1 + n_2 - 2))$  for the t-test and  $\eta^2 = \text{sum of squares (between groups)} / \text{sum of squares (total)}$  for the analysis of variance, and the effect size was interpreted as “small” at  $\eta^2 = 0.01$ , “medium” at  $\eta^2 = 0.06$ , and “large” at  $\eta^2 = 0.14$  (Büyüköztürk, 2011).

### Ethical Permits of Research

In this study, all the rules specified to be followed within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were complied with. None of the actions specified under the heading "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, have been taken.

### Ethics Committee Permission Information:

Name of the committee that made the ethical evaluation = Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.

Date of ethical review decision = 27.05.2022

Ethics assessment document issue number = 2022/06

## Findings

This section presents the findings acquired in line with the objectives.

### What are the lifelong learning levels of prospective special education teachers?

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of participants' scores

	$\bar{X}$	S
LLS Scale	59,31	9,62

According to Table 4, the average score of participants on the LLS Scale is 59.31. Considering that the scale scores vary between 15 and 75, it can be said that the participants' scores are above the average score that can be obtained from the scale and their lifelong learning levels are high.

### Is there a difference among the lifelong learning levels of prospective special education teachers by age, gender, graduated secondary school type, and grade level?

Table 5. Analysis of variance results of prospective special education teachers' scores by age

	Age	N	$\bar{X}$	S	F	p
LLS Scale	18-22	84	4,23	1,16	8,888	,000
	23-27	27	3,65	0,95		
	28-32	14	3,03	1,03		
	33 and above	7	2,57	1,44		

According to Table 5, as a consequence of variance analysis, there was significant difference ([F: 8,888]  $p < .05$ ) in the scores of respondents by age. According to the effect size analysis, it is seen that age has a large effect on the lifelong learning levels of respondents ( $\eta^2 = 0.21$ ).

Upon this result, the outcomes of the Levene test were evaluated for the post hoc test to be performed to identify which groups differ between the averages, and since it was seen that the variances were equal (Levene statistic: 1.363;  $p = 0.257$ ), the Scheffe Test, which is recommended in cases where the variances are equal and do not require the number of observations to be equal, was applied (Güriş & Astar, 2019). The outcomes are introduced below.



Table 6. Scheffe test results of the LLS scale scores by age

	(I) Age	(J) Age	Average Difference (I-J)	Standard Error	P
LLS Scale	18-22	23-27	,57851	,25	,149
		28-32	1,19610*	,32	,005
		33 and above	1,65551*	,44	,004
	23-27	18-22	-,57851	,25	,149
		28-32	,61759	,37	,428
		33 and above	1,07699	,48	,169
	28-32	18-22	-1,19610*	,32	,005
		23-27	-,61759	,37	,428
		33 and above	,45941	,52	,854
	33 and above	18-22	-1,65551*	,44	,004
		23-27	-1,07699	,48	,169
		28-32	-,45941	,52	,854

There was significant difference in the scores between those aged 18-22 and those aged 28-32 [Standard error: .32] and those aged 33 and over [Standard error: .44] in favor of those aged 18-22. Accordingly, the lifelong learning level of those aged 18-22 ( $\bar{X}$ =4.23) was higher than those aged 28-32 ( $\bar{X}$ =3.03) and those aged 33 and over ( $\bar{X}$ =2.57).

Table 7. T-test results of prospective special education teachers' lifelong learning scale scores by gender

	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	S	Sd	t	p
LLS Scale	F	82	3,88	1,19	130	-0,194	0,847
	M	50	3,92	1,28			

According to Table 7, no significant difference was noticed among respondents' scores by gender [t(130)= -0.194, p>.05].

Table 8. Analysis of variance results of the scores of prospective special education teachers by the secondary school type

	Secondary School Type	N	$\bar{X}$	S	F	p
LLS Scale	AHS	79	4,03	1,25	1,962	,089
	AIHHS	10	4,30	0,90		
	SHS	5	4,30	0,93		
	SSHS	8	3,94	1,24		
	VTAHS	17	3,50	0,91		
	Other	13	3,13	1,44		

Based on the variance analysis results on Table 8, was no significant difference ([F: 1,962] p>.05) was noticed in the lifelong learning scores of participants by secondary school they graduated.

Table 9. Variance analysis results of the scores of prospective special education teachers by grade level

	Grade Level	N	$\bar{X}$	S	F	p
LLS scale	1	22	3,83	1,22	,740	,530
	2	40	3,85	1,34		
	3	30	4,19	1,27		
	4	40	3,78	1,06		

Based on the variance analysis results on Table 9, no significant difference ([F: ,740] p>.05) was observed in the lifelong learning levels of participants by their grade level.



## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study examined prospective special education teachers' the lifelong learning levels and whether the lifelong learning levels of the participants differed by age, gender, secondary school type, and grade level. Based on findings, the lifelong learning levels of participants were generally found to be high. When analyzed according to various variables, it is clear that the participants' lifelong learning levels did not differ by gender, kind of secondary school graduated from, and current grade level. Instead, the scores of the participants differed by age. Accordingly age had a wide effect on the lifelong learning levels of the participants. Besides the lifelong learning level of those between the ages of 18-22 was higher than those between the ages of 28-32 and those aged 33 and over.

When we examined the findings related to the first sub-objective, it was concluded that the respondents' lifelong learning was at a high level. It is clear that the research result coincides with many studies in which lifelong learning levels are determined. In the studies conducted with school administrators, teachers, and prospective teachers, it was found that their lifelong learning levels were high (Aydın, 2020; Ayanoglu, 2020; Erdoğan, 2020; Şahin, Sarıtaş, & Çatalbaş, 2020, Bahadır, 2019; Bulaç, 2019; Gedik, 2019; Kabal, 2019; Korkmaz, 2019; Satiroğlu, 2019; Çam 2017, İleri 2017; Ayaz & Ünal, 2016; Ergün & Cömert Özata, 2016; Ayra, et al. 2015; Gür Erdoğan, 2014; Özçiftçi & Çakır 2015; Yıldırım, 2015 and Kılıç 2015). As a result, pre-service special education teachers obviously tend to lifelong learning; they are open and predisposed to learning to help their personal and professional development. In actual fact prospective special education teachers have lifelong learning skills and qualifications. In addition to these, the high level of lifelong learning shows that teachers and pre-service teachers should update their knowledge and keep up with the developing age and modernization (Kaya, 2022). However, some studies have concluded that lifelong learning levels are low (Tunca et al., 2015; Demir-Başaran & Sesli, 2019). Increasing the number of qualitative studies to be conducted to determine the reasons for this result is thought to give direction to other studies to be conducted on lifelong learning.

When the findings related to the other sub-problem of the research were analyzed, it was concluded that lifelong learning levels of the participants differed by age. In line with the findings, age has a great effect on the participants' lifelong learning levels and the scores of those between the ages of 18-22 is higher than those between the ages of 28-32 and 33 and above. Prospective teachers in this age group can accept the benefits of lifelong learning for personal and social development and direct themselves toward it. In addition, they may have a positive viewpoint to learning and accessing information with an open approach to self-improvement. The finding is supported by recent research. In research applied with police officers and prospective teachers in which lifelong learning levels were determined, a significant difference by age was determined (Demirel, 2019; Polat & Abaslı, 2018). In contrast to this study, some studies have found that lifelong learning dispositions do not have a significant difference by age. (Çavuşoğlu & Acar, 2020; Adabaş 2019; Aykaç & Aslandağ, 2019; Yılmaz & Beşkaya, 2018; Sarıgöz, 2015). Seminars are suggested to be organized by professionals to encourage the lifelong learning perspectives of prospective teachers who are open to new ideas and innovations.

It was concluded that there was no significant difference in the lifelong learning levels of pre-service special education teachers according to gender. In other words, the lifelong learning levels of male and female pre-service special education teachers were similar. Recent studies support this finding of the research. Boztepe and Demirtaş (2019), Adabaş (2019), Yasa (2018), Akran and Özdemir

(2018), Kozikoğlu and Altunova (2018), Oral (2015), Tunca et al. (2015), Beytekin and Kadı (2014) and Kılıç (2014) also found no difference in lifelong learning levels by gender in their studies with teacher candidates. According to Boztepe and Demirtaş (2019), the cause of this situation is interpreted as that the studies in the education processes given by the faculties of education contribute to the awareness of prospective teachers in lifelong learning. Understanding lifelong learning is extremely important, especially for prospective teachers with regard to catching up with age and contributing to their individual development at the same time. The adoption and implementation of lifelong learning are among the main qualities of people in knowledge societies (Demiralay & Karadeniz, 2008). However, some studies have found out significant difference in lifelong learning level by gender (Yazıcı, 2020; Doğan, 2019; Kabal, 2019; Yılmaz & Beşkaya 2018; İleri, 2017; Horuz, 2017; Özgür, 2016; Karaduman, 2015; Ayra et al., 2015; Gür-Erdoğan, 2014; Evin Gencil, 2013; Özçiftçi & Çakır 2015; Demiralay & Karadeniz, 2008). In most of these research results, it was observed that lifelong learning levels were higher in favor of women. In general, it is clear that women's lifelong learning levels are high because they see themselves as prone and competent to learning. According to Jenkins (2004), women frequently encounter job changes, interruptions, or quitting jobs due to their responsibilities and make efforts to adapt and adapt to these changes, and thus women's lifelong learning competencies are positively affected.

When the findings concerning the other sub-problem were investigated, no significant difference was observed in the scores of participants by secondary school type they graduated. According to this finding, it is clear that prospective teachers show similar lifelong learning levels despite the secondary school they graduated.

The analysis conducted to examine the differentiation of prospective special education teachers' lifelong learning levels by grade level concluded that there was no significant difference by grade level. When this finding of the research is compared with the the literature, there are both similarities and differences. In some studies conducted in parallel with this research, no significant difference among lifelong learning by grade level variable was determined (Asiloğulları, 2020; Oran, 2020; Bahadır, 2019; Altay-Yorulmaz, 2019; Tatlısu, 2016; Selçuk, 2016). In contrast to these results, there was a difference among lifelong learning levels and grade levels (Coşkun & Demirel, 2012; Tunca et al., 2015; Karakuş, 2013). When the research were reviewed, it was interpreted that the reason why the prospective teachers' lifelong learning levels in upper grades were high was that intensive theoretical and practical courses related to the professional field improved their lifelong learning levels (Boztepe & Demirtaş, 2018). It is foreseen that as education level rises, prospective teachers will have positive contributions such as expanding their horizons and improving and updating themselves.

## **Recommendations**

On a practical level, it is recommended to create inclusive education environments in tertiary level to ensure the encouragement of young adults' lifelong learning skills. To make education environments inclusive and support lifelong learning in tertiary education, the following types of practices can be implemented: (1) building on person-centered learning and providing differentiated learning opportunities where students can make choices, (2) harnessing the power of technology to foster motivation for lifelong learning and to acquire the basic skills needed to navigate the changing labor market and life circumstances, and (3) fostering partnerships between different stakeholders in developing high-quality and inclusive learning environments (OECD, 2021). It is also recommended that

seminars should be organized by relevant experts for pre-service teachers to develop and change their perspectives on lifelong learning.

For further research, examining comparatively the lifelong learning levels of students of teaching department studying in several disciplines and examination of the lifelong learning levels of special education teachers are suggested. The study was carried out with prospective special education teachers studying at Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University Faculty of Education. For the generalizability of the research, the research can be applied with prospective special education teachers studying in more than one university in the future.

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES**

### **Contribution Rate of Researchers**

Author 1: 50%

Author 2: 50%

### **Conflict Statement**

There is no financial or individual organic link with the person or institution involved in the research.





## Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

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# Özel Eğitim Öğretmen Adaylarının Yaşam Boyu Öğrenme Düzeylerinin İncelenmesi

## Giriş

Hızla gelişen günümüz dünyasında bireyler kendilerini geliştirme, bilgi, beceri, sosyal ve kültür seviyelerini artırma eğilimindedir. Bu yaşam boyu devam eden bir süreçtir. Bireylerin, bilgilerini ve kendilerini devamlı yenileme ihtiyacında olması ve yaşamın bütün alanlarında beceri ve bilgilerini kullanmaya gerek duyması yaşam boyu öğrenme kavramının ortaya çıkmasında etkili olmuştur (Lambeir, 2005). Yaşam boyu öğrenmede amaç bireyin yaşadığı bilgi toplumuna ayak uydurmak, hayatını kontrol etmek için hem ekonomik hem de sosyal hayatın bütün aşamasında aktif olarak katılım göstermektir.

Değişen çalışma hayatının talepleri çalışanların giderek daha fazla şeyi bilmesini gerektirmektedir. Bu nedenle, yaşam boyu öğrenme, toplumlarımızın geleceğini inşa etmek için önemli bir beceridir. Yaşam boyu öğrenme klasik bir yetişkin eğitiminden ziyade, insanların edinmesi gereken bir zihniyet ve alışkanlık olarak açıklanmaktadır.

Yaşam boyu öğrenmede amaç bireyin yaşadığı bilgi toplumuna ayak uydurmak, hayatını kontrol etmek için hem ekonomik hem de sosyal hayatın bütün aşamasında aktif olarak katılım göstermektir. Öğretmenler yaşam boyu öğrenme perspektifinde kilit bir role sahiptir. Çünkü öğretmenlerin görevi her seviyede ve yaştaki öğrencileri eğitmektir (Aleandri ve Refrigeri, 2014). Öğretmenlerin öğrencilere bilgiyi nereden elde edeceği ve bilgiye nasıl ulaşacakları konusunda rehberlik etmesi son derece önemlidir. Hızla değişen bilgi toplumunda öğretmenlerin yeni bilgileri kazanması, daha nitelikli olması, becerilerini geliştirmesi ve zenginleştirmesi ve bunları da öğrencilerine iyi bir şekilde aktarması gerekmektedir (Yurdabakan, 2002). Öğretmen, sürekli değişen ve yenilenen bilgiler karşısında, bilgilerini sürekli güncellemelidir. Bu nedenle yükseköğretim kurumlarının öğretmenlerin ve öğretmen

adaylarının yaşam boyu öğrenme alışkanlarını destekleyici bağlamlar oluşturması ve buna yönelik düzenlemeler içermesi beklenmektedir.

Etkili birer öğretmen olabilmek için, özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının, sınıfa girdiklerinde kendi öğrenmelerinin sorumluluğunu üstlenecek şekilde yetiştirilmeleri önemli görülmektedir (Brownell, 2021). Eğitim programlarını uygulayan öğretmenlerin bu sayılan nitelik ve verileri taşımları ve öğrenmeyi kolaylaştırıcı görevlerini başarılı bir şekilde yerine getirmeleri, yaşam boyu öğrenme becerileriyle ilişkili olduğu unutulmamalıdır (Evin- Gencil, 2013). Özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeylerinin ve hangi değişkenlerden etkilendiğinin bilinmesinin, özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının yükseköğretimde yaşam boyu öğrenme fırsatlarının zenginleştirilmesine yönelik çıkarımlarda bulunmaya yardımcı olacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu düşüncelerden hareketle bu çalışmanın temel amacı, özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeylerinin incelenmesi olarak belirlenmiştir.

## **Yöntem**

Bu araştırma genel tarama modellerinden tekil tarama modeliyle desenlenmiştir. Bu araştırmanın evrenini Türkiye'deki Özel Eğitim Bölümlerinde okuyan özel eğitim öğretmeni adayları, örneklemi ise uygun örnekleme tekniği ile ulaşılan Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Özel Eğitim Bölümünde okuyan 132 özel eğitim öğretmeni adayı oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma verileri toplanırken hazırlanan Demografik Bilgi Formu ile Yaşam Boyu Öğrenme Ölçeğinden yararlanılmıştır. Yaşam Boyu Öğrenme Ölçeği: Orijinali Wielkiewicz ve Meuwissen (2014) tarafından öğrenci ve diğer gruptaki insanların yaşam boyu öğrenmelerini değerlendirmek amacıyla geliştirilen ölçeğin Türkiye koşullarında geçerlik ve güvenirlik çalışması Engin vd. (2017) tarafından yapılmıştır. Ölçeğin Cronbach Alfa güvenirlik katsayısı 0,936 bulunmuştur. Ölçekten alınabilecek en düşük puan 15 iken alınabilecek en yüksek puan 75'tir.

Verilerin toplanmasında Google Formlar uygulaması kullanılmış olup çevrimiçi anket formu üzerinde düzenlenen Demografik Bilgi Formu ve Yaşam Boyu Öğrenme Ölçeği katılımcılara mobil paylaşım grupları aracılığıyla ulaştırılmış ve doldurmaları istenmiştir.

Kolmogorov Smirnov testi [ $Z=0.984$ ; basıklık=-0.536, Standart hata=.419; çarpıklık=-0.762, Standart hata=.211);  $p>.05$ ] sonucunda elde edilen verileri incelediğimizde Z istatistiği normallik koşulunu sağlamasına rağmen basıklık ve çarpıklık değerleri normallik koşulunu sağlamamaktadır. Verilerdeki negatif çarpıklık için uygulanan veri dönüştürme işlemlerinden biri olan karekök dönüşümü uygulanmıştır. Karekök dönüşümü sonrasında uygulanan Kolmogorov Smirnov Testi sonuçlarına göre LLS Ölçeği ile toplanan veriler [ $Z=.499$ ; basıklık= -.162, Standart hata=.419; çarpıklık=-.066, Standart hata=.211);  $p>.05$ ] analiz edildiğinde normallik koşulunun sağlandığı görülmektedir. Buna göre dağılımın normal ve grup sayısının iki olduğu durumlarda Bağımsız Örneklem t-Testi, ikiden fazla grup olduğu durumlarda ise Varyans Analizi (ANOVA) uygulanmıştır.

## **Bulgular**

Özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının YBÖ Ölçeği'nden aldıkları ortalama puan 59,31'dir. Katılımcıların puanlarının ölçekten alınabilecek ortalama puanın üzerinde olduğu ve yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeylerinin yüksek olduğu söylenebilir. Çeşitli değişkenlere göre yapılan analizde katılımcıların yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeylerinin cinsiyete, mezun olunan lise türüne ve mevcut sınıf düzeyine göre anlamlı bir farklılık göstermediği tespit edilmiştir. Ancak katılımcıların yaşam boyu

öğrenme düzeylerinin katılımcıların yaşlarına göre anlamlı bir şekilde farklılaştığı; yaşın özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeyleri üzerinde geniş bir etkiye sahip olduğu ve 18-22 yaş aralığındakilerin yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeyinin 28-32 yaş aralığındakiler ile 33 yaş ve üzerindekiilere göre daha yüksek olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

## **Tartışma ve Sonuç**

Araştırmanın birinci alt amacına yönelik bulguları incelediğimizde özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının Yaşam Boyu Öğrenme ölçeğinden aldıkları puan ortalamalarında yaşam boyu öğrenmelerinin yüksek düzeyde olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunun yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeylerinin belirlendiği birçok araştırmayla örtüştüğü görülmektedir. Okul yöneticileri, öğretmenler ve öğretmen adaylarıyla yapılan araştırmalarda da yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeylerinin yüksek olduğu bulunmuştur (Aydın, 2020; Ayanoglu, 2020; Erdoğan, 2020; Şahin, Sarıtaş ve Çatalbaş, 2020, Bahadır, 2019; Bulaç, 2019; Gedik, 2019; Kabal, 2019; Korkmaz, 2019; Satiroğlu, 2019; Çam 2017, İleri 2017; Ayaz ve Ünal, 2016; Ergün ve Cömert Özata, 2016; Ayra, vd 2015; Gür Erdoğan, 2014; Özçiftçi ve Çakır 2015; Yıldırım, 2015 ve Kılıç 2015).

Araştırmanın diğer alt problemine ilişkin bulgular incelendiğinde, özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının yaşına göre yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeyleri arasında anlamlı fark olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Yaşın özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeyleri üzerinde geniş bir etkiye sahip olduğu ve 18-22 yaş aralığında olanların yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeyinin 28-32 yaş aralığında olanlar ile yaşı 33 ve üstü olanlardan daha fazla olduğu bulunmuştur. Bu yaş grubundaki öğretmen adaylarının yaşam boyu öğrenmenin kişisel ve toplumsal gelişimine faydasını kabul ederek kendisini buna yönlendirebilir. Ayrıca kendisini geliştirmeye açık bir yaklaşım ile öğrenmeye ve bilgiye ulaşmada olumlu bir tutuma sahip olabilir. Araştırmanın bulgusu alanyazındaki bazı araştırmaları destekler niteliktedir.

Araştırmaya katılan özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeylerinde cinsiyete göre anlamlı bir farklılık görülmediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Başka bir ifadeyle belirtmek gerekirse erkek ve kadın özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeyleri benzer çıkmıştır. Alanyazın incelendiğinde çalışmanın sonucunu destekleyen başka araştırmaların da olduğu görülmektedir (Boztepe ve Demirtaş, 2019; Adabaş 2019; Yasa, 2018, Akran ve Özdemir, 201, Kozikoğlu ve Altunova, 2018 ve Oral, 2015). Yaşam boyu öğrenme anlayışının özellikle öğretmen adayları için çağı yakalamak ve aynı zamanda bireysel gelişimine katkıda bulunmak açısından son derece önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir. Yaşam boyu öğrenmenin benimsenmesi ve uygulanması bilgi toplumlarındaki bireylerin önemli nitelikleri arasındadır (Demiralay ve Karadeniz, 2008).

Özel eğitim öğretmen adaylarının yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeylerinin sınıf düzeyi değişkenine göre farklılaşma durumunu incelemek amacıyla yapılan analizlerin sonucunda bulunan sınıf düzeyine göre anlamlı farklılaşma olmadığı bulunmuştur. Araştırmanın bu bulgusu alanyazındaki araştırma sonuçlarıyla karşılaştırıldığı zaman benzerlikler ve farklılıklar olduğu görülmektedir.

## **Öneriler**

Uygulamaya yönelik olarak, genç yetişkinliklerin yaşam boyu öğrenme becerilerinin geliştirilmesini sağlamak amacıyla yükseköğretimde de kapsayıcı öğrenme ortamlarının oluşturulması önerilmektedir. Yükseköğretimde kapsayıcı öğrenme ortamlarının oluşturulması ve yaşam boyu öğrenmenin desteklenmesi için şu türde uygulamalar gerçekleştirilebilir: (1) birey merkezli

öğrenmenin temel alınması ve öğrencilerin seçimler yapabileceği farklılaştırılmış öğrenme fırsatlarının sunulması, (2) değişen iş gücü piyasası ve yaşam koşullarını yönlendirebilmek için gerekli temel becerileri edinmede ve yaşam boyu öğrenme motivasyonunu teşvik etmede teknolojinin gücünden yararlanılması, (3) yüksek kaliteli ve kapsayıcı öğrenme ortamlarını geliştirmede farklı paydaşlar arasındaki ortaklıkların teşvik edilmesi (OECD, 2021). Ayrıca öğretmen adaylarına yaşam boyu öğrenmeyle ilgili bakış açılarını geliştirmek ve değiştirmek amacıyla ilgili uzmanlar tarafından seminerlerin düzenlenmesi önerilebilir.

İleri araştırmalara yönelik olarak, farklı branşlarda okuyan öğretmen adayların yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeylerinin karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmesi ve özel eğitim öğretmenlerinin yaşam boyu öğrenme düzeylerinin incelenmesi önerilmektedir.