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TEACHER CANDIDATES' PERCEPTIONS ON A NEW TECHNIQUE: IN-CLASS DEBATE IN KINDERGARTEN

Abstract:

In-class debate has been used starting from the older grades of primary school and above educational levels but it is not common in younger students' classes. Research shows that in-class debate used in higher education levels has a positive effect on students' development. It gives students the opportunity of cooperative learning and peer tutoring. This way, in-class debates cultivate the active engagement of the participating students. When teachers use debates as a daily activity in their classes, they can easily observe the students' developmental levels in different areas and may plan activities for students who show low performance. Since it is an influential technique for both students and teachers when used in the older grades, it was thought that, after giving suitable education to kindergarteners, in-class debate can also be used in kindergarten level. The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze teacher candidates' perceptions on this new technique used in preschools: in-class debate. Based on this purpose, for 4 weeks, the researcher worked with 12 teacher candidates who have been teaching in the classrooms of 60 to 72-month-old-children. Before the study, the researcher conducted a one-week workshop for these teacher candidates on how in-class debate can be used in kindergartens. After the workshop, the teacher candidates prepared their two-week plans where they added "in-class debate games" in their daily activities. These plans were examined ahead by the researcher and conducted in the classes by the teacher candidates under the supervision of the researcher. For the last two week, the teacher candidates observed the children focusing on their cognitive, socio-emotional and language development. Finally, the teacher candidates were interviewed based on their comparisons of their observations of the children and what their perceptions about in-class debate technique used in kindergarten. The teacher candidates explained that in-class debates used as daily activities scaffold children's development in different areas. They also mentioned that they learned how to involve children actively in their own learning and they overall evaluated the study as successful. According to findings of the study, suggestions were given to teachers and academicians who are working with teacher candidates.

Keywords:

In-class debate, kindergarten, teacher candidate

JEL Classification: I23, I29