



Childhood in the **Anthropocene**

VOL 1, No. 1. 2024, 7-11

What EfS says about early childhood teacher's education: The Turkish Context



Şule Alici

Kirsehir Ahi Evran University, Türkiye

Correspondent author: Şule Alici, namn.eftarnamn@mdu.se
DOI: [10.64952/cia.1.58829](https://doi.org/10.64952/cia.1.58829) **ISSN:** 1234-5678

Abstract

In this article, I explore the Transnational Dialogues in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability Research (TND) recent history, group members' works and projects, and how these endeavours have addressed the need for Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS) and shed light on the way forward for emerging researchers and practitioners. I also reflect on how this work has influenced the Turkish context, such as the Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum and teacher education.

Introduction

From September 2017 - my first TND attendance in Canada - to now, the TND group members as ECEfS researchers have made many attempts to enlarge the impact of this group's synergies, perspectives, pedagogies, projects, and collaborations across different countries.

© 2024 The author. This article is published open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons CC BY-NC license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which allows use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided that the original work is properly cited. The material may not be used for commercial purposes. Citation: Alici, Ş. (2024). What EfS says about early childhood teacher's education: The Turkish Context. *Childhood in the Anthropocene*, 1(1), 7-11.
<https://doi.org/10.64952/cia.1.58829>

Three notable edited books and three journal special issues actualize these attempts.

- Ferreira et al. (2019) focusing on embedding sustainability in teacher education courses and their institutions.
- Elliott, Ärlemalm-Hagsér and Davis (2020) encompassing different worldviews and cultural influences, national education policies, teacher education changes, plus initiatives in ECEfS curriculum and pedagogy.
- Davis and Elliott (2024) giving importance to new pedagogical approaches, cultural impetus for effective ECEfS practice, the intersections between digital technologies and STEAM and worldwide ECEfS implementation updates.
- Carr, Elliott and Ärlemalm-Hagsér (2021) covering different research projects and practices around the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and early childhood environmental education reflecting change in SDG awareness and understandings about how to adapt the SDGs into practice and educator pedagogical transformation.
- Evans et al. (2022) focusing internationally on early childhood initial teacher education in ECEfS; and,
- Karrow, Evans and Harwood (2022) targeting environmental and sustainability education within the teacher education field.

Moreover, previous TND participants established the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Special Interest Group (SIG) *Sustainability in Early Childhood Education* in 2019. Many self-organised symposia were offered at the annual EECERA conferences, including different perspectives and research projects from various countries. Besides academic research studies, some countries (such as Australia) have reported ECE curriculum updates to be more sustainability integrated.

In light of these international ECEfS developments, when I analysed the policy, practice, and academic studies in Türkiye some local shifts were evident. For example, the revision of the ECE curriculum to explicitly support EfS has nearly been completed. Looking further back, in 2018 the pre-service teacher education program was renewed by adding compulsory and elective courses to support sustainability. Moreover, there has been an increase in academic studies on both in-service (e.g., Alici & Sahin, 2023) and pre-service teacher education (e.g., Akyol, Pamuk & Elmas, 2018; Karaarslan Semiz & Temiz, 2021; Alici & Alan, 2022). Despite this acceleration, we still need to renovate teacher education and teacher qualities to support practices that more effectively target the SDGs and the political, economic, social, cultural, and natural dimensions of sustainability. A 2017 analysis of the Competencies of the Teaching Profession (MoNE, 2017) indicated that the social and cultural dimensions were placed under the teacher's attitudes and values domain; however, no explanation was offered about the other

sustainability dimensions or EfS under subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Alici, 2020).

More broadly, after Türkiye approved to enter into the Paris Climate Agreement in 2021 the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanization was renamed the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. Based on the recent United Nations climate change conferences, in 2021, the climate change directorate was established, and in 2022, the Climate Council was formed. However, when the 2011-2023 action plan originally declared by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization regarding sustainability policy is examined, the plan mostly centres on economic and environmental sustainability issues, such as energy transportation and zero waste. Furthermore, the only adaption strategy for the 2011-2023 Action Plan on Climate Change was focused on "organizing training, awareness-raising, and informative activities to develop the capacity to combat and adapt to climate change" (Ministry of Environment & Urbanisation, 2012, p. 140). Although without educational strategies and practices, action plans cannot be recognised by the public, and there is no detailed explanation of how this adaption can be implemented. Therefore, the next steps for Türkiye are that the action plan should be revised to encompass educational strategies and more collaboration with the Ministry of National Education and representatives from all educational sectors, from early childhood to higher education.

Further, as mentioned above, sustainability has political, economic, social, cultural and natural dimensions (UNESCO, 2010; 2021). Based on this multidimensionality, ECEfS requires more interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches and studies from the perspectives of the Mainstreaming Change Model proposed by Ferreira and Ryan (2012). Based on this model, if a change has occurred in one system/sub-system/hub, this provokes transformation in another system/sub-system/hub. In Türkiye, I argue the change starts with the ECE curriculum and I propose this will trigger transformations in teacher education and teacher competencies.

Lastly, my colleague and I instigated a series of historical studies focused on the previous Turkish teacher education program - Village Institutes - since this program was derived from the Turkish people's local needs. According to our preliminary findings, this program supports today's UNESCO SDGs. Therefore, we will further examine this program in terms of the SDGs, higher education functions, and global citizenship education. Our first analysis indicated that the Village Institutes program accorded significant importance to learner-centred approaches, active participation, placed-based learning, participatory learning, empowerment, transformative learning, and active citizenship. We anticipate discovering other powerful program aspects and adopting these within our current teacher education programs and teacher competencies.

Overall, although each country has its own dynamics, we live in a global village; thus, the change in one country can initiate change in another country, like the Mainstreaming Change Model (Ferreira & Ryan, 2012). I argue for longitudinal and comparative studies between countries to inspire each country to explore appropriate teacher education programs that actualize the SDGs. While constructing these studies, researchers should not forget the multi-dimensionality of sustainability. In other words, we need more interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research studies, so we can present good research and practice examples to build a more robust ECEfS field instead of a "patchwork quilt" (Elliott, 2006, p. 1).

References

- Akyol, T., Pamuk, D., & Elmas, R. (2018). Drama in education for sustainable development: Preservice preschool teachers on stage. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 7(5), 102–115.
<https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/jel/article/view/74316>
- Alici, Ş. (2020). The place of ECEfS in the Turkish teacher education system. In S. Elliott, E. Årlemalm-Hagsér, & J. Davis (Eds.), *Researching early childhood education for sustainability: Challenging assumptions and orthodoxies* (pp. 192–204). Routledge.
- Alici, Ş., & Alan, H. A. (2022). Implementation of education for sustainability in Turkish pre-service teachers' practicum. *Brock Education Journal*, 31(2), 17–39.
<https://journals.library.brocku.ca/brocked/index.php/home/article/view/937>
- Alici, Ş., & Şahin, V. (2023). Fostering Turkish early childhood teachers' professional growth about education for sustainability through media literacy. *Education and Science*, 48(213), 143–168.
<https://educationandscience.ted.org.tr/article/view/2084>
- Carr, V., Elliott, S., & Årlemalm-Hagsér, E. (2021). Special issue editorial note- Rethinking play in nature: Embracing early childhood education for sustainability. *International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education*, 9(1), 5–10.
https://naturalstart.org/sites/default/files/journal/ijecee_winter_si_2021_combined.pdf
- Davis, J. & Elliott, S. (Eds.) (2024). *Young children and the environment* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Elliott, S. (2006). *Beyond patches of green: A turning point in early childhood environmental education*. Paper presented at the biennial conference of the NZ Association of Environmental Education, January 22–26, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Elliott, S., Årlemalm-Hagsér, E., & Davis, J. (Eds.). (2020). *Researching early childhood education for sustainability: Challenging assumptions and orthodoxies*. Routledge.
- Evans, N., Harwood, D., Furu, A., & Alici, Ş. (2022). Challenges in reorienting early childhood education for sustainability in initial teacher education: Transforming, creating and expanding. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(5), 1–14.
<https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2022v47n5.1>
- Ferreira, J., Evans, N., Davis, J., & Stevenson, R. (2019). Learning to embed sustainability in teacher education. Springer briefs in Education, Springer.

Karaarslan Semiz, G., & Temiz, Z. (2021). Turkish pre-service early childhood education teachers' perceptions and practices of nature-based teaching on professional experience. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, 37(3), 187–207. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ae.2021.6>

Karrow, D. D., Evans, N., & Harwood, D. (2022). Guest editorial from the margins to the mainstream: Canadian and international teacher ESE. *Brock Education Journal*, 31(2), 4–16. <https://journals.library.brocku.ca/brocked/index.php/home/article/view/983>

Ministry of Environment and Urbanization (2012). *Republic of Türkiye climate change action plan 2011–2023*. Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. https://webdosya.csb.gov.tr/db/iklim/editordosya/file/eylem%20planlari/iklim_degisikligi_eylem_plani_EN_2014.pdf

Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (2017). *Öğretmenlik Mesleği Genel Yeterlilikleri* [General Competencies of Teacher Proficiencies]. Devlet Kitapları.

UNESCO (2010). Four dimensions of sustainable development. http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_a/popups/mod04t01s03.html