

Original article

Perspectives of Classroom Teacher Candidates on the Contribution of Art Readings to Intellectual Identity Development in Children: A Case Study

Sibel Begeç  *

Department of Fine Arts Education, Faculty of Education, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Çanakkale, Türkiye

Abstract

This study draws attention to the use of "Painting Readings" in the education of young children through art and emphasizes its importance in acquiring intellectual identity. Intellectual identity refers to an individual's sense of self in relation to intellectual pursuits such as knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and creative expression. It is shaped by the experiences and influences a person has throughout their life, including early childhood. Overall, painting readings can provide a rich and engaging learning experience for young children, while creating potential for deepening visual memory and acquiring intellectual identity. By establishing connections between different works of art, it can help them develop critical thinking skills, become more creative and expressive individuals, contribute to their multi-cultural development, and help them develop the desire to learn more. In terms of identity acquisition, the child's developmental primary education period is of decisive importance. At this point, teachers are the people who can influence this process. Therefore, the perspectives of classroom teacher candidates on this issue are important.

The purpose of this study is to determine the perspectives of prospective primary school teachers regarding the importance of Painting Readings in terms of visual art education. Case study design, one of the qualitative research methods, was applied in the study. The data of the research was collected through a survey applied to 26 Classroom Teacher candidates taking the 4th Grade Visual Arts Course. The data was analyzed using content analysis, one of the qualitative data analysis methods. An attempt was made to answer the following questions with the data received from pre-service teacher: What are the perspectives of classroom teacher candidates regarding the use of picture readings? What kind of learning experience do painting readings provide to the child in acquiring an intellectual identity through art education? How does painting reading contribute to children's intellectual identity acquisition? In the study, prospective teachers saw Picture Reading activities as an important resource in teaching visual arts and emphasized that they should be used as an effective method in the education of children.

Keywords: Memory , Painting Readings , Intellectual Identity , Art Education.

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* **Corresponding author:**

Sibel Begeç, Assoc. Prof. Dr., Department of Fine Arts Education, Faculty of Education, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Çanakkale, Türkiye.
Email: sibelbe@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Paintings are filled with rich elements that will attract children, trigger their curiosity and desire to learn, and lead them to explore. Painting readings can be a valuable resource for developing visual perception and interpretation, analysis, critical thinking, creative ideas, and self-expression skills. In this sense, "Painting readings contain potential that supports young children's acquisition of intellectual identity" and offers a rich and interesting learning experience.

An individual's identity acquisition is related to the process of understanding, developing and expressing their own personality and self. Intellectual identity refers to an individual's sense of self in relation to intellectual pursuits such as knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and creative expression. Today, with modernism, identity now has to be structured by the individual. From traditional societies to the postmodern period, identity is an important concept that has helped individuals determine their sense of belonging, roles and place. With modernism, identity has become mobile, multiple, individual, self-reflective and open to change and innovation. (Kellner, 2001:195-196). Identity acquisition is related to the individual, the social structure and the other. As a matter of fact, according to Derrida; "All identities can only exist with their 'differences'. There is no identity that is not the 'other' of itself. (Derrida, 1992, p.129)

The changes and qualities of the age have influenced and shaped the individual's identity acquisition processes. "From this perspective, while identity in traditional societies has a holistic, fixed and generally singular quality, especially starting with the modernization process and with the postmodernity discussions, these holistic, fixed and singular identities have increasingly begun to be replaced by fragmented, variable, multiple and flexible identities." (Güven, 2015, p. 267) Therefore, to raise individuals suitable for today's circumstances it is vital to prioritize intellectual identity acquisition and development in early childhood education. The individual is confronted with the obstacles of understanding, analyzing, and organizing information in the present day (Berman 2002).

In this context, it would be appropriate to understand how identity and intellectual identity formation is shaped in the individual. The study includes some definitions and elements for this purpose. It has also been observed that these definitions share common components with the intended outcomes of art education on the individual.

The issue of identity has always been seen as an important area of study and research. It has been tried to be explained with different definitions and theories. Identity is a complex and multifaceted concept. It can be defined as the process by which an individual understands and develops his or her own self and expresses it to others, in which the experiences accumulated since childhood are effective. In general, identity acquisition is defined in the literature as an individual's response to the most

fundamental questions of their existence, such as "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" (Atak, 2011; Eralp, 1997).

Ericson states that identity acquisition experiences, which he describes as a complex process, last a lifetime in the individual in interaction with the environment (Erikson, 1968). Experiences and decisions in various areas of life are part of the process of forming one's identity. (Arnett JJ., 2004). This process is shaped by the individual's interactions with family, society, education, and the environment. Philips, Pittman and Grotevant stated that personal factors such as personality and cognitive abilities affect the identity process by interacting with contextual factors such as culture, society, family, peers, school and work. (Phillips, 2003). Bosma and Kunnen also put forward the "micro-level processes model" in identity development. Here, the long-term development of identity occurs with short-term repetitions and is constantly restructured (Kunnen, Bosma, 2003; 3:247-270). Therefore, systematic repetition of painting readings as part of the individual's art education for identity construction will provide positive effects and learning experience in this process. In another definition, "according to Kegan, identity is the process of "meaning-making". Meaning-making is an ongoing and non-static process." (Atak, 2011 ; p.180) The individual constantly creates new meanings between himself, his environment and others. (Atak, 2011). At this point, painting readings can offer many opportunities for the child to create meaning and establish connections between meanings with each artwork interaction.

In the light of these definitions, intellectual identity should be seen as a part of the whole identity that the individual creates in the process. Moreover, intellectual identity contains variety of characteristics. Intellectual identity is associated with the ability to learn, solve problems and understand information. Intellectual identity exploration also includes the process that enables a person to become aware of their own mental abilities and potentials. Intellectual development refers to the growth of a child's cognitive ability to think and reason. It's about how they organize their minds, ideas, and thoughts to make sense of the world they live in.

Piaget (1963) was interested in how the intellectual formations of individuals develop from infancy to adolescence. Piaget stated that learning is the internal organization of an event and occurs as a result of mental schemas as the individual grows and develops. Intellectual development is the continuous restructuring of knowledge to achieve higher levels of problem solving and critical thinking. The process of assimilation and accommodation encourages intellectual development in children. Assimilation is the process of integrating new experiences into existing schemas. Accommodation is the change of existing thought processes to manage more complex information. (Erdoğan & Koç, 2022 ; p. 81)

Through strategies implemented in school and home environments, children can be taught art reading skills and thus support their academic success and continuous learning skills throughout their lives. Developing painting reading skills will help children establish deeper connections with the world.

Memory plays a critical role in helping individuals make sense of their lives, process information, learn, and benefit from past experiences. Painting readings are an especially important opportunity for cultural memory and memory formation.

Our childhood years include an important period in acquiring an intellectual identity. The development of an intellectual perspective is important for the individual to gain insight into the age(era) in which they live, to acquire national and international cultural knowledge , and to recognize, identify and evaluate themselves. We all know that children are shaped within a cultural structure. “In psychosocial development, the child finds their own life cycle within the social life cycle and culture has a significant impact on the child's development.” (Miller, 1993). Painting readings can be useful resource in terms of acquiring, understanding and learning this cultural structure. At the same time, while reading art, young children will gain new experiences to discover their own potential for intellectual identity exploration and choose their areas of interest. “What it means to be an intellectual is rise above the partial preoccupation of one's own profession—and engage with the global issues of truth, judgment, and taste of the time” (Bauman, 1996, p. 30).

Intellectual identity is mostly related to the individual's ability to develop critical thinking. We can say that the most defining characteristic of being an intellectual ,in terms of identity, is that the individual possesses a critical perspective. Critical perspective ability will provide the individual with a different perspective to evaluate. In other words, it is the ability to look at events from a different viewpoint than one's current position. In a sense, it is a 'counter memory' that will give the person dynamism. (Said , 2002, p. 56) This ability to go beyond the ordinary will also add an important feature that differentiates the individual from others. This state of questioning can enable the individual to investigate the connections of events and establish more original connections, instead of exhibiting a reductionist attitude (Rajchman, 2002, p. 192).

Acquiring an intellectual identity enables a person to become both an active and free subject (Butler, 1997). According to Said, one of the main roles of the intellectual is to oppose and have a critical perspective (Anık, Uysal, 2022). In this sense, the child can have the opportunity to practice his critical thinking skills while reading paintings. By examining the works, young children can analyze the stories through the visuals in the paintings, understand the emotional states of the characters, and make an effort to decipher the meanings of visual symbols. This process can help children deepen their intellectual identities by developing their critical thinking abilities. Supporting children's creativity and feelings of aesthetics in the early years is important for them to grow up to be creative and productive individuals who perceive the beauties in the environment. (Feeney & Moravcik, 1987).

All these definitions and explanations show us the importance of childhood in the acquisition of intellectual identity. In this context, opportunities can be found to help children gain critical perspective

skills through art reading studies and practices. Therefore, the effect of painting reading on children's identity acquisition is related to teachers' awareness and perception.

It is molded by the experiences and influences a person has throughout their life, including early childhood. In this process, the individual needs achievements such as recognizing and discovering who they are, creating their own unique form of expression, and gaining self-esteem. In this regard, the primary education period has critical importance in terms of identity acquisition in children. Therefore, these aspects of development in children need to be nurtured from an early age.

Naturally, educators are among the crucial elements that will significantly contribute to a child's intellectual identity development. Teachers are the ones who will effectively oversee these processes. In this direction, educators must foster educational settings that stimulate students' love of learning, allow them to develop critical thinking skills, and expand their ideas of culture and the arts.

Picture readings incorporated systematically into art education practices could offer the child encouraging opportunities to make a life experience in such development. Teachers' perspectives and resources on painting readings are significant in this aspect. The purpose of this study is to determine the significance of picture readings in children's identity acquisition by including the viewpoints of pre-service primary school teachers. In this regard, the study aims to bring out the potential of young children in acquiring an intellectual identity while drawing attention to the use of "Picture Readings" in their education through art.

An attempt was made to find answers to the following questions with the data received from teacher candidates. What is the perception of pre-service teachers regarding the use of Art readings in educating children through art? What kind of learning experience do art readings provide to the child through art education? How does painting reading contribute to children's intellectual identity acquisition?

METHOD

Research Model

In this study, case study design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. A case is a phenomenon observed over a certain time period (Gerring, 2007). Case studies are studies in which an occurrence is studied in its real-life context (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). In case studies, focusing on how and why allows researchers to undertake in-depth investigations while seeking to find answers to their studies (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011; Yin, 2009). Case study is a research method that describes the data gathered by researchers during real-life investigations (Creswell, 2013; Wellington, 2000, Cepni, 2007). Since the case study is based on real-life events, it allows for more diverse, in-depth, and holistic research, as well as the possibility to offer multiple perspectives simultaneously (Merriam, 2013).

Participants

This study included 26 4th grade pre-service teachers from Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University's Primary School Teacher Education program in 2022-2023 who were taking the Visual Arts Education course. Additionally, this course was given by the researcher. Since the study focuses on young children, it was especially important to establish a sampling group of primary school teacher candidates. The participants were given preliminary training on the importance of art education in primary education and "Picture Reading" methods within the scope of the "Visual Arts Teaching" course.

While selecting the study group, it was determined using the convenience and purposive sampling techniques from the non-probability sampling method. Purposive sampling is a sampling method used to make the best use of limited resources and to select information-rich groups (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). In convenience situation sampling, individuals who are easy to reach are selected and their opinions are sought (Hatch, 2002).

Data Collection Tools

Yin mentions common sources of evidence in the data collection such as archive records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation , and as physical structure resources, technological tools, works of art and different physical evidences (Yin, 1984). An open-ended survey, prepared on Google Forms, was employed as a data gathering tool in this study. For the validity of the produced survey questions, opinions were obtained from 2 experts in the field of visual arts education. Before taking the survey, teacher candidates presented the painting readings they had prepared for first and second grade students in the primary schools where they were interning. Teacher candidates' opinions about the process were taken during the Visual Arts Class held online via Teams. Afterwards, participants partook in the survey. The survey questions related data collecting to the teacher candidates' experiences and observations during the Painting Reading activity in the classroom.

Analysis of Data

Based on the survey and interview data, evaluations were done using the content analysis method, and the results were interpreted. Content analysis is a way of analyzing data that involves grouping, comparing, and making arrangements to derive inferences from the acquired data. (Cohen, 2007). The collected data must first be prepared for analysis. Categories are developed and grouped on the data in content analysis, and the results are analyzed. (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008; Bogdan & Biklen 2007). For this study, first , codes were collected from the textual phrases provided by 26 prospective teachers in response to the survey questions, then, categories were created from these codes. Finally, these codes and categories were merged based on similar qualities and presented under themes. In addition, to support the codes in the analysis, comments from prospective teachers have been included in the text within quotation marks.

RESULTS

Below, the findings obtained during the research process are presented in line with the research questions and themes of the research. The statements of the participants are symbolized as such; 1st Teacher Candidate: PT1, 2nd Teacher Candidate: PT2..

Theme 1: The Effect of Picture Readings on Children's Education

Table 1. Categories and codes of the Theme of Picture Readings on Children's Education

| Category | Code | f | |
|--|--|--|----|
| Contribution to Personal Development | Imagination | 5 | |
| | Creativity | 4 | |
| | Interest-curiosity-exploration | 33 | |
| | Self-confidence-social development | 6 | |
| | Ability to express | 3 | |
| Contribution to Acquiring Cognitive and Analytical Thinking Skills | Analyzing | 2 | |
| | Perception | 4 | |
| | Link between information | 2 | |
| | Contribution to the learning experience | 8 | |
| | Visual memory | 16 | |
| | Visual intelligence | 3 | |
| Contribution to Cultural and Artistic Development | Understanding Visual Language and Expression Development | Contribution to visual expression language | 6 |
| | | Art expression skill | 4 |
| | | Aesthetic appreciation | 5 |
| | | Exploring visual language | 3 |
| | | Picture reading skill | 25 |
| | | Visual literacy | 2 |
| | Cultural and Artistic Accumulation | Meeting art | 3 |
| | | Interest and love for art | 8 |
| | | Learning about art | 12 |
| | | Respect for artistic and cultural values | 5 |

From the data collected, prospective teachers' opinions on the use of Picture Readings in primary school art education are presented. Table 1 demonstrates that participants rated the use of painting readings positively. It has been concluded that Painting Reading activities will have a good impact on children if they are employed in early childhood education. Simultaneously, it is thought to have a substantial impact on children's personal development, learning processes, artistic interest, and intellectual development.

According to the teacher candidates' observations during the application, painting reading influences the child's learning and perception processes and evokes a remarkable amount of attention and curiosity. The following are some examples of teacher candidates' perspectives on this subject:

PT3: *"Although the students didn't know what to do at first, most of them raised their hands to read the work as the course progressed. Based on this, I believe their curiosity has grown."* PT17: *"The level of interest of the students caught my attention. They studied with enthusiasm."* PT2: *"...it piqued their interest and surprised them."* PT6: *"...the work piqued the students' interest and piqued their curiosity. Students were able to pay attention to their studies more easily as a result of this interest."*

One of our teacher candidates noted that painting reading activities made the visual arts course more engaging than their previous experiences. PT5: *"I introduced Picasso to my students. Therefore, I talked about the Cubism movement. Even though they were first graders, it attracted a lot of attention. They asked questions about the work and examined the samples I brought more than I expected. They even expressed that they wanted to do this activity in every visual arts class. Because it attracted their attention, their perspective on the lesson changed and allowed me to explain it more easily. Because they listened to me more carefully and with interest compared to other lessons."*

During our online sessions with teacher candidates, they frequently mentioned that children exhibited a strong interest in reading paintings during the activities. They attributed their interest to the visual elements in the artworks. They noted that the works included in the art readings had a significant impact due to the visuals they contained (for example, colors, textures, and shapes), thus turning them into an important material that aids children's learning processes, and they expressed their thoughts as follows: PT7: *"I believe that reading activities will provide a rich and interesting learning experience for children at the primary education level. Here's why: Visual richness: Works of art are full of visual elements such as colors, shapes, patterns, and composition. Children at the primary level are particularly sensitive to visual stimuli, and therefore works can be impressive and interesting to them. While works of art activate children's imagination and creativity, they can also attract their attention with their visual richness."* PT8: *"Art reading lessons can often arouse interest and curiosity in students. I also saw that the students were interested and curious in the lesson. Students had the opportunity to express themselves and use their creativity by interacting with visual elements."*

11 participants emphasized on imagination, creativity and language skills in children, in addition to attention and curiosity. They stated that in Painting Reading activities, when methods such as question-answer and inferring meaning are used, children have the opportunity to use their language skills and express themselves confidently. In addition, they stated that children, who encounter different works each time through art reading, also use their imagination and creativity with the following example expressions:

PT10: *"I noticed that kids gained the ability and confidence to openly express their opinions in front of an audience."* PT:4 *"By interacting with visual elements, students had the opportunity to express themselves and use their creativity."* PT1: *"Picture reading fosters the development of*

their creative sense and gives them the power to speak, dream, and come up with ideas." The questions asked to children during picture readings can also be inspiring for them to develop creative ideas. Pre-service teacher no. 5 *"(Kees van Dongen) The red hat in 'The Corn Poppy' painting caught the children's attention. They thought about what kind of works could be created if different red hats were used, and interesting ideas came up."* emphasized in their statement that creative ideas are put forward.

In addition, 4 of our participants stated that the questions asked to children about the work during the art readings support their ability to express themselves in the social environment. PT19: *"...I believe that it will increase self-confidence in social environments."* PT21: *"I believe that it will increase their readiness in social relations and academic success, as well as visual arts education in their future lives."* They stated that art readings give children the opportunity to practice speaking in a social environment.

Painting Reading activities are seen by teacher candidates as opportunities to help children develop their analytical thinking skills. Candidates emphasized that the children demonstrated skills such as reading, understanding, drawing conclusions, and verbally expressing the visual language in the pictures during the application. According to the findings, 12 of the participants believe that when children in primary school read paintings, they can understand the details and event patterns in the paintings, and they can understand the meanings of symbols and images when lesson planning is done according to the children's developmental characteristics. As an example; PT10: *"...focusing on a work and thinking about it will positively affect their cognitive development."* PT7: *"It can change and shape students' perceptions and perspectives."* PT1: *"They can make inferences from a picture."* PT6: *"By examining the pictures, children can show their skills in understanding visuals, paying attention to details, and analyzing pictures."* PT16: *"At the same time, analyzing pictures and remembering details strengthens children's visual analytical abilities."* PT 12: *"Reading interesting works makes it easier to remember."* made such supporting statements.

16 of our participants linked the growth of visual intelligence and memory to reading the visual values in the works. PTA 10: *"If the child is drawn to this lesson, it is inevitable that the information will become an image in their mind or subconscious because they are trying to make sense of and interpret what they are seeing. In other words, the student will retain both the visual representation of the work and the knowledge they acquired about it. I believe that visual memory improves as these images accumulate in the brain."* PTA 2: *"It's critical for kids to read paintings to strengthen and expand their visual memories. Examining works of art helps children develop their visual perception, recognition, and visual memory. At the same time, analyzing pictures and remembering details improves children's visual analytical abilities."* PT18: *"Picture readings are an important tool for the development and deepening of visual memory." It helps pupils acquire a more in-depth visual comprehension by improving their abilities to recognize,*

remember, analyze, and retain visual information in visual memory." PT20: *"I believe that reading paintings will enhance visual memory because students will pay close attention to the details in the work and occasionally group the works by talking about their similar or different features."*

Drawing upon observations from six pre-service teachers, it was observed that children could evaluate picture readings through methods such as discussion, analysis, inferring meaning and classification. Participants' following statements show it believed that these picture readings may also impact their cognitive and analytical thinking skills: PT10: *"I think that by reading a painting, students focus on the elements contained in the work in detail. It will improve visual memory because they sometimes classify works by discussing their common or different aspects."* PT12: *"Memory can be deepened with important information in reading a picture (what you see in this work, which colors were used most in the work, what the artist might have wanted to say, etc.)."* PT 3: *"When I took out and hung a picture of a painter with whom we had a painting reading on the back of the classroom door and observed their reactions, I heard them say, 'Oh, we studied this painting in class' and made numerous comments about it, and I realized that the children's visual memory had improved and their interest had been piqued. I think this will contribute greatly to the cognitive development of children."*

When the statements of 2 Teacher Candidates were examined, they emphasized that picture readings were related to obtaining information and establishing connections. For example, prospective teachers, PTA1: *"I think it is a subject that should be taught at a young age... At the same time, visual reading makes it easier for the student to integrate new information with his prior knowledge and structure it in his mind. The student who learns the logic of new knowledge progresses faster and organizes his mental structure better."* PA 2: *"..we did readings about still life paintings in the class with the students, and later on, I saw that the students were more willing and had an idea about what they could do in the activity of drawing still life."* With such explanations, this states that children who gain knowledge by reading paintings quickly establish mental connections when they start practicing art activities.

When the answers of the teacher candidates were examined, they also stated that painting readings would provide children with the opportunity to meet art at a very early age, provide important experiences in discovering the visual language, and support the formation of children's aesthetic tastes: 6 teacher candidates associated painting readings with the development of aesthetic tastes and emphasized this acquisition. On this subject, PT12 said: *"Students' exposure to visual arts at an early age can contribute to the development of their aesthetic understanding."* PT22: *"...I think it will provide aesthetic value development."* PT 6: *"...I think it will provide the development of aesthetic taste and understanding."* PT13: *"It is very important to meet the aesthetic needs of students."*

5 participants stated that painting readings provide gains in terms of discovering the visual language in children with the following words: PA 17: "...students learn that art can be expressed in different ways by discovering the language of works of art and the meaning of the symbols they contain." T4: "...it helps them learn and love colors and paints better, and they see in practice that there are different thoughts and arts." PT9: What caught my attention during the process was that when I showed them Sabri Berkel's 'Motifli Kompozisyon', they noticed that the motifs on it had a pattern. They were surprised when I told them that the artist drew them all by hand." PT5: "It provides an opportunity to introduce students to the basic concepts of art, improve their visual literacy skills and help them understand works of art."

The questions "Do you think reading paintings is a skill?" and "How can it be developed in young children?" were asked to pre-service. 'Reading painting' is viewed as a skill by all 26 of the participants. They proposed that frequent participation in art education programs is a good way to develop this talent, that children should be exposed to it at a young age based on their developmental characteristics, and that family cooperation is essential. Some sample statements regarding their opinions are as follows:

PT15: "I do think it is a skill, but this skill can be developed and thus acquired. For young children, this skill can be attained by showing them examples of age-appropriate artworks."

PT18: "Yes, it is a skill. It can only be acquired and improved through proper education." PT20:

"I think it is skill. It can be improved by planning and including such activities in visual art lessons..." PT22: "I think it is a skill. But every skill can be improved when it starts being taught

at a young age. The painting reading skill that is introduced in first grade, will be expanded and improved over time." It's also worth noting that a pre-service teacher indicated that this skill may

differ from child to child. TA5: "I believe it is a skill that differs from child to child. Because each kid focused on a different aspect of the painting during the exercise I organized." Both

teacher candidates associated this skill with acquiring knowledge. Participant PT7 said; "I think it starts with knowledge and evolves into skill. They can learn to make sense of it and how to

interpret it at a young age, and they can turn this knowledge into skills at later ages." PT 24: "It

is a skill. If they are familiar with different branches of art and creation techniques, they can have a healthier (painting) reading." They argued that this condition should be supported by preliminary information.

3 teacher candidates emphasized that reading paintings would improve their visual literacy skills and create opportunities. The ability to effectively understand visual content allows the individual to absorb information from a broader range. In this sense, it has been emphasized that painting studies will create important opportunities. PT3: "...offers an opportunity to improve their visual literacy skills and help them understand works of art." PT5: "These lessons help students develop visual literacy skills."

PT10: "Examining and interpreting works of art increase children's visual reading abilities." are some example statements.

It is also significant that one of our teacher candidates thought that the cultural details in the artworks would have an impact on the child's own visual expression. PT8: "It allows students to see how different cultures define paintings. They may also be willing to add their own cultural elements to their paintings."

In line with the data gathered, it's been determined that reading art can be effective in helping children meet art at an early age, become interested in art, learn about art, love art, and respect art values. 17 of the participants made supportive statements that art reading will be effective in introducing children to art at an early age and will positively shape their attitudes and interests.

Candidates, PT1: "...can increase children's interest in art." PT2: "It benefits the cultural development of students from an early age." PT4: "...exposure to visual arts at an early age can reveal existing talents in the child and also develop positive effects on interest/desire/attitude." PT6: "...it becomes the basis for art education." PT4: "Artwork analysis and painting reading courses enable students to understand the meaning and value of art." PT5: "It helps to see whether children are interested in art from a teacher's perspective and direct them to the relevant field." PT10: "It teaches students the art movements and history of art in different periods. By getting to know the works of famous painters, students can see how art has evolved and changed throughout history." PT17: "I think that art analysis or painting reading courses in visual arts education at the primary school level will make a positive difference in children's perspective on art." PT20: "I think art reading lessons can be effective in the child's intellectual identity development. I think it will improve children's perspectives on art." PT23: "It can enable children to have a socially and culturally rich personality that leads the future." PT25: "Art, interpreting art, knowing art, understanding art and many other things, existing in nested clusters, become a subset of the intellectual personality. It allows the child to have his own tastes."

Theme 2: Contribution of Painting Readings to Intellectual Identity Formation

Table 2. Codes of the Theme of the Contribution of Picture Readings to Intellectual Identity Formation

| Category | Code | f |
|---|----------------------------|----|
| The Effect of Individual Development and Personal Experiences on Identity | Confidence | 4 |
| | Free Expression | 6 |
| | Self Discovery | 5 |
| | Vision | 7 |
| | Discovering Your Abilities | 3 |
| | Analytical Thinking | 12 |
| | Memory Deepening | 14 |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----|
| | Originality | 16 |
| | Critical Thinking Skills | 12 |
| Cultural and Social Awareness | Cultural Accumulation | 27 |
| | Local Cultural Identity | 14 |
| | Multicultural Interaction | 15 |
| | Empathy | 6 |
| | Appreciation | 2 |

According to information provided by pre-service teacher, it is believed that individual developments and personal experiences influence the contribution of art readings to formation/development of intellectual identity, as shown in Table 2. Participants believe that reading art aids children in developing self-confidence, which is supported by the following statements:

(PT2): *“I observed that children developed the ability and self-confidence to freely present their ideas in front of a crowd.”* PT6: *“I believe it will increase self-confidence in social environments.”* PT13: *“They produce original ideas while reading and examining the artwork, and I have seen that allowing them to express this clearly provides them with incredible speaking skills and self-confidence.”* PT15: *“They can progress to the point where they can make very different, creative, and unique comments thanks to painting reading.”* PT7: *“Painting reading lessons support young children to acquire an intellectual identity. These lessons develop children's critical thinking skills...strengthen observation skills, artistic expression...increase the ability to express their own thoughts, and support the ability to make cultural/artistic connections. This way, children develop intellectually, explore their own thoughts and artistic identities, and gain the confidence to express themselves.”*

According to the data collected, teacher candidates emphasized critical thinking, original thought expression, and analytical thinking skills.

PT19: *“I believe that painting reading lessons can be effective in the child's intellectual identity development...Critical thinking skills: Picture reading lessons offer children the opportunity to hone their critical thinking skills. Artworks contain a variety of visual elements and symbols. Children learn to apply critical thinking skills by examining, interpreting and analyzing these works. This process allows children to evaluate different perspectives and develop their mental processes.”* T8: *“It will help the student gain a different perspective and broaden their horizons.”* T12: *“Painting readings help them expand their vision, read more, interpret and focus on details.”* Made such supporting statements. PT22: *“It may allow students to look from different viewpoints.”* PT9: *“...it improves their analytical skills... By examining pictures, children improve their skills in understanding visuals, paying attention to details and analyzing pictures.”* PT10: *“At the same time, analyzing pictures and remembering details strengthens children's*

visual analytical abilities.” PT11: “It affects intellectual development. An individual can look at life from different perspectives by obtaining different viewpoints.”

The statements of the participants were consistent with the concept that painting reading activities will provide vision and sustainable quality.

PT13: *“Showing students examples from different branches of art at an early age and having them examine these sample works will help the child gain vision.”* PT18: *“It can change students' perspectives and give them a new perspective.”* PT24: *“A child exposed to this kind of education may develop a distinct and broader personality.”* PT25: *“It can change and shape students' perceptions and perspectives.”* PT26: *“Image reading lessons may enable them to have a broader perspective in their future lives.”* One of the practicing teachers also stated that it will have an impact on the child's future career in terms of self-discovery. PT23: *“I think that studying art will be effective in terms of the profession they will choose in the future or whether they will become a painting artist in the future.”*

14 candidates highlighted the importance of local cultural identity in children's development of an intellectual identity. The candidates stressed that painting reading activities will boost kids' curiosity in both their own and other cultures. Furthermore, they mentioned in their statements that the knowledge that kids will learn from these readings can help them develop their intellectual identities in the following;

PT7 *“...painting readings help the student to be curious about his own culture, research and gain knowledge.”* PT10: *“The artist of the painting, the period in which it was made, and what is depicted in the painting enable the student to become acculturated.”* PT14 *“As their interest and curiosity in this subject will increase with reading painting, they will also be curious about learning their own art culture.”* PT9: *“As they learn their own art and culture in depth, their interest in art history may increase and they can specialize in this subject in the future.”* PT16: *“Not only painting but also art contributes to intellectual identity development.”* PT13: *“Painting reading lessons have a great impact on people's reading of their own art culture. There are many artists who grew up in our country or any other country and produce universal works and have very meaningful works. It is beneficial for children of primary school age to learn these, as well as adults. Thanks to the art reading lessons that started to be given in primary school, the student will have seen many works of art and artists, and will also be making interpretations about these works. “Thanks to these interpretations and criticisms, he will learn his own artistic culture.”* PT15 *“Painting reading lessons offer children many opportunities to learn about their own artistic culture. These lessons enable children to respect the artistic heritage, different artists and art periods, and to discover their own creativity. In this way, children approach art and cultural diversity with a deeper understanding and progress towards developing their own artistic*

identities.” One of the participants thinks that it cannot be understood at the primary education level. “In a multicultural education environment, considering that each work reflects a different culture and period, every student can connect with their own culture. It also increases interaction with one's own culture and respect for different cultures. However, this may not be understood by students in primary school. Therefore, it will be more effective in the secondary school period.” PT2: “Including such learning objectives/outcomes in the curriculum can introduce the child to his own artistic culture. The teacher can also show examples and organize trips.”

The definition of Multicultural interaction was emphasized 15 times by the practicing teachers.

(PT9): “Students get to know different cultures and learn to respect these cultures. They learn to live among different cultures and not to feel uncomfortable in environments where different cultures are the majority.” PT14: “It helps students not to find any culture strange by letting them get to know different cultures and grasp their core values. It also helps them understand how these differences create a rich world, and it allows them to think about these riches in terms of multi-cultural education life.” PT7: “Painting reading lessons are essential in multi-cultural education. Examining the work of an artist from a different culture than their own and forming an opinion about it, whether he likes it or not, or the sentiments he has toward that work, will have an impact on multi-cultural education. The student will analyze several works from America, England, and France, and as a result of these interpretations, he will gain knowledge about different cultures and lives. It is critical to have this equipped, especially at such a young age... The fact that this equipment can be obtained at a young age is the most essential part of having it.”

5 participants made statements regarding the importance of reading paintings in learning about intercultural differences and drawing conclusions by comparing.

PT6: “They will learn how their own art culture differs from other art cultures as they get more familiar with various artists and their works. They will be able to see the methods used by artists in their own culture and learn about them.” PT11: “Learning about one's own art culture can also offer chances to explore and compare different cultures, as well as recognize how our society is reflected in artistic creations that exist outside of daily life.” PT19: “I think that seeing different art movements will contribute a lot to them in choosing and learning their own art culture.” PT5: “They will learn about the differences between their own and other art cultures as they become acquainted with various artists and artworks. They will be able to discover the techniques used by artists in their own culture and gain knowledge about them.”

6 participants acknowledged the importance of painting reading exercises in building empathy in children. They associated it with multicultural education and emphasized the necessity of recognizing cultural differences, meaning, evaluating and respecting differences.

PT11 "...these picture reading lessons support students' empathy skills and emotional development." PT24 "It gives children the opportunity to understand and appreciate cultural diversity by introducing them to works of art from different cultures." PT5: "Every child in art reading lessons makes meaning of the artwork by applying a different thought from their culture. This is important for students to learn about diverse cultures in an educational setting that encompasses many different backgrounds. It is equally critical that they learn to respect these points of view." A teacher candidate, PT3, stated: "An intellectual identity can be achieved with family and school support" and drew attention to the importance of family in acquiring identity.

Theme 3: Observations of Candidate Teachers on the Process

Table 3. Categories and Codes of the Theme of Prospective Teachers' Observations on the Process

| Category | Code | f |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Experiences for Students (Child) | attention span | 8 |
| | Learning with fun | 9 |
| | desire to learn | 3 |
| | active participation | 14 |
| | Motivation | 22 |
| | not encountered before | 13 |
| Experiences for Teachers | Getting information about the child | one |
| | classroom management | 7 |
| | Application process | 25 |

According to the views of pre-service teachers, this experience provided an opportunity for them to better understand the dynamics of the study. These experiences are expected to help pre-service teachers better prepare for their future careers as teachers.

Observation and practice experiences allowed candidate teachers to reflect on their own teaching approaches and interactions. They gained a better understanding of what went well and what needed improvement as a result of the post-application reflections. This is regarded to be an important step for teacher candidates to continually improve themselves.

Participants mentioned in their statements that they've had the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching approaches and interactions. According to their statements, the reflections made after the sessions helped them understand what went well and what needed improvement. Following the event, pre-service teachers were polled on the difficulty and simplicity of implementing the activities.

Pre-service teachers' assessments of student experiences in painting reading practices highlight the study's dynamics even more. According to the statistics, these experiences will help teacher candidates better prepare for their future teaching professions. This implies that teacher candidates will get an important understanding of the importance of continuous self-improvement.

In the following sample statements, participants conveyed their thoughts about the learning process of painting readings. The survey asked, "Have students encountered this method before?" The response to the question was outstanding. 88.5% of the students said they had never experienced such an experience previously. The following are some of the pre-service teachers' perspectives based on the responses they got from students.

PT1: *"It was a fun and different lesson because they had never done such an activity before."*
(PT14): *"I was surprised that the children had never experienced such a lesson before."*, (PT19)
"It was a fun and different lesson because they had never done such an activity before." (PSA23):
"Since the students were unfamiliar with this type of class, it was perhaps a little unusual at first, but they listened intently when we discussed the artist and the work.." PT2: *"They loved working on this activity very much. They asked if we would do it again in other lessons. There was intense interest and desire in this direction."* PT3: *"The graffiti topic piqued their curiosity. The children's participation and interest in the class improved dramatically as they investigated the examples. As a result, the lesson was both productive and interactive."*

Pre-service teachers reported that students were more easily motivated, had a greater desire to learn, and had a longer attention span when reading paintings. They reported that students were more active in this class than in others.

PT4: *"Picture readings made the lesson more fun."* PT5: *"Every student was very active at this stage."* PT6: *"The children attended the lesson with greater pleasure and interest."* PT7: *"I presented Picasso to my students." Consequently, I discussed the Cubism movement. Even though they are just first graders, it drew a lot of attention from them. They asked questions about the artwork and examined the samples I brought more than I had anticipated. They even stated that this activity should be included in every visual arts lesson. Because it drew their attention, their viewpoint on the lesson shifted, making it easier for me to teach. Because they listened to me attentively and with greater interest than in previous classes."* PT9: *"Everyone had a fun and productive time in our class."* PT10: *"They contributed to the lesson with various questions."* T12 *"I observed that our students' curiosity grew throughout the lesson. I was drawn to their constant probing and questioning. The class became more active as a result."* PT7: *"...rather than an idle painting lesson (draw-paint), a lesson in which students exchange their thoughts, see and evaluate other works, see works done with different materials, and think about why the artist*

created them, is more active and entertaining.” With these statements, they emphasized that painting readings create an effective learning environment.

Participant PT1 stated, *“...experimenting with new techniques and forms of expression will enhance students' inner worlds, and attempting to understand the underlying profound meanings through trial and error with their peers can make this course engaging.”* The statement further points out that by interacting together rather than alone, kids learn more effectively and grasp diverse meanings from the paintings.

By observing classes in action, practicing teachers gained firsthand experience in a real classroom setting. By reading pictures, they claimed to have had the chance to observe and interact with children more effectively. They stated that they had valuable experience in applying the theoretical knowledge they learned in the visual arts course into practice, as well as in issues such as the learning process, getting to know the student, teaching, classroom management, and effective communication.

At the same time, they viewed this study as a chance to enhance their proficiency in teaching art education and conveyed their contentment. The following statements of the participants support these claims:

PT1: *“The children participated in the lesson with more interest because they read a work for the first time, and this made it easier for us in terms of classroom management.”* PT4: *“I enjoyed it very much. The truth is, when I was teaching this activity, I thought my students would not like it. But the moment I started explaining what we should do, they listened to me with full attention and I was very surprised. They immediately started asking questions. It attracted their attention more than other lessons. The thing that caught my attention the most was that they asked interesting questions about the work as if they were adults.”* PT9: *“I enjoyed it very much. What caught my attention was that I did not expect the students to be so interested, relevant and curious.”*

Our teacher candidates stated that an interactive learning environment was created and they expressed their experiences that such activities would create an opportunity to get to know the students, as follows;

PT12: *“I must admit that I enjoyed the installation process. I was really fascinated by the students' surprise when they realized they could make art using films. In addition, I spotted certain students in the class who I would consider talented.”* S2: *“The artwork I did a painting reading on was 'The Scream' by Edward Munch. When kids saw the painting, they were taken aback. They attempted to replicate the character's facial expression in the artwork. The moment drew a lot of attention. They actively participated in the session due to their curiosity and interest.”* PT4: *“It contributed to the students sharing and working collaboratively. As they thought about the answers to different questions asked about the work...it helped with classroom management.”*

Pre-service teachers were asked, "Can painting readings have an impact on young children's perception of contemporary art?" and 96% answered yes to the question. PT10: *"While I was doing a reading on installation art, all the attention of the children was on me and the artworks. Everything that was different and colorful attracted the attention of the students."* One of our pre-service teachers expressed his opinion that reading pictures also contributes to the applied field, that they understand the work better and that it increases motivation." PT6: *"We did readings about still life paintings in the class with the students, and later on, I saw that the students were more willing and had an idea about what they could do in the activity of drawing still life."*

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has shown that if Picture Reading activities are included more frequently in "Visual Arts Teaching" courses in primary education, it can be an important resource that will support the development of intellectual identity in children.

In our rapidly changing world, it becomes crucial for children to go beyond mere information consumption and develop an intellectual identity. Intellectual identity encompasses the discovery of one's intellectual abilities, the cultivation of deep thinking skills, and the acquisition of the capacity to produce original thoughts. This identity equips children with fundamental skills like deep thinking, critical analysis, creative problem-solving, and transforms them into individuals who not only consume information but also contribute to its creation. Such individuals are better equipped to address societal needs, play a more positive role in social interactions, and enhance their personal self-esteem. Placing greater emphasis on the development of intellectual identity within education systems can significantly contribute to the establishment of a sustainable society. At this stage, teachers play an important strategic role.

For this reason, the perceptions, thoughts and opinions of Primary School Teacher Candidates on this subject are important. What are the benefits of reading pictures to children in acquiring an intellectual identity? What kind of learning experience does it offer? How can picture reading skills be improved? The opinions of teacher candidates regarding these were taken. According to the findings of the research; Pre-service teachers saw "Picture Reading" activities as an effective resource in the education of young children through art. In this regard, common opinions have been obtained that picture readings can make significant contributions to both children's learning processes and intellectual identity development. The results show that picture reading activities increase students' attention span, increase their desire to learn, and enable more active participation. Picture readings have been shown to have potential for intellectual identity acquisition by providing a rich and interesting learning experience for young children. Picture readings created an entertaining and enjoyable learning process for children; It has been fascinating and inspiring. In this respect, picture readings taking part in art education programs and practices can provide important opportunities.

Pre-service teachers all come to agreement that reading art is a skill training. Accordingly, it is thought that it will have an impact on the acquisition of intellectual identity, provided that skill training is started at an early age. Considering that children's identity development is shaped by experiences at an early age, picture readings offer children content of valuable life experiences. Pre-service teachers' statements reveal that reading pictures can increase children's intellectual abilities and thus develop deeper connections. Participants' opinions were that when artists' paintings are used as a resource, children will support their cognitive development by using their ability to make inferences, analyze and derive meaning. It has been stated that children's interaction with picture reading at an early age can form the basis of their cognitive and analytical thinking skills and have a positive impact. Candidates observed that children were able to analyze, deduce meaning from pictures and express them. In this regard, it is stated that Picture Readings will support achievements such as analytical thinking, language skills and developing creative ideas. It is thought that this education will contribute to the acquisition of intellectual identity, provided that it starts at an early age.

Based on the statements provided by teacher candidates, it appears that reading paintings can be beneficial for children, particularly in grasping the meanings conveyed by symbols and visuals. This plays a vital role in enhancing children's abilities in visual and symbolic thinking. Therefore, it contributes to the advancement of children's visual memory and intelligence. The intricate details and visual components within artworks not only enhance visual memory skills but also expose children to diverse works, fostering the development of visual intelligence.

Children exhibit heightened interest and curiosity when exposed to the details and visual elements such as color, texture, and shape in artworks. It has been emphasized that engaging with visual content through painting reading extends children's attention spans, instills curiosity, and ignites a desire to learn. Furthermore, it is believed that these experiences can positively impact various areas, including the exploration of visual language and the cultivation of artistic expression skills. Lastly, teacher candidates highlighted that visual elements play a role in fortifying a child's visual memory skills and providing support for their overall development.

The participants expressed that engaging in painting reading activities would boost children's self-confidence and enhance their presence in social relationships. This underscores the idea that such activities support children in expressing themselves effectively within social environments. In this context, painting readings serve as a valuable resource for children to develop an intellectual identity, contributing significantly to their personal, social, and academic growth.

Each session of painting reading presents a unique chance for children to explore a variety of diverse artworks. It should be recognized as a valuable opportunity to cultivate an interest in art. The candidates stated that children can develop a sense of respect for art through the practice of reading art. With each different painting, there is an opportunity for children to foster interest and understanding not

only in their own culture but also in other cultures. This aspect is highlighted as a crucial opportunity for multicultural education in children, enabling them to perceive cultural diversity as a form of wealth/richness. In this way, it is supposed that picture readings can offer critical knowledge that contributes to the development of children's intellectual identities.

Pre-service teachers emphasized that engaging in painting reading activities plays a significant role for teachers, in the enhancement of teaching skills, including classroom management, getting to know students, and effective communication. These activities are seen not only as a means to improve the ability of aspiring teachers to apply theoretical knowledge into practice but also as a support mechanism for better understanding students' profiles and managing their learning processes more effectively.

Based on the gathered data, pre-service teachers have indicated that engaging in picture reading offers children the chance to be introduced to art from a young age, playing a crucial role in fostering their understanding of visual language and their ability to express themselves visually. It has been noted that picture readings yield positive effects in various areas, including the development of aesthetic appreciation, discovering visual language, and the sharpening of artistic expression skills. Over time, as children form their aesthetic tastes, acquire knowledge about art, and develop a vision, these outcomes are deemed significant achievements in the acquisition of intellectual identity.

In contrast to traditional teaching methods, it offers a more contemporary approach to learning and highlights the significance of student-centered teaching. Today, the role of the teacher is to involve students in a learning process that enables them to be more active through questioning and thinking methods. (Morrissette and Voynaud, 2002). In this context, art classes will create an active learning environment for teachers. It will offer an inspiring learning environment where every student is self-confident, free and can express their own ideas without hesitation. Additionally, according to the data, participants pointed out that 88.5% of the students had encountered a reading painting method for the first time. This shows that picture reading practices offer an innovative and interesting learning experience for students. In this regard, it was observed that the students were more interested in the activity and approached difference and innovation with curiosity. At the same time, it has been observed that students develop their creative thinking skills in picture reading activities and are directed to discover different meanings in artistic works.

Participants highlighted that artworks foster student interest in their own culture and others, facilitating the attainment of important information and the development of intellectual identities. The study's data underlined the significance of multicultural interaction. According to participants, art education equips students with the capacity to acknowledge, understand, and respect diverse cultures, fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity. In this context, painting readings emerge as a vital tool in developing cultural and social awareness. In line with these findings, the education system can

formulate suitable strategies to empower students in navigating cultural diversity, cultivating empathy, and nurturing individuals capable of understanding and embracing differences.

The results show that picture reading activities increase students' attention span, increase their desire to learn, and enable more active participation. Picture readings have been shown to have potential for intellectual identity acquisition by providing a rich and engaging learning experience for young children. Reading paintings has proven to create an entertaining and enjoyable learning process, captivating and inspiring the learners. Thus, participating in art education programs and practices presents valuable opportunities for students to enrich their educational journey.

These findings are significant in that they reveal that painting readings play a positive role in the formation of intellectual identity and support the all-round development of students. "No matter what profession they choose, individuals who are educated with appropriate art education and have a developed aesthetic appreciation will contribute more to themselves and their society." (Buyurgan & Buyurgan, 2012, p.5).

No similar research study was found in the literature review. In this sense, it is thought that the study will contribute to the field.

In line with the data obtained in this study, the following suggestions can be offered;

- Pre-service teachers should be trained in picture reading.
- Painting reading education for children should begin at a young age.
- Painting reading activities should be given more room in art education programs.
- Schools can arrange art reading activities involving family participation to increase the level of artistic awareness.
- Painting readings can be held outside of the typical classroom setting in museums and galleries. Provide varied learning possibilities to children, and their interest in art and motivation to learn may grow.
- This study can be applied to children of different age groups.
- The education system should equip students with the skills to recognize and respect diverse cultures. Therefore, by adopting a multicultural education approach, students should be provided with the opportunity to develop positive attitudes towards different cultures. It can prepare children to become global citizens.
- In the realm of intellectual identity development, "Painting Readings" can make significant contributions to the sustainability of art education.

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