

## Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop in Turkey: Current Situation, Results and Suggestions<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the opinions, suggestions and findings of the report emerged as results of Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop organized by Association for the Development of Early Childhood Education in Turkey that is the representative of OMEP in Turkey. The topics covered in the workshop concerning early childhood are education, migration, neglect and abuse, values and family in social context. Discussions were held in the groups based on these topics to identify problems and offer solutions to current problems. Document review from one of the qualitative research methods was used to examine the report. The report was analyzed by content analysis. Based on these they were coded and themes were created. These themes were "Problems-Suggestions on the Functioning of the State and Institutions", "Problems and Suggestions from Individuals", "Problems-Suggestions Based on Society". Findings showed that there are limitations in Turkey in terms of reaching facilities in early childhood so poor or/and immigrant children have become even more limited in this respect. In addition to this, it was emphasized that there are inadequacies in teacher training institutions and in the quality of teachers and various suggestions were given about the studies to be done in order to increase teacher training system and teacher quality. Various solutions and models have proposed in order to realize implementations taking high benefit of children into consideration.

**Keywords:** *Early childhood and education, early childhood and migration, early childhood and abuse, early childhood and values, early childhood and family in social context.*

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## **Türkiye’de Erken Çocukluk Farkındalık Çalıştayı: Mevcut Durum, Sonuçlar ve Öneriler**

### **Öz**

Bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye OMEP temsilciliğini yürütmekte olan Türkiye Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Geliştirme Derneği’nin düzenlemiş olduğu Erken Çocukluk Farkındalık Çalıştayı sonucunda ortaya çıkan raporu görüş öneri ve tespitleri açısından incelemektir. Çalıştayda ele alınan konular erken çocukluk bağlamında eğitim, göç, ihmal ve istismar, değerler ve toplumsal bağlamda ailedir. Bu başlıklarda oluşturulan gruplarda sorunların tespiti ve çözüm önerilerinin getirilmesi amacıyla tartışmalar yürütülmüştür. Erken Çocukluk Dönemi Farkındalık Çalıştayı’nın sonuç raporunu incelemek amacıyla nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden doküman incelemesi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada; incelenen dokümanın analizinde içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Erken Çocukluk Dönemi Farkındalık Çalıştayı Sonuç Raporu detaylı olarak incelenerek, grupların sonuç raporlarına yansıttıkları sorun ve öneri ifadeleri arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıklar karşılaştırılmış, kodlanmış ve temalar oluşturulmuştur. Bu temalar “Devlet ve Kurumların İşleyişi İle İlgili Sorunlar- Öneriler, “Bireylerden Kaynaklanan Sorunlar- Öneriler, “Toplumsal Kaynaklı Sorunlar ve Toplum Temelli Öneriler” bağlamında incelenmiştir. Çalıştay sonucunda tüm gruplarda elde edilen bulgular; Türkiye’de var olan yasal düzenlemelerin uygulanmasında, denetlenmesinde ve gerekli yaptırımların hayata geçirilmesinde önemli sınırlılıkların yaşandığı, bu durum, yoksul ve/veya göçmen çocuklar söz konusu olduğunda daha da sınırlı bir hale geldiğini göstermektedir. Bunun yanı sıra öğretmen yetiştiren kurumlarda ve öğretmenlerin niteliğinde yetersizliklerin olduğu vurgulanmış ve öğretmen yetiştirme sisteminin ve öğretmen niteliğinin artırılması yönünde yapılacak çalışmalarla ilgili çeşitli öneriler sunulmuştur. Çalıştay kapsamında çocukların yüksek yararını gözetecek uygulamaların hayata geçirilmesi yönünde, çeşitli çözüm önerileri ve modeller geliştirilmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Türkiye’de erken çocukluk eğitimi, erken çocukluk ve göç, erken çocukluk ve istismar, erken çocukluk ve değerler, erken çocukluk ve toplumsal bağlamda aile.*

## Introduction

It is an important need that stakeholders from different disciplines come together and exchange ideas in scientific studies from time to time. Today, especially in the field of educational sciences, the technique of workshop providing people who are specialized in a certain field with the opportunity to come together and exchange ideas is frequently used. Workshop is a method of work designed to make "quality decisions" on important and sensitive issues by discussing, analyzing the situation/matter and synthesizing ideas in a participatory environment. Generally, it can be defined as a meeting held by those who are specialized in their fields in order to find solutions to current educational problems and add new applications to education. The target of this technique is a joint team meeting where all knowledge and experiences are reflected. Workshop is used in different fields of specialization and preferred in academic knowledge exchange applications in which usually higher level cognitive processes are used (Demirel, 2011; Dilek, 2011). Workshops are held in the field of early childhood education as well as in many different areas, with the participation of all stakeholders in order to make qualified decisions and develop common attitudes.

Early childhood education is the starting point of human development and the period where the child develops fastest in terms of all the developmental stages. In these years, the foundations of learning and behavior patterns, which affect the child's later development, are laid (UNICEF, 2013). Although it is one of the most important educational and developmental periods having lifelong effects, unfortunately the field of early childhood education still faces with many problems in Turkey. The schooling rates in preschool period in Turkey are 39,54 % for 3-5-year-old children, 50,46 % for 4-5-year-old children and 67,17 % for 5-year-old children (MEB; 2016). According to the OECD Report, from 2008 until 2013, Turkey increased the amount of expenditure per capita in elementary and secondary education, but it still ranks the lowest among the OECD countries in relation to the expenditure per student. While the state expenditure per student is 2894 dollars in Turkey, the OECD mean is 8477 dollars (ERG, 2016). The distributions of students to institutions in preschool education are like this: 56.4 % of children attend public nursery schools included within elementary schools, 25.2 % attend public nursery schools, 8.8 % go to private nursery schools, 3.9 % attend institutions dependent to the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and the rest of them enroll

to day care centers opened at firms or companies in accordance with the Labor Law. However, the Society Based Models only cover 1.7 % (ERG, 2016).

In Turkey, there is a need for carrying out both qualitative and quantitative works in order to increase the quality of preschool education rapidly. As one of the works aiming to fulfill this aim, the Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop was held in Eskisehir on the dates of 18th-19th-20th November 2016 under the lead of the Association for the Development of Early Childhood Education in Turkey in collaboration with Ministry of National Education General Directorate of Basic/Primary Education, Association for Child Development and Educators, Association for Private Preschool and Etude Education Institutions, and Eskisehir City Council. The workshop was carried out with the participation of academicians, teachers and representatives of non-governmental organizations performing works on children in different professional fields. The basic aim of the workshop was to put forward basic problems related to "Early Childhood Period" in Turkey and to propose solutions based on scientific grounds. Within this scope, based on the participants' opinions, five headings were determined, namely "Early Childhood and Education", "Early Childhood and Migration", "Early Childhood and Abuse", "Early Childhood and Values" and "Early Childhood and Family within the Social Context", and discussions were held in the groups created under these headings with the aim of determining problems and proposing solutions.

The purpose of this study is to examine the report of the Workshop on Early Childhood Period Awareness in detail and, in this way, determine the current situation and problems of the field of early childhood education in Turkey and finally propose solutions to these problems. At the same time, the study also aims to contribute to the solution of various current problems experienced in the field of early childhood both in Turkey and in the world and put under discussion in the workshop by sharing these solutions with different people and institutions working on early childhood in different countries.

## **Method**

In this study, with the aim of examining the Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop Conclusion Report prepared by the - Association for the Development of Early Childhood

Education in Turkey (TOÖEGD) – OMEP Turkey, the document review method that is one of the qualitative research methods was used. The document review covers "an analysis of written materials containing information about the targeted cases or phenomena for investigation" (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). Although the document review is used in qualitative, research methods as a data triangulation besides observation and interview techniques. It can be used as a qualitative research method (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

## Data Resources

In the study, the Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop Conclusion Report was investigated as data. In the Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop organized by the Association for the Development of Early Childhood Education in Turkey (TOÖEGD) – OMEP Turkey, five headings were determined, namely "Early Childhood and Education", "Early Childhood and Migration", "Early Childhood and Abuse", "Early Childhood and Values" and "Early Childhood and Family within the Social Context". The groups held discussions including opinions, problems and solutions on the workshop subject for two days. In addition, on the last day, every group presented the reports of their works, which they carried out. Finally, all the group presentations were brought together and the Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop Conclusion Report was composed. Participants from different disciplines participated in the work under five headings. Problems and solutions on these issues were included in the final report. 94 people participated in the Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop and the distribution related to the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1.  
*The Distribution Related to the Participants*

Participants	Women	Men	Total	
	n	n	n	F
Academicians	42	5	47	50
Non-Governmental Organization Workers	8	-	8	8,5
Preschool Teachers	7	1	8	8,5
Preservice Preschool Teachers	4	3	7	7,4
Psychological Counselors	4	3	7	7,4
Ministry of Family and Social Services	4	2	6	6,4
Administrators of the Preschool Educational Institutions	4	1	5	5,3
Ministry of National Education	2	1	3	3,2
Municipalities	2	1	3	3,2
TOTAL	77	17	94	
Percentage (f)	81,91 %	18,08 %	100 %	100

Ninety-four participants from nine different fields related to the field of early childhood education in Turkey participated in the Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop. As it is seen in Table 1, half of the participants were the academicians working in the field of early childhood education at different universities in Turkey (50 %); they were followed in order of frequency by the non-governmental organization workers servicing in the field of early childhood (8,5 %), the preschool teachers (8,5 %), preschool teaching students and psychological counselors (7,4 %). Moreover, the Ministry of Family and Social Services (6,4 %), the administrators of the preschool educational institutions (5,3 %), the Ministry of National Education (3,2 %) and the municipalities (3,2 %) were represented. A great majority of the participants were composed of women (81,91 %) and 18% of the participants were men. When the general distribution was looked in, it can be stated that the Workshop brought together many different stakeholders working in the field of early childhood education in Turkey and being interested in this field and composed a good representative group.

### **Data Analysis**

Content analysis and descriptive analysis are used as the analysis of the data in the document review method. The content analysis is a scientific approach allowing for the examination of verbal, written and other materials in an objective and systematic way (Tavşancıl ve Aslan, 2001). The descriptive analysis approach allows for the organization of data according to themes put forward by research questions and the presentation of them by taking into account questions or dimensions used in an interview (Çepni, 2009; Yıldırım, ve Şimşek, 2005). In the study, since the existing themes were not used in the analyzed document, content analysis was used for in-depth analysis.

Firstly, the Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop Conclusion Report was examined in detail by the researchers participating in the workshop as both organizers and participators. Then the similarities and differences between the problems and solution suggestions reflected by the groups into conclusion reports were compared. Finally the codes and themes were composed. These themes were examined in terms of "Problems- Suggested Solution related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions", "Individual Based Problems and Suggested Solutions", Social Based Problems and Community Based Suggested Solutions". Then, all the problems and solution suggestions stated by the workshop groups in relation to their own

headings and reflected into the workshop report were classified firstly separately and then mutually over the themes. Moreover, the participants' opinions and solution suggestions included in the conclusion report were summarized and presented within quotations.

## Findings

In the Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop, five working groups were composed, namely "Early Childhood and Education", "Early Childhood and Migration", "Early Childhood and Abuse and Neglect", "Early Childhood and Family within the Social Context" and "Early Childhood and Values". In the discussions held in the group works, related to the headings discussed, problems in Turkey and suggestions to solve these problems were presented in the conclusion report.

Table 2.

*Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop Report Summary Table*

Subtitles	Defined Problems			Suggested Solutions		
	State/ Institutions	Individuals	Social	State/ Institutions	Individuals	Social
	n	n	n	n	n	n
Early Childhood and Education	4	7	7	35	-	3
Early Childhood and Migration	7	1	7	20	-	5
Early Childhood and Abuse and Neglect	5	3	7	27	-	5
Early Childhood and Family within the Social Context	1	1	2	39	-	2
Early Childhood and Values	5	-	1	33	-	-
TOTAL	22	12	24	156	-	15

As it is seen in Table 2, on the above-listed workshop topics, the groups determined 68 problems were in the category of "Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions", 12 problems were in the category of "Problems Arising from Individuals-Individual Based Problems" and 24 problems were in the category of "Social Based Problems". Moreover, in relation to the solutions to these problems, the groups presented 156 suggested solution in relation to the "Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions"

and 15 suggested solutions were in relation to the "Social Based Problems". The problems determined by the working groups and the solution suggestions to these problems were categorized and presented in the following tables:

Table 3.

*Early Childhood and Education Problems and Suggested Solutions*

Subtitles Covered	Defined Problems			Suggested Solutions		
	State/ Institutions	Individuals	Social	State/ Institutions	Individuals	Social
	n	n	n	n	n	n
1. Application of Quality Standards in Early Childhood Education						
1.A. Teacher Competence	20	4	3	10	-	1
1B. Early Childhood Education Program	7	-	-	11	-	1
1C. Educational Environment	2	-	-	1	-	-
1D. Situation Quality, Management, Leadership	1	1	-	1	-	-
1E. Children's Rights and Society	-	-	2	2	-	-
2. Education and Rehabilitation of Children with Special Needs Developmentally at Risk						
2.A. Orientation, Assessment-Diagnosis and Early Intervention	8	1	1	5	-	1
2B. Mainstreaming Education	2	1	1	5	-	-
TOTAL	40	7	7	35	-	3

As it is seen in Table 3, the participators in the "Early Childhood and Education Problems" group gathered the problems, which they determined in this field and the solution suggestions under two main headings. It was stated that, of these problems, 40 were related to state education policies and functioning of institutions, seven were individual based problems and seven were social based problems. Related to the suggested solutions to the mentioned problems, the participants proposed 35 solutions to the state education policies and the functioning of institutions and 3 solutions to the social based problems.

In relation to the category of "Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions", the problems can be summarized as follows: "problems related to teacher training; problems



related to the contents of teacher training programs; problems related to the quality and quantity of teaching staff members; too many students in undergraduate programs; problems related to the quality and quantity of in-service training programs; problems related to the implementation of the current preschool education program; problems related to physical conditions of educational environments and resources; problems related to the adaptation to primary school; limitedness of current systems aiming at early intervention and lack of a system model in the national context; problems related to limitedness, monitoring and sanctions at the point of transferring legislative regulations, which are in effect in relation to inclusive education, into practice; teachers' being unable to benefit from supportive special educational services sufficiently".

In relation to the category of the "Suggested Solutions to Solve the Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions", the suggestions made by the participants can be summarized as follows: "developing standard measurement tools and special examinations in teacher selection; re-regulation of the system of transition from vocational high school to university; re-regulation of course contents of teacher training programs; inclusion of compulsory courses aiming at children with special needs and under risk; extending the duration of teaching practice; developing policies in order to support teaching staff members to increase their qualities; carrying out needs analysis at a local base in order to determine types of in-service training program in line with teachers' needs; making regulations in relation to the encouragement of mentorship practices to help teachers implement, evaluate and monitor the program; taking in hand the auditing of the preschool education as a special field; carrying out works in collaboration with related ministries in order to develop an early intervention system model which is appropriate for our country; establishing a model at a point of presenting supportive special education services; starting works to take the education of children who are not diagnosed yet but under risk under guarantee; employing field specialists to evaluate the child multi-directionally at Family Health Services and establishing a system with an interdisciplinary approach; giving preschool teachers more support about developmental insufficiency and children who are under risk; strengthening the auditing and sanction mechanism at the point of transferring the existing legislative regulations into practice area in relation to inclusive education empowerment".

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The problems specified by the participant included in the category of "Problems Arising from Individuals - Individual Based Problems" can be summarized as follows: "teaching staff members, teachers and students sometimes fail to develop themselves; lack of intrinsic motivation and adaptation problems; preschool teachers' developmental insufficiency and having insufficient knowledge about what kind of a process they are supposed to follow when referring the child under risk to relevant authorities; teachers' being in need for information about inclusive education and not having encountered insufficient number of good practice examples".

The problems stated by the participants discussed in the category of the "Social Based Problems" are as follows: "society's not giving the profession of teaching the importance which it deserves; children's and families' not being informed about child rights; society's having low awareness level about early childhood education; insufficient social awareness level about inclusive education". The solution suggestions in relation to these determined problems, the ones which can be discussed in the category of "Solution Suggestions to Social Based Problems" can be summarized as follows: "increasing the works aiming to change the viewpoint towards vocational high school students; making regulations to support works aiming to achieve cooperation between families, teachers and experts; carrying out works to make health workers, educators and families conscious about early intervention and early education services".

Table 4.

*Early Childhood and Migration Issues Problems and Suggested Solutions*

Subtitles Covered	Defined Problems			Suggested Solutions		
	State/ Institutions	Individuals	Social	State / Institutions	Individuals	Social
	n	n	n	n	n	n
Right to life and development	3	-	4	9	-	-
Right to Protection	1	-	2	6	-	1
Right to Participation	3	1	1	5	-	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

As it is seen in Table 4, the participants in the "Early Childhood and Immigration Problems" group gathered the problems and suggested solutions that they determined in this field under three main headings. It was stated that seven of these problems were related to the functioning

of the state and institutions, one of them was individual based, seven of them were social based. However, in relation to the solutions suggested for the mentioned problems, the participants proposed 20 solutions in relation to the functioning of the state and institutions and 5 solutions in relation to the social based problems.

The problems specified by the participants that can be discussed in the category of the "Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions" can be summarized as follows: "insufficient qualitative and quantitative knowledge about immigrant children in the early childhood period; not creating opportunities for children to use their right to act and play; problems related to the maintainability of developmental and educational services given to immigrants; problems related to the meeting of immigrants' needs for housing (inside and outside camp); having most of the immigrant children (especially female children), reaching early childhood educational services and solving the problems related to the unrecorded immigrants' reaching health services and problems which they encounter when solving their health problems and reaching health services".

Moreover, the solutions suggested by the participants to these problems and which can be discussed in the category of the " Suggested Solutions in relation to Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions" can be summarized as follows: " starting and supporting interdisciplinary applied studies to guide policies related to 0-8-year-old immigrant children immediately; recording all children immediately; preparing, generalizing formal, non-formal flexible early childhood education programs; supporting bilingual education in the preschool period and in the first years of primary education (achieving this via dual teachers or bilingual teachers); integrating functional Turkish education given to the person who is primarily in charge of giving care to the child with mother education programs; establishing child-friendly safe playgrounds in places where the child can reach easily; providing support and budget to early childhood education given place in developmental plans related to migration; providing all children with healthy, sufficient and balanced nutrition supports; developing monitoring systems and using them effectively; developing the sensitivity of security forces and having them acquire skills in relation to monitoring; developing safe and child-friendly environments; increasing incentives to achieve the continuity of children's attending educational institutions; increasing disincentives; benefiting from programs to support social acceptance, respect for differences, establishment of empathy and the sense of

belongingness in children in the existing formal, non-formal and informal early childhood education programs; giving information in the social media, media and public institutions; achieving the maintainability of early childhood education; developing programs which are sensitive to social equality in education and having girls benefit from these programs; convincing the state to raise awareness towards creating a common life ground between immigrant children and children of a society receiving migration and giving them support to have them acquire necessary knowledge and skills".

The participants drew attention to individual adaptation problems in the category of "Problems Arising from Individuals - Individual Based Problems". The problems stated by the participants that can be discussed in the category of the "Social Based Problems" can be summarized as follows: "social adjustment and behavior disorders (normalization of violence and becoming aggressive); language problem (use of mother tongue); hunger and malnutrition (breast-feeding, supplementary food, accessing clean water) and problems caused by toxic stress; the society's tolerating immigrant children's working (cleaning windshield, panhandling, etc.); immigrant children's facing with dangers (problems related to statelessness, getting lost, death, child trafficking, abuse); immigrant children's belongingness problem (not having the sense of belongingness, peer rejection); prejudices against immigrants and their being unable to make their voice heard".

The suggestions in relation to the solution of these determined problems that can be discussed in the category of "Suggestions in relation to the Solution of Social Based Problems" can be summarized as follows: "developing children's skills of protecting themselves and asking for help and making mothers, fathers and other care-giving people conscious about this matter and having them acquire skills; raising the awareness of families about the existing educational services; creating environments to have all children seethe with one another and to make them understand one another; raising social awareness (media, social media, public service ad); spending effort to make individuals develop personally about this matter".

*Early Childhood and Migration Issues Problems and Suggested Solutions*

Subtitles	Defined Problems			Suggested Solutions		
	State/ Institutions	Individuals	Social	State / Institutions	Individuals	Social
	n	n	n	n	n	n
Scope and Awareness of Child Neglect and Abuse	4	1	6	20	-	3
Prevention of Child Neglect and Abuse	1	2	1	7	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>

As it is seen in Table 5, "the participants in the "Early Childhood and Neglect and Abuse" group gathered the problems and solution suggestions under two main headings. It was stated that five of these problems were related to the functioning of the State, Institutions, 3 were individual based, and seven were social based problems. As solution suggestions to the mentioned problems, the participants suggested 27 solutions to the problems related to the functioning of the State and Institutions and four solutions to the social based problems.

The problems specified by the participants that can be discussed in the category of the "Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions" can be summarized as follows: "insufficient amount of action research on child neglect and abuse in Turkey; having insufficient knowledge about research prepared, implemented and evaluated on this matter in Turkey and in the world; proliferation of neglect and abuse in preschool educational institutions; problems related to the way of dealing with the religious education in public and private institutions in the preschool period; lack of functional, long-term public policies which require making new laws and regulations aiming both to determine the current situation and increase social awareness on this matter in Turkey".

The solution suggestions stated by the participants which can be discussed in relation to the category of the "Solutions Suggested in relation to Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions" can be summarized as follows: "organizing workshops at local level in all the cities with the aim of determining the current situation and developing solution suggestions to prevent child neglect and abuse; increasing the amount of action research and fieldwork on this subject; providing training to all adults and children; addressing the subject of child rights and responsibilities in activities to be performed in preschool education environments; giving courses on rights and responsibilities in all the higher education

institutions, mainly the teacher training institutions, primary education and secondary education institutions; including the course of child neglect and abuse within the compulsory courses in teacher training programs; providing employment possibilities to adults in families; strengthening cooperation between institutions; preparing environments to meet the requirements of children living and working in the street (Municipalities, NGOs, etc.); taking legislative precautions against the use of wrong material and programs about social sexism in mass media; under the lead of the Ministry of National Education and with the support of Other Public Institutions and by bringing various groups together such as universities, non-governmental organizations, etc., preparing a country-based training program and giving this training program to all adults and children; increasing the support given to disadvantaged/at-risk children; loading the materials prepared by such institutions as social service institutions, UNICEF, Save the Children, ICC, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and AÇEV (Mother Child Education Foundation) into the system of the Ministry of National Education and opening them to the use of teachers; the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labor can provide financial support especially to the families of children being exploited economically in order to prevent child labor".

In relation to the category of "Problems Arising from Individuals - Individual Based Problems", the participants drew attention to the problems that some individuals tend to ignore the problem, some people working with children do not behave sensitively with respect to this matter and fall short of developing themselves.

The problems stated by the participants that can be discussed in the category of the "Social Based Problems" can be listed as follows: "lack of information in adult groups and children from different age groups about child neglect and abuse and also varieties of them; acceptance of emotional and physical abuse as a method of discipline with a traditional approach in our society; disrespecting and neglecting children as a result of emotional and physical abuse and neglect behaviors commonly observed in the society; abusing children by using them to derive income; observing child neglect in the family commonly; adopting attitudes preventing children from acquiring their sexual role identities properly and behaving accordingly at home and school; lack of sufficient social awareness about the ways to follow in case of a child neglect and abuse ".

The solutions suggested to solve these determined problems in the category of “Solutions Suggested to Solve the Social Based Problems” can be summarized as follows: “dealing with the subject of child rights and responsibilities in children's theatres; sharing the idea that giving money to panhandling children will not solve this problem but it will contribute to its continuation with all the parts of the society; using billboards, public service ads and mass media to give information about this matter; raising public awareness in relation to the fact that doing nothing is a crime as much as doing wrong”.

As it is seen in Table 6, the participants in the "Early Childhood Period and Family in Social Context" group gathered the problems which they determined in this field and the solutions which they suggested under five main headings. Of these problems, 11 were related to the functioning of the state and institutions, one was individual based and two were social based problems. In addition, in relation to the solutions suggested to the mentioned problems, the participants suggested 39 solutions to the problems related to the functioning of the state and institutions and two solutions to the social based problems.

The problems specified by the participants discussed in the category of the "Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions" can be listed as follows: "not implementing the regulations in accordance with goals; inability to carry out the auditing of the regulations including school-family cooperation at schools; low teacher quality; inability to establish a healthy communication with families at preschool educational institutions; teachers' not knowing well and not receiving sufficient support about the aims and contents of family participation and home visits; insufficiencies related to parents education; insufficient knowledge which people working in the field have about children under risk; celebrating a single day under the name of child rights day; incidences of violation of child rights caused by language differences; courses on child rights and child law are not compulsory at universities".

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*Early Childhood and Education Problems and Suggested Solutions*

Subtitles	Defined Problems			Suggested Solutions		
	State/ Institution	Individuals	Social	State/ Institutions	Individuals	Social
	n	n	n	n	n	n
The Importance of School-Family Cooperation in Early Childhood Education and Studies	4	-	-	17	-	1
Family Participation and Home Visits in Early Childhood Education	1	-	-	7	-	-
Family Education Practices in Early Childhood Education	2	1	1	7	-	1
Development, Implementation and Maintenance of Developmental and Educational Needs of Children at Risk and Family Oriented Programs	1	-	-	3	-	-
Discussion of Family Institution in the Context of Children's Rights (Regional Differences, Access, Equality, Quality, etc.)	3	-	1	5	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>

The solutions suggested by the participants to these problems that can be discussed in the category of the "Solutions Suggested to Solve the Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions" can be summarized as follows: "re-arrangement of the regulations (law, regulations, program, etc.) so as to make the definition of school -family relationship and school - family collaboration include the same statements in the practice; making auditing frequently and being clear; increasing the number of projects such as family-friendly schools, etc.; education faculties' accepting students to become teachers according to certain criteria; increasing the number of lesson hours of mother-father education at faculties and carrying out the education both theoretically and practically; making compulsory the carrying out of in-service training programs in cooperation with education faculties compulsory; teachers' having academic mentors about family education and family participation; making teachers' in-service training topics' including family participation compulsory; increasing the family participation lesson hours at both pre-undergraduate and undergraduate levels and arranging the content as practice and theoretical; student teachers' participation in these works before starting their



career; making at least 3 family trainings compulsory at schools separately in the first and second semesters; doing education interactively; employing child development specialists in municipalities, prisons, public education centers and life centers; bringing the requirement of field specialists' (preschool teacher-PCG-psychologist) working cooperatively; providing preschool teachers with the opportunity to become administrators of developmental tests; carrying out workshops together with families of children under risk; administering family training programs to families in order to introduce them child rights and make them become conscious administrators of their contents; drawing attention to child rights starting from the primary education week when schools are opened and including them in the curriculum throughout the educational year; giving training in relation to how to give children child rights in in-service programs; through local administrations and public education centers and as it is required by the article included in the basic education law that basic education is given in Turkish, giving education to parents in Turkish".

In relation to the category of the "Problems Arising from Individuals - Individual Based Problems", the participants mentioned the problem of "students' parents' being unable to choose the correct family education topic which is appropriate for them".

As one of the problems in relation to the category of the "Social Based Problems", the participants mentioned the problem of the lack of knowledge in our society about the necessity and importance of family education. As a solution suggestion to this problem, they stated that social awareness should be raised through supporting family participation via social responsibility projects".

As it is seen in Table 7, "the participants in the "Problems Encountered in relation to the Subject of Early Childhood and Values and Solution Suggestions" group gathered the problems which they determined in this field and their solution suggestions under two main headings. It was stated that five of these problems were related to the functioning of the State and Institutions and one of them was a social based problem. In relation to the solutions suggested for the mentioned problems, the participants suggested 33 solutions in relation to the functioning of the State and Institutions.

Table 7.

Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop in Turkey:  
Current Situation, Results and Suggestions

*Early Childhood Values Problems and Suggested Solutions*

Subtitles	Defined Problems			Suggested Solutions		
	State/ Institutions	Individuals	Social	State/ Institutions	Individuals	Social
	n	n	n	n	n	n
Definition of Values in Early Childhood Education	2	-	1	17	-	-
Scope and Awareness Challenges in Value Education in Early Childhood	2	-	-	16	-	-
TOTAL	5	-	1	33	-	-

The problems stated by the participants discussed in the category of the "Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions" can be listed as follows: "Not having determined the definition and scope of the values in preschool period; limited number of studies made in Turkey on values education in the early childhood period; low teacher quality in relation to the management of the values education process and lack of cooperation with families in the values education process".

The solutions suggested by the participants to these problems in the category of the "Solutions Suggested for the Problems in relation to the Functioning of the State and Institutions" can be summarized as follows: "determining the definition and scope of values; determining universal and cultural values; determining developmental appropriateness characteristics when working on values with preschool children; determining methods related to the teaching of values; informing preservice teachers and servicing teachers about the definition, scope, teaching methods of values and developmental characteristics of preschool children; reviewing the results of studies made in Turkey on values education in the early childhood education; achieving the continuation of values education to be taken in hand in the preschool period during the primary education; carrying out works to increase the media literacy awareness of teachers and families; controlling popular culture contents to which children are exposed; inclusion of universal values, which are free from didactic, lesson-giving and frightening components, in books and child publications; raising public awareness through public service ads aiming at children and families; opening compulsory courses to contribute to values education at teacher training institutions (professional ethics, values education, etc.); determining professional ethics principles of preschool teaching and auditing preservice and servicing teachers' professional ethics practices; carrying out works in relation to school-family

cooperation; teachers' and families' working together on how to give values via family participation activities".

Of the problems mentioned by the participants in the category of the "Social Based Problems" is stated as the "inability to get sufficient support from written, visual and social media.

Moreover, the participants also made a definition work in the workshop and determined the universal values as "responsibility, love, respect, tolerance, sharing, helping, honesty, cooperation / solidarity, justice and self-control" and the cultural (local) values as "child games, meals, toy, architecture, clothes, art, music and special days".

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

In the Awareness of Early Childhood Period Workshop organized by the Association for the Development of Early Childhood Education in Turkey (TOÖEGD) – OMEP Turkey, the sub-headings of "Early Childhood and Education", "Early Childhood and Migration", "Early Childhood and Abuse", "Early Childhood and Values" and "Early Childhood and Family within the Social Context" were taken in hand. In this study examining the conclusion report prepared following the workshop by bringing together the opinions, problems and solutions presented by the participants under the above-mentioned sub-headings, it is observed that some issues were attached more importance by the participants in all the groups in relation to the field of early childhood education in Turkey.

The first of these is "teacher qualities". This issue was the one, which all the groups emphasized most in both the "problems" section and the "solutions" section. In preschool education, the concept of teacher having a special and weighted importance with its aspect of providing guidance to both the child and the family in the development and education process was evaluated by the participants under many headings such as selection of students to become teachers, training of teachers, in-service training of teachers, etc. The common point on which the participants having stated opinions under different headings agreed was the existence of some hitches and insufficiencies in the selection, training (courses and teaching practice which they receive from universities) and appointment of preschool education students and during their servicing process and in-service trainings, which they receive in this process. Moreover,

many suggestions related to the elimination of these hitches and insufficiencies were included in the report. The teacher, one of the most strategical parts of the social system called school, is the first adult, which the preschool child encounters in addition to the family (Oktay, 1991: 56; Bursalioglu, 1981: 81). Studies show that the factor that makes preschool institutions different from one another is the teacher. No matter how good the physical environment, the program and the administration is, it is the teacher's knowledge, competence and personality that make education successful and active (Bekman, 1990; Bedel, 2008; Kesicioğlu, 2012; Kök et al., 2011; Pianta, Stuhlman and Barnett, 2003). For this reason, it can be stated, "A school can only be as good as its teachers". The success of education system depends fundamentally on the qualities of teachers and other personnel to operate and implement the system (Büyükkaragöz and Kesici, 1996: 354). In order for the teacher, who is the most strategical element of the education system, to be able to answer and meet the student's needs, it is of vital importance for them to have professional and field knowledge and transform this knowledge and their personal qualities into experience; shortly, their qualification level is of vital importance. The quality of the teacher affects the quality of the produced education service, hence, the satisfaction which the student and families, who are the "client" of the education system, from the education service which they receive; in other words, whether needs are met (Kuru, 2000). When the existing situation in Turkey is looked in, it really seems necessary to revise teachers' situations both qualitatively and quantitatively immediately both in preservice and in-service periods and find solutions in the short/long run. According to the 2015-2016 HEC data, there are Preschool Education Programs at 72 universities in Turkey. At these universities, a total of 517 academic staff member are working and 35.377 students are enrolled; at the same time, 18.986 preschool teachers had been waiting to be appointed and 4614 students teachers had started to study as new registrations in the preschool education field by the year 2016 (YÖK, 2016).

In the workshop report, all the groups having worked on different topics underlined the fact that increase in the number of teachers is not directly proportionate to the increase in quality. When practices done in the world on teacher education are looked in, it is seen that there is a need for making new regulations to meet the gradually increasing need for preschool teachers in Turkey in a qualitative way. In a study made on this subject, Küçükoğlu and Kızıлтаş (2012) examined the preschool teacher training programs of some countries such as Germany, England, Italy, France, Russia and Turkey. Because of the comparisons, the researchers made

some determinations and suggestions about the preschool teacher training system in Turkey. Some of these were the re-regulation of the terms of admission of students to the preschool teaching program by benefiting from experiences of other countries, developing different criteria for the selection of individuals who are appropriate for the preschool teaching, not making placement just according to the achievement grade in the student selection examination, etc. Besides this, it is considered that it will be useful to regulate the preschool teacher training in Turkey as a five-year training program and give general culture and special field courses in the first three years of the training and then a professional skill and practice weighted successive training in the last two years of training. All these opinions and suggestions overlap the opinions stated by the participants under five headings taken in hand in the workshop in relation to teacher training and its quality.

Another problem having appeared in the workshop commonly in all the groups was "*the lack of sufficient qualitative and quantitative data about the situation of children in the early childhood period in Turkey and the inability of making an effective situation determination*". In the headings discussed in all the groups, the fact that there is insufficient knowledge about the situation of our country's children and insufficient number of studies on this subject was mentioned as a problem and various solutions were suggested. For example, quantitative and qualitative data about the situation of internal and external immigrant children being in the early childhood period in Turkey having received an intensive migration in recent years seem insufficient. While the internal migration was 451.794 in Turkey (TSI, 2015), the number of people having come to our country through external migration was 3.018.452 according to the data taken from the United Nations Higher Commissariat for Refugees (UNHCR, 2016) on 3rd October 2016. It is observed that these figures are changing every moment and the total number of people affected by migration is about 3.470.196. However, although the data in relation to the internal migration in Turkey cannot be reached, it is known that there are 0-4-year-old 364.974 Syrian children having come to our country or was born here and 24.079 children having come to our country from other countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Somalia. While 10% of the Syrian refugees in Turkey are living in camps, 90% of them are living outside camps and they can reach basic services in a limited way (European Commission, 2016). This data in our hand is changing every moment and the lack of an effective and regular tracking system makes it difficult to carry out situation determination and indirectly hinders solution production processes.

A similar situation is true for such subjects as the education related to the early childhood education, nutrition, neglect and abuse, values and their education as well. It is observed that many pieces of quantitative and qualitative data related to the early childhood period are detached and different from one another. It is clear that some compilation studies made in academic field (Berat and Kıldan, 2013; Bertan et al., 2009) contribute to the collection of academic data from time to time. However, it can be stated that there is not a nationwide comprehensive tracking system to bring together all academic studies made on the early childhood period and again statistical data collected from different institutions and organizations giving service in this field. In other words, it was determined that there is a need for bringing together regularly data to be collected from different disciplines, institutions and organizations giving service in the field of early childhood, affecting studies in this field.

Among the problems and solution suggestions discussed in relation to the topics dealt with in the workshop, the mostly emphasized another issue was "the necessity that people, institutions and organizations from different disciplines, fields should work cooperatively for the high benefit of the early childhood period". This situation put forward as a necessity in increasing public awareness in relation to the early childhood period, determining the current situation more easily, developing tracking systems, making the practices of determination of children under risk more functional and effective, reaching more people within a shorter time, etc.

Another interesting result attracting attention in the workshop report was that the groups having worked on five different working topics determined 68 problems in the category of the "Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions", 12 problems in the category of the "Problems Arising from Individuals - Individual Based Problems" and 24 problems in the category of the "Social Based Problems" and, in relation to the solution of these problems, they suggested 156 solutions in the category of the "Solutions Suggested to Solve the Problems related to the Functioning of the State and Institutions" and 15 solutions in the category of the "Solutions Suggested to Solve the Social Based Problems". This result indicates that a great majority of the existing problems related to the early childhood period in Turkey and the solutions suggested to solve these problems might be related to the functioning of the State and Institutions. In other words, it can be stated that the participants regard the functioning of the

state and institutions as the most effective factor at the point of both the problems and the suggestions related to the early childhood period.

Another problem on which the participants having presented opinions under five different headings agreed commonly was that “*there are important difficulties in the implementation, auditing of the existing legislative regulations and putting necessary sanctions into effect in Turkey*”. This becomes more limited when destitute and/or immigrant children are the matter of discussion.

The participants mentioned the necessity of making some existing legislative regulations active and effective in addition to issuing new legislative regulations, making some additions to or changing the existing ones in the field of child education. For example, it was emphasized in various sessions that some new legislative regulations are needed with regard to the auditing of preschool education and the existing regulations related to family visits should be actively applied. Moreover, the literature supports these opinions. In different studies made on the subject, the practice of family visits included in the current system is regarded by an important part of teachers as unnecessary and not applied (Yıldız, 2012; Gülcan and Taner, 2011; Bahçeli Kahraman and Taner Derman, 2012).

Finally, another issue taken in hand commonly in the workshop was "the insufficient public awareness in relation to the importance, characteristics of the preschool period, the necessity of preschool education and the sensitivities which are specific to it and the state's not giving enough support". In the UNICEF Report (2016) on the State of World Children, it was mentioned that Turkey has a big economy, plenty of resources and sufficient substructure in terms of protecting child rights. But unfortunately, the opinion that the contribution of these bodies are not sought systematically and, most of the time, they are not integrated with child services and child rights monitoring works supervised by the state" overlaps the opinions stated in the workshop.

### **Suggestions**

In the direction of the findings obtained in all the groups as results of the workshop, the following suggestions can be made;

1. Some legislative regulations should be made to create a platform to make all the public institutions and organizations, non-governmental organizations, universities, private sector and others, which are related to the child work in cooperation with the aim of protecting the high benefits of children and a systematic monitoring system including all these elements, should be developed.
2. It is necessary to speed up and support works to improve the teacher training system and increase teacher quality for raising healthy generations.
3. Various works should be done to increase public awareness about the importance, characteristics of preschool period and the necessity of preschool education and the sensitivities that are specific to it and the state's interest in and support for this education stage should be strengthened.



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