

The Evaluation of 1st Grade School Teachers' Views about Orientation and Preparation Programs

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ABSTRACT

During the 2012-2013 academic year, the primary education system in Turkey witnessed an overhaul where among other changes, "Compliance and Preparatory Studies" were introduced. Implementation of the twelve-week Compliance and Preparatory Studies course is now the responsibility of primary 1st grade teachers. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the opinion of 1st grade teacher's regarding the compliance program. The study employed qualitative research methods and conducted interviews with 20 teachers. Results of the data analysis identified six main themes; teachers' reflections on the new education system, activities in the compliance program, problems encountered while administering the compliance program, the benefits of compliance programs, difficulties in the transition to primary school, and the situation after the process of integration of the students.

Key Words: Compliance and preparatory process, Transition to primary school, First grade school teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Transition from preschool or home in to elementary school can be seen as the first and most important stage in a student's educational journey. Children are leaving the environment they are accustomed to, and being transferred to a formal education environment. Transferring from a home or educational setting in to a school setting is expressed as the 'transition' or 'transfer' in the literature. In this study, the term 'transition' has been used to denote the stage which covers the transition from preschool in to elementary education. This study aims to investigate the Orientation and Preparation Program applied to students in the process of transition from home or preschool to primary school, based on teachers' viewpoints. Children who enter into an educational setting different from his/her family or friends from preschool education can have difficulty adapting to their new friends, teacher or to the school setting. Studies show that the other problems experienced by children in transition to school include obeying the rules, numbers, and transition to reading and writing skills (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Margetts, 2002). This brings us to the conventions required within a formal primary education environment. In this context, independence, language and communication skills, ability to sit still behind a desk, and listening and concentration are expressed as the social skills that will help the orientation of students (Dockett & Perry, 2004). Ensuring that students possess these skills will facilitate adaptation to the school rules.

Preparation for Elementary School

Another concept that arises in connection with the transition to school is the preparation process. Students, parents and schools themselves must be prepared in order to ensure an effective transition. Students' readiness for school is closely related with their physical and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and cognitive development (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani, & Merali, 2007). Schools must also be 'ready' for students in order to ensure an effective transition. The professional staff (e.g., teachers, private tutors, school nurses, psychologists, etc.) working in preschools will facilitate the children's transition to formal education, and will be the ones to help get them ready for elementary school (Ahtolaa et al., 2011).

When starting at primary school, children enter a new and complex social environment, feel that they are now part of society as individuals, and in short, they are opening up to the outside world during this period (Korkmazlar, 1995). In the school setting, children not only receive the information necessary to survive, but they reach a level of social and emotional maturity necessary to establish healthy communication with other people. School is a social environment in which the social skills of students are developed and they start to become emotionally healthy individuals through communication with both teachers and peers (Sungur, 2010).

A child's transition from home to a preschool institution and the transition from preschool in to primary education is quite a different process. Even though the school environment is familiar for those children who attended preschool, they may experience adaptation problems in transition to primary school education. These problems can be divided into those caused by physical reasons, caused by the teacher, and problems caused by peers (Güler, 2010, 462-466).

It is possible to consider the transition of children who start school as a second

separation from their mothers, after birth. This separation may result in behaviors such as crying, screaming, temper tantrums, and refusal to go to school in some children. In fact, the reason for this behavior can be associated with the separation from the mother, rather than the starting of school. The developmental story of behaviors of children exposed to social life for the first time is shaped during “the transition from home to school” process (Sarp, 1995).

One of the most frequent problems observed by teachers in children starting primary school is the unwillingness of the child to leave his/her mother because of dependency. Therefore, children starting at primary school are expected to have qualifications such as the ability to leave their mothers and home for school, and not being upset because of separation from their mothers. In addition to these expectations, it is also expected that they have skills such as prolonged attention span, self-dressing skills (pulling up of their own zip, buttoning of a shirt, tying shoe laces, etc.), sitting upright and at a certain distance from the desk, being in control of their needs for the restroom, carrying out self-cleaning, the ability to wait their turn, to persevere, to protect themselves during breaks, to act balanced, to be aware of their responsibilities and fulfill them, to communicate with teachers, to adhere to the instructions given by the teacher, to be able to tolerate the presence of other children and to be able to cope with them, to express themselves, and to have friendship relations and communication skills (Oktay & Unutkan, 2005, 149-150). In order to be able to have these qualifications, it's important to perform an effective ‘orientation’ as part of the process of transition from ‘home’ or ‘preschool’ to primary school. It is also necessary to include families in this orientation, and to help and encourage them to support the activities performed in the school by undertaking similar activities at home as well. To help ensure school-family cooperation, including any elder siblings, as well as to ensure support from older students or siblings, the bringing of them together during breaks can help facilitate their adjustment to school.

Orientation and Preparation Program

There are certain periods, or transitions that everyone has to overcome in life. We are faced with adjustment problems not only when we start school, but at other times during our lives. For example, we experience a process of adaptation when we enter a new environment, when we meet new people, or when we change employment/business or environment. This process is a natural and temporary process that should be experienced as part of life. The process of adaptation to school should be perceived as a natural process that must be overcome in a normal and healthy manner. The successful management of this process will positively affect the academic life of the child. The ‘School Orientation Program’ was introduced to the Turkish Education System during the 2012-2013 academic year in order to facilitate children’s transition to school, to minimize their concerns about school, to help them better like the school environment, and to get them used to the new learning settings, teachers and friends. This program aims to introduce them to the school personnel, the physical environment such as classrooms, restrooms and gym facilities, perform activities to help children become acquainted with each other, to inform families regarding issues such as school anxiety, fear, etc. in order to help them actively support the education of their children, and to perform activities to make children embrace the school environment as if it is their home.

The School Orientation Program starts one week before the normal start date for school for children about to start primary school. At the end of the first one-week process, called the orientation week, specific activities are performed by primary school teachers with instructional materials prepared for 1st grader students, instead of teaching the usual reading-writing skills. The 'Orientation and Preparation Activities' are organized over a period of twelve weeks. The activities have three main purposes: First, it's aimed to facilitate the adjustment of new students to the school, friends, teachers, and teaching activities; second, a basis is created for the reading-writing activities by performing preparatory work for the 1st grade courses; and, third it is aimed to address the issues in the Life Sciences, Mathematics, Visual Arts, Music, Games and Physical Activities courses at a certain level. This process aims for a healthy transition to the learning environment for students.

The formal education institutions in Turkey were reorganized as primary, secondary and high schools from the 2012-2013 academic year, with a 12-year multi-stage compulsory education system launched instead of the former eight years of continuous compulsory education system (MoNE, 2012). Children aged 66 months now start attending elementary school within this new system. In the preschool education program that ran between 2006 and 2012, there used to be primary school orientation for children aged 60-72 months. In this case, this process, which is of interest to preschool teachers, is now the responsibility of 1st grade primary school teachers. Therefore, it can be said that 1st grade school teachers are confronted with an unaccustomed age group (66-72 months old) and practices. Consequently, this study aims to investigate opinions regarding the orientation program of 1st grade school teachers, as those primarily affected by the revised system.

METHOD

Research Model

This descriptive study aims to investigate the opinions of 1st grade school teachers regarding the previous 12 years continuous education program and the revamped program of 12-years multi-stage compulsory education. The interview technique, which is the most widely used qualitative research method, was employed in this study in order to obtain in-depth information about their knowledge on both the former and the revamped programs.

Participants

This study was conducted with 20 primary school teachers working at various public schools in the province of Balıkesir, Turkey. The participants of the study were determined by way of the purposeful sampling technique. The selection criteria for participant teachers was primary school teachers who conducted orientation and preparation activities, volunteered to participate in the research, and were working in the public schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). All of the primary school teachers that participated in the study were female, and all were working as 1st grade primary school teachers in public schools, subordinated to the provincial directorate for national education in the province of Balıkesir, Turkey.

Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview form, which was prepared by the researcher and two experts, was used as the data collection instrument in the study. The instructions provided by MoNE regarding the revamped education system was taken into account when

preparing the semi-structured interview form questions. A briefing was given by MoNE to teachers, managers, the educational community and the public, with the title '12-Years Compulsory Education, Questions-Answers', in order to communicate the changes introduced by Primary Education Law No. 222, and amendments to certain laws.

This study and the responses to the questions asked to MoNE on the subject were examined, and a total of 20 pilot interview questions were prepared accordingly. Selected questions were asked to nine primary school teachers working at three elementary schools selected by random sampling method, and their responses were recorded. The responses of the teachers interviewed in the pilot study were recorded and the questions for the interview form data collection tool were prepared in accordance with their responses, and with the help of experts who work in the departments of primary and preschool school teaching. The interview form used in the study consists of a total of 9 questions:

1. What are your opinions regarding the 4+4+4 three-stage structure of the new education system?
2. What are the differences in the new educational system carried out at the 1st grade?
3. Do you think the orientation activities of the new system implemented at the 1st grade are effective class-wise?
4. How would you assess the orientation activities in the program according to the level of readiness of students?
5. Do you experience problems in line with the new system?
6. If yes, what are the problems you experienced?
7. What are the beneficial aspects of the orientation program?
8. How does the separation of elementary and secondary schools affect the orientation of 66-month-old students?
9. What are the contributions of the orientation process on the developmental areas of the 66-month-old students?

Data Collection Process

Data were collected between December 2012 and February 2013 in the Province of Balıkesir, Turkey. After obtaining necessary permissions, one of the researchers visited the schools and explained the purpose of the research directly to the primary school teachers. Interviews were conducted with those primary school teachers who volunteered to participate in the study. A voice recording device was used in the interviews. After the pilot implementation, the 1st grade teachers were interviewed and the data required for the research were collected. The interview periods ranged from 20 to 40 minutes.

Data Analysis

After the interviews, the data obtained were analyzed by in-depth representation (through content analysis). The open and selective coding, which is the first and primary stage of content analysis, was then conducted. Accordingly, the transcribed interview text was read over several times and notes made about the possible initial codes. While coding, the relevant literature, research, and pilot implementation responses were taken into consideration (Atıç, 2004).

Similar phrases given to answers were listed by the researchers and their frequencies were determined afterwards. The codes were later grouped under common headings.

Coding was initially conducted separately, and then the consistency ratios calculated. It was concluded that the researchers reached a consensus on 90% of the cases. It can be said that there was a consistency between the categories and sub-categories determined by the researchers. The quotations were directly included in order to reflect the viewpoints of the respondents and to provide a more vivid portrayal of the situation described from the perspective of the teachers' mind. From the data analysis, the following six main themes were identified: 1) Reflections on the new education system. 2) Activities in the orientation program. 3) Problems experienced in implementing the orientation program. 4) Benefits of the orientation program. 5) Difficulties encountered in the transition to primary education. 6) Statuses of 66-month-old students after the orientation process.

RESULTS

Reflections on the New Education System

Of the participant 1st grade teachers, five had positive and 15 had negative opinions regarding the 4+4+4 three-stage structure of the new education system. The teachers who stated negative opinions had based their views on students confronted with in-field-teachers at too early an age, the inconvenience of the physical environment for education and training, that the school starting age shouldn't have been lowered, and the change in system was introduced without any pilot study. Although five of the 1st grade teachers gave positive opinions regarding the 4+4+4 three-stage structure of the new education system, all of these respondents criticized the system in terms of the earlier starting age for school students. This situation was expressed as (EST 9) "I think it has a single negative aspect. And, it is the lowered school starting age; it's good except for this." and (EST 8) "I think it is a nice implementation. It has no negative side. But, lowering the school starting age was wrong."

Table 1. Categories and sub-categories regarding three-stage structure of the new education system

Categories	Sub-Categories	f	Sample Views
Negative	Taking Courses from Branch Teachers at too Early an Age	5	EST 2. I don't have positive opinions on this issue actually. Children face teachers from various branches at the 5 th grade, which is important for the psychomotor, physical, social-emotional development of the children. During the children's transition to adolescence, we were able to keep them under control previously since we knew their characteristics. But now both teachers and students are complaining about each other because they don't know and understand each other.
	Inappropriateness of the Physical Environment	10	EST 10. In my opinion, this kind of distinction is wrong. I think the previous system was better. We are experiencing challenges in many areas. Especially the physical environment and educational implementation is not suitable for this system.
	Starting School at an Early Age	9	EST 14. I think it would be more beneficial to make preschool mandatory. In my opinion, children over 72 months of age should be 1st graders. The obligation to preschool shouldn't be canceled.
	Absence of any Pilot Implementation	4	EST 16. I think such a change should not be enforced without a pilot study, with no preparation all of a sudden. Disadvantages of this system will affect students and teachers all over Turkey. If there was a pilot implementation, negative aspects could have been spotted and corrections could have been made.
Positive	Separation of Primary and Secondary Schools	5	EST 15. I am positive about the separation of elementary and secondary schools. Primary school students act more comfortably.

Another question that reveals the implications of the new education system is the question of “What are the differences in the new educational system carried out at the 1st grade?” In the new system, 11 of the 1st grade teachers interviewed stated that the orientation program had been implemented, nine of them stated that the reading-writing was delayed, three teachers stated that there were no group activities in the new system, and three stated that more time was allocated for playing.

Table 2. *Categories regarding differences in the curriculum for 1st graders in the new system*

Categories	f	Sample Views
Orientation program was implemented	11	EST 17. <i>I implemented the orientation program only. There was no other change.</i>
Teaching of reading-writing skills delayed	9	EST 14. <i>Previously, we were starting to teach reading-writing skills at most by the 3rd week. We implemented 12 weeks of orientation program in the new system. More time is allocated to playing, compared to the old system.</i> EST 6. <i>Both we teachers and students were at ease due to the delayed teaching of reading-writing skills. We were performing the reading-writing activities faster before, but we teach it more slowly now. It is more beneficial.</i>
No group activities	3	EST 3. <i>Previously, there were group-activities in the curriculum, but it's not present in this program.</i>
More time allocated for playing	3	EST 16. <i>The preparation period became longer. Reading and writing was further delayed. More time allocated for playing and physical activities.</i>

According to Table 2, one of the most important implications of the new system regards the opinions about the delay of teaching reading-writing skills, which forms the basis of the 1st grade. Sometimes these views are expressed in a positive way, however, most teachers expressed discomfort caused by these delays.

For example, one teacher (EST 12) stated that: “We were told to teach reading-writing skills later. We were told to provide the orientation program up until then. Both we as teachers and students became bored when performing just cutting and pasting activities. We’ve delayed the reading-writing in the orientation program, but still we should teach according to the old program. So, we should teach reading-writing in the same way but in less time according to the new program.” Another teacher (EST 19) said, “The transition to reading-writing skills was delayed in the new system. Previously, we were teaching reading-writing early. The new system delayed teaching reading-writing skills up to April.”

Activities in the Orientation Program

Regarding the activities present in the orientation program, the question of “Do you think the orientation activities of the new system implemented at the 1st grade are effective class-wise?” was asked of the primary school teachers within the scope of this study. Of the primary school teachers, seven of them stated that they were effective and achieved the goals of the orientation program, six teachers stated that they were too similar to the activities of the kindergarten and weren’t effective due to the prolonged orientation program, and seven teachers stated that they weren’t affective for students who attended preschool, but effective for students who hadn’t attended any form of kindergarten,

regardless of their age.

One of the primary school teachers with negative opinions (EST 16) stated that, *"I think the orientation program is effective because it is very close to the preschool program. But because the vast majority of children had preschool education already, they got bored because of the same activities."*

And, one of the primary school teachers with a positive opinion (EST 15) stated that, *"Of course it was effective. The reason is that children understand the activities and achievements in the new program quickly, because they are taught over a longer time. Students act more comfortably since the curriculum was extended. We're comfortable. I think the new program is very effective."*

According to the opinions of one of the primary school teachers (EST 9), *"I have observed positive impacts, since most of the class is in the junior age group. However, the activities were simple for the students who had attended kindergarten."*

Regarding the activities present in the orientation program, the question of "How would you assess the orientation activities in the program according to the level of readiness of students?" was asked to the primary school teachers within the scope of the study. In this context, the majority (f=12) of the 1st grade teachers stated that the activities in the textbook were suitable for the levels of 66-month-old students, albeit too simple for 72-month-old or older students, and six of the teachers stated that they were appropriate for the readiness levels of the students, and two of them stated that the orientation activities were below the levels of the 1st graders.

One of the primary school teachers (EST 14) with positive opinions on the appropriateness of the activities, stated that *"A beautifully prepared program. I've used additional materials in parallel with the curriculum. They were more comfortable in the reading-writing preparation. It's good to teach numbers in more than one week for children to learn them more easily."*

Among the primary school teachers that expressed that the activities implemented are not appropriate for the levels of the students, one of them (EST 19) stated that *"I think the textbook being taught until November 30 is unnecessary. Children were quite bored in doing these activities. The students who attended kindergarten have performed the same activities there already, so the children became bored when performing the cutting and pasting activity here again."*

According to the opinion of one of the primary school teachers (EST 20), *"This program may be eligible for younger students who had not went to kindergarten. But, the students who attended preschool get bored naturally in doing these activities, because there are activities below their levels."*

Problems Experienced in Implementing the Orientation Program

Regarding the problems experienced, the question of "Do you experience problems in line with the new system?" was asked to the primary school teachers within the scope of the study. Of the teachers questioned, 16 answered yes, and as a follow-up, the question of "If yes, what are the problems you experienced?" was asked. Table 3 shows the problems encountered by the 1st grade school teachers.

Table 3. Categories of problems encountered by 1st grade school teachers with the new 4+4+4 system

Categories	f	Sample Views
Difficulty in controlling the class	10	EST 14. <i>Younger students want to play games continuously, and the older ones want to learn reading-writing. I had difficulties to manage the whole class and to keep them under control.</i>
Students fail to acquire self-care skills	5	EST 15. <i>There are students who have restroom problems. Previously, children started the 1st grade after mastering certain behaviors, but now we've got to help them with those behaviors. These issues challenged me since I had no experience with this age group.</i>
Lack of experience with 66-month age group	4	EST 17. <i>Of course I have experience. At 24 I became a preschool teacher. I haven't received any training on this issue.</i>
Students fail to learn classroom rules	4	EST 12. <i>Yes, I've had issues. I had great difficulty in teaching behaviors such as raising hands, sitting quietly, and answering questions etc. in children who hadn't attended preschool. It is impossible to teach without forming a behavior at a young age. When dealing with them, the others were neglected and their attention naturally began to slip into extracurricular activities. It was a challenge to provide the same to the whole class at the same time.</i>

Of the teachers who experienced a problem, 10 teachers stated problems in controlling the class, four of them had no experience with students in the 66 month age group, four teachers had difficulty in teaching students the classroom rules, and five expressed they had problems because the students had no self-care skills and all of them required individual attention.

One of the primary school teachers who had no issues (EST 5) stated that, “I had no problems. Primary school teachers do not have a problem on this issue because we implement an individual program in our class now, just as before. I haven't experienced problems since we behave according to the developmental levels of the students. And, younger students come and ask for teachers to undo their buttons, or older students ask for teachers to tie the laces of their shoes. We help both.” she said.

Benefits of the Orientation Program

After the problems experienced, the question of “What are the beneficial aspects of the orientation program?” was asked to the primary school teachers. Of those 1st grade teachers who answered this question, 14 of them stated that it facilitated the adaptation to school, six teachers stated that the student achievement and self-confidence was increased, and three of them stated that transition to reading and writing skills was facilitated.

Table 4. *Categories regarding the beneficial aspects of the orientation program*

Categories	f	Sample Views
Facilitated adaptation to school	14	EST 17. <i>Its only useful aspect is to make children get used to school more easily.</i>
The confidence of the students has increased	6	EST 3. <i>In general, students in the younger age group benefited from the program. Through the activities in the program, they have a sense of accomplishment and their self-confidence increases.</i>
Facilitated to transition to reading-writing	3	EST 9. <i>It facilitated the transition to reading-writing and relieved the students. Ensured that children adapted to school and school setting more easily.</i>

Difficulties Encountered in the Transition to Primary Education

Regarding the orientation of 66-month-old students, the question of “How does the separation of elementary and secondary schools affect the orientation of 66-month-old students?” was asked to the primary school teachers within the scope of this study. Of the primary school teachers, 12 of them stated that the secondary school students were serving as a negative model with their inappropriate language and actions, hence the separation was a positive step, and eight teachers stated that the primary school students go to school in the afternoon till the evening, so that the separation of the groups was actually a negative step.

One of the primary school teachers with positive opinions (EST 16) stated that “*The separation of the elementary and secondary schools is beneficial both for us and the students. The new students were getting used to the school more easily because there is not so much of an age difference between students, and their development is closer to each other. The negative behaviors of the older students also do not affect the younger ones.*” she said. Another primary school teacher (EST 9) stated that “*In the past, younger students were afraid to go out during the break. We were witnessing the older ones bullying them, but now the children can freely go outside during the break. They were getting used to the school more easily.*”

And, one of the teachers who responded negatively (EST 1) stated that “*These children are together at home, streets, parks, etc. everywhere. I think they should be together at school as well. There shouldn't be such distinction. In practice this distinction did not have much effect for younger students.*” she said.

Status of 66-month-old Students after the Orientation Process

In order to learn the status of the 1st grade students after the implementation of the orientation program, the question of “What are the contributions of the orientation process on the developmental areas of the 66-month-old students?” was asked to the primary school teachers. All of the primary school teachers expressed that it affected the social development of the students positively, 14 of them stated that there was positive developments in the psychomotor skills, 13 teachers expressed that there were developments in cognitive learning, seven of them expressed a development of the affective skills, and one teacher stated that there were developments linguistically.

Table 5. Categories regarding contribution of orientation process on developmental of 66-month-old students

Categories	f	Sample Views
Social Domain	20	EST 11. <i>They are in a better position socially. They come to school more willingly. They got used to school and their friends. Crying has decreased. They don't ask for their mother as before.</i>
Psycho-motor Domain	14	EST 9. <i>Their muscle coordination is in better condition. They perform activities such as holding a pencil or scissors more comfortably. They participate more in activities. They are more active in the course.</i>
Cognitive Domain	13	EST 8. <i>The most noticeable change was in the development of their small muscles. They hold the pen better. Their levels of perception and comprehension have increased.</i>
Affective Domain	7	EST 1. <i>There are many differences. They improved themselves. They are now in a better position in terms of manual dexterity, muscle coordination, and orientation. They have gained self-confidence.</i>
Language Domain	1	EST 12. <i>The only difference was in the social development and the motor area. They have adapted to school, became more social, and now they are able to hold a pencil and scissors better. But there is no difference in learning. There's been a development in language skills a little.</i>

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Opinions of 1st grade school teachers regarding the previous 12 years continuous education program and the revamped program of 12-years multi-stage compulsory education were investigated in this study. According to the qualitative findings, overall the 1st grade teachers have negative opinions about the separation of the new education system into the 4+4+4 three-stage structure. Their views are consistent with the findings (Memişoğlu & İsmetoğlu, 2013; Epçaçan, 2014) highlighted in the literature. According to the findings of a study conducted to determine the opinions of school managers regarding the 4+4+4 implementation, the majority of managers emphasized that the implementation should not be continuous, but should be in the form of 5+3+4, and the starting age for school should be 72-months (Memişoğlu & İsmetoğlu, 2013). Another study that looked at the opinions of primary school teachers and managers on the 4+4+4 education system revealed that about half of the participants had a negative attitude about the new three-stage education system (Epçaçan, 2014). Another question in this study that reveals the implications of the new education system is “What are the differences in the educational system carried out at the 1st grade?” The 1st grade teachers interviewed concluded that the “orientation program was added” to the program carried out with the new system. And, some of them expressed that it delayed the teaching of reading-writing skills, extends the preparation stage, and changes the course hours.

According to this study's findings, the majority of 1st grade school teachers experience problems when teaching a different age group. The majority of teachers experiencing problems were found to have problems in controlling the class. Of the teachers who experienced a problem, 10 teachers stated that problems in controlling the class, four expressed no experience with students in the 66-month age group, four teachers had difficulty in teaching students the classroom rules, and five teachers expressed they had problems because students had no self-care skills and all of them required individual

attention. These results have similarities with the other study findings in the literature. In a study conducted by Delican (2013), the primary school teachers reported that there are children at different levels in the classroom, the outcome of the activity does not satisfy these children, the guide books are not clear enough, some of the activities are not suitable for a classroom setting, and the different age groups leads to problems.

Another study that reveals problems encountered in the new system was conducted by Boz (2013). According to that study, the primary school teachers had frequent problems with students who haven't attended kindergarten and 60-65-month-old students in the orientation and preparation activities. The majority of the difficulties encountered were in trying to provide skills such as using books/notebooks properly, and listening, understanding and fulfilling the instructions. It was stated that younger children encounter more problems in orientation and complain about various illness more, and there was a problem in finding instructional material in this period since the textbooks on orientation and preparation were provided late. Finally, the primary school teachers stated that the students who hadn't attended kindergarten and the youngest students were getting tired in performing the activities during the orientation and preparatory work

The study findings put forward by Aslan (2014) also confirm the results in the literature. According to the findings of the study conducted to identify issues caused by a school starting age of 60-months and education given to 60-month and 72-months-old children in the same grade, the developmental status of 60-72-month-old children indicated that calendar age is not enough for starting to go to school, children need to reach an intellectual, social, physical, and emotional maturation. Those children who attended preschool education were more successful, and it was revealed that families should be informed about the development of children. It was found that 60-72-months-old children experience communication problems with their teachers and peers regarding the adaptation to school, have difficulty to leave their families, have difficulty in writing skills and self-expression skills, and the 1st grade orientation textbooks and the program is difficult for the children; plus children at this age have no self-care skills. According to findings from another study that addresses the problems experienced, the primary school teachers consider the 12-week period as "a waste of time" for the children over 72-months of age and for those who attended preschool. They stated that children under 72 months of age do not yet have a consciousness about school yet, they see the activities as a game, and do not attempt to learn anything. Also, it was found that this program is not sufficiently adequate to provide basic skills to children who haven't yet attended preschool (İnam, 2013).

In addition to the negative issues experienced in the orientation and preparation program, its beneficial aspects are also present in the study findings. Of the 1st grade teachers who answered the question "What are the beneficial aspects of the orientation program?" 14 of them stated that it facilitated the adaptation to school, six teachers stated that the student achievement and self-confidence increased, and three of them stated that transition to reading and writing skills was facilitated. In a study conducted by Cerit et al. (2014), the opinions of teachers and managers regarding the benefits of the new education system (4+4+4) were obtained. According to the opinions regarding the benefits of the orientation and preparation program, it was concluded that the orientation program is beneficial for younger children and children who hadn't attended preschool, whilst the extended orientation process was useful for adaptation and muscle development of 1st

graders, and providing education in line with games and play contribute to children enjoying school from when they go to school for the very first time.

In this study, the Orientation and Preparation Program implemented by the new education system was evaluated by 1st grade school teachers. The revamped education system was negatively criticized by the primary school teachers on the basis of the students confronting with the in-field-teachers at too early an age, inconvenience of the physical environment for education and training, the fact that the school starting age shouldn't have been lowered, and the change of the system without any pilot study or implementation. The Orientation and Preparation Program implemented for the 1st graders was also criticized negatively since it delays the teaching of reading and writing skills, omits the group activities and spares more time for play. The primary school teachers were criticizing the activities in the Orientation and Preparation Program due to their similarities with the kindergarten activities and its prolonged duration, whereas some of the teachers stated that the activities had no effect on students who has already attended kindergarten, but were effective on those students who hadn't attended kindergarten, regardless of the age.

Teachers who met 66-month-old students for the first time because of the new system expressed that they had problems in controlling the class, had no experience with students in the 66-month age group, difficulties in teaching students the classroom rules, and also these students possessed no self-care skills, which caused problems. They reached consensus that the Orientation and Preparation Program contributes more to the development of the 66-month-old students. All of the primary school teachers expressed that the program positively affected the social development of the students, as well as positive developments in their psychomotor skills, cognitive learning, affective skills, and linguistic skills.

At the end of the study, it is recommended that the Ministry of National Education should organize in-service training seminars and workshops regarding the duration and content of the Orientation and Preparation Program. The opinions and suggestions of the teachers in this study are expected to be a source for other studies to be conducted in this area. Informative meetings and interviews should be performed by field experts or teachers to inform families about this program, and ensure family communication is not neglected. In further studies, the opinions of primary school teachers and preschool teachers, elementary school and preschool pre-service teachers, and managers regarding the preparation process for elementary education can be compared based on factors such as school, gender, experience, regional differences and license courses taken.

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Birinci Sınıf Öğretmenlerinin İlköğretim Uyum ve Hazırlık Programına İlişkin Görüşlerinin Değerlendirilmesi

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Giriş

Okul öncesinden veya evden ilkokula geçiş öğrencilerin eğitim serüvenindeki ilk ve en önemli aşaması olarak görülebilir. Çocuklar artık alışkın oldukları çevreden çıkıp formal bir eğitim ortamına transfer olmaktadır. Bir ev veya eğitim ortamından okul ortamına aktarılmak alanyazında “geçiş” veya “transfer” olarak ifade edilmektedir. Bu çalışmada “geçiş” kelimesi okul öncesinden ilköğretime doğru geçilen aşama olarak kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı evden veya okul öncesinden ilköğretime geçiş yapan öğrencilere uygulanan Uyum ve Hazırlık Programını öğretmen görüşlerine göre incelemektir. Aile veya okul öncesi eğitimde beraber olduğu arkadaş çevresinden farklı bir eğitim ortamına giren çocuk yeni arkadaşlarına, yeni öğretmenine veya sınıf ortamına uyum sağlamada zorluk çekebilir.

Yapılan araştırmalar çocukların okula geçişte yaşadıkları diğer problemlerin okul kurallarına uyma, rakamlar ve okuma-yazmaya geçişte yoğunlaştığını göstermektedir (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000; Margetts, 2002). İlköğretim formal eğitim ortamının gerektirdiği kuralları da beraberinde getirmektedir. Bu bağlamda okula uyum sağlamada öğrenciye yardımcı olacak sosyal beceriler; bağımsızlık, dil ve iletişim becerileri, sırada oturma becerisi, dinleme ve konsantrasyon olarak ifade edilmektedir (Dockett & Perry, 2004). Öğrencilerin bu becerilere sahip olması okul kurallarına uymada adaptasyonlarını kolaylaştırır.

İlköğretim kurumlarına başlayan çocuklarda öğretmenlerin sıklıkla gözledikleri sorunlardan biri, anneye bağımlılık nedeniyle çocuğun anneden ayrılmak istememesidir. Bu nedenle ilköğretime başlayan çocuklardan, anneden ve evden kolay ayrılabilme ve anneden ayrı oldukları için üzüntü duymama gibi yeterliliklere sahip olması beklenmektedir. Bu beklentilere ek olarak dikkatlerini uzun süre yoğunlaştırmaları, kendi kendine giyinme becerisini (feruarını çekme, düğmesini ilikleme, ayakkabı bağlama vb.) kazanmış olmaları, sırada dik ve belli bir mesafede oturmaları, tuvalet kontrolünü kazanmaları, kendi temizliklerini yapabilmeleri, sıralarını beklemeleri, sebat göstermeleri, teneffüslerde kendilerini korumaları, dengeli hareket etmeleri, kendi sorumluluklarının farkında olmaları ve bunları yerine getirebilmeleri, öğretmen ile iletişim kurabilmeleri, öğretmenin verdiği yönergelere uymaları, diğer çocukların varlığına katlanabilme ve onlarla baş edebilmeleri, kendilerini ifade etmeleri, arkadaşlık ilişkileri ve iletişim kurma becerilerine sahip olmaları gibi kazanımlara sahip olmaları istenmektedir (Oktay & Unutkan, 2005, 149-150).

Bu yeterliliklere sahip olabilmek için “evden” veya “okul öncesinden” ilköğretime geçiş sürecinde etkili bir “hazırlık” yapılması önem taşımaktadır. Bu hazırlığa ailelerin dâhil edilmesi, okulda yapılan çalışmaların evde desteklenmesi, okul ve ailenin işbirliği içinde uyumlu olarak çalışabilmeleri, bu işbirliğine varsa yaşça büyük kardeşlerin de katılması, gerektiğinde üst sınıflarda öğrenim gören çocukların veya kardeşlerin okula yeni başlayan çocuklarla teneffüslerde bir araya gelerek okula uyumlarına destek olması gerekmektedir.

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Türkiye’de 2012–2013 eğitim-öğretim yılında örgün eğitim kurumları ilkokul, ortaokul ve lise kademeli zorunlu eğitim kurumları olarak düzenlenerek 8 yıllık kesintisiz zorunlu eğitim sistemi yerine 12 yıllık kademeli zorunlu eğitim sistemine geçilmiştir (MEB, 2012). Bu sistemle birlikte 66 ayını dolduran çocuklar ilkokula başlamaktadır. 2006–2012 yılları arasında uygulanan okul öncesi eğitimi programında 60–72 aylıklar için ilköğretime hazırlık süreci yer almaktaydı. Bu durumda okul öncesi öğretmenlerini ilgilendiren bu süreç artık ilköğretim 1. sınıf öğretmenlerinin sorumlulukları arasında yer almaktadır. Bu durumda ilköğretim 1. sınıf öğretmenlerinin alışık olmadıkları bir yaş grubu (66–72 aylıklar) ve uygulamalarla karşı karşıya geldiklerini söylemek mümkündür. Bu nedenle bu çalışmada, yenilenen sistemden öncelikli olarak etkilenen birinci sınıf öğretmenlerinin uyum programına ilişkin görüşlerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

Yöntem

Araştırmada kesintisiz eğitim ve yenilenen program ile ilgili bilinenler hakkında derinlemesine bilgi edinmek amacıyla, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden en çok kullanılan görüşme tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır. Bu çalışma, Balıkesir il merkezindeki çeşitli devlet okullarında görev yapan 20 sınıf öğretmeni ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmanın katılımcıları amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi ile belirlenmiştir.

Araştırmada, veri toplama aracı olarak; araştırmacı ve 2 uzman tarafından geliştirilen yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Pilot görüşme yapılan öğretmenlerin cevapları kaydedilmiş ve verdikleri yanıtlar doğrultusunda veri toplama aracını oluşturacak görüşme formu soruları sınıf öğretmenliği ve okul öncesi öğretmenliği bölümlerinde görev yapan uzmanlar eşliğinde hazırlanmıştır. Araştırmada kullanılan görüşme formu, toplam 10 sorudan oluşmaktadır. Görüşmeler sonunda elde edilen veriler derinlemesine betimlenerek (içerik analizi kullanılarak) analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmacıların % 90 görüş birliğine vardıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmacılar tarafından belirlenen kategori ve alt kategoriler arasında tutarlılık gözlemlendiği söylenebilir.

Bulgular

Yeni Eğitim Sisteminin Yansımaları: Yeni eğitim sisteminin 4+4+4 olarak ayrılması hakkında 1. sınıf öğretmenlerinden 5 kişi olumlu, 15 kişi ise olumsuz görüş bildirmişlerdir. Olumsuz görüş bildiren öğretmenler; öğrencilerin branş öğretmenleriyle erken yaşta tanışması, fiziki ortamın eğitim ve öğretim için uygun olmaması, ilkokula başlama yaşının düşürülmemesi gerekliliği ve pilot uygulama olmadan sistem değişikliği olması açısından olumsuz görüş dile getirmişlerdir. Yeni eğitim sisteminin 4+4+4 olarak ayrılması hakkında 1. sınıf öğretmenlerinden 5’i olumlu yönde olduklarını ifade etmelerine rağmen olumlu görüş bildirenlerin tamamı öğrencilerin okula erken yaşta başlaması açısından sistemi eleştirmektedir.

Uyum Programında Yer Alan Etkinlikler: Araştırma kapsamında sınıf öğretmenlerine uyum programında yer alan etkinliklerle ilişkili olarak “Yeni sistemle birlikte 1. sınıflarda uygulanan uyum etkinliklerinin sınıfın genelinde etkili olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?” sorusu yöneltilmiştir. Bu soruya sınıf öğretmenlerinden 7’si etkili olduğunu ve uyum programındaki hedeflere ulaştıklarını, 6’sı anasınıfı etkinliklerine yakın olduğu ve uyum programı süresinin uzun olması nedeniyle etkili olmadığını, 7’si ise anaokuluna giden öğrencilerde etkisinin olmadığı fakat anaokuluna gitmeyen öğrencilerde yaşı ne olursa olsun etkili olduğunu belirtmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında sınıf öğretmenlerine uyum

programında yer alan etkinliklerle ilişkili olarak sorulan bir diğer soru ise “Programda yer alan uyum etkinliklerini öğrencilerin hazır bulunuşluk düzeyine göre nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?” sorusu olmuştur. Bu bağlamda, 1. sınıf öğretmenlerin çoğunluğu (f=12) kitapta yer alan etkinliklerin 66 aylık öğrencilerin seviyesine uygun olduğunu fakat 72 aylık ve üstü öğrenciler için basit kaldığını, 6’sı öğrencilerin hazır bulunuşluk düzeyine uygun olduğunu, 2’si ise hazırlanmış olan uyum etkinliklerinin 1. sınıf öğrencilerinin seviyesinin altında olduğunu ifade etmiştir.

Uyum Programının İşlenişinde Yaşanılan Sorunlar: Araştırma kapsamında sınıf öğretmenlerine yaşadıkları sorunlarla ilişkili olarak “Yeni sistemle birlikte sorunlar yaşıyor musunuz?” sorusu yöneltilmiştir. Bu soruya 16 kişiden evet cevabı alınmış ve bunun üzerine sınıf öğretmenlerine “Hangi sorunlarla karşılaşıyorsunuz?” sorusu yöneltilmiştir. Sorun yaşayan öğretmenlerin 10’u sınıf kontrolünde sorunlar yaşadığını, 4’ü 66 aylık yaş grubu öğrenciler ile deneyimlerinin olmadığını, f=4’ü öğrencilere sınıf kurallarını öğretmede zorluk yaşadığını, 5’i ise öğrencilerin öz bakım becerilerinin gelişmediği, hepsinin ayrı ayrı ilgi istediği ve bu yüzden sorunlar yaşadıklarını ifade etmiştir.

Uyum Programının Yararları: Sınıf öğretmenlerine yaşadıkları sorunlardan sonra “Uyum programının faydalı yönleri nelerdir?” sorusu yöneltilmiştir. Bu soruyu cevaplayan 1. sınıf öğretmenlerinden 14’ü okula uyumu kolaylaştırdığını, 6’sı öğrencilerin başarı duygularını ve kendilerine olan güvenlerini arttırdığını, 3’ü ise okuma yazmaya geçişi kolaylaştırdığını ifade etmişlerdir.

İlköğretime Geçişte Karşılaşılan Zorluklar: Araştırma kapsamında sınıf öğretmenlerine öğrencilerin 66 aylık öğrencilerin okula uyum sağlamasıyla ilişkili olarak “İlkokul ve ortaokulların birbirinden ayrılması 66 aylık öğrencilerin okula uyum sağlamasını nasıl etkiliyor?” sorusu yöneltilmiştir. Bu soruya sınıf öğretmenlerinin 12’si ortaokul öğrencilerin uygunsuz söz ve davranışlarıyla olumsuz örnek olduğunu bu yüzden de ayrılmasının olumlu olduğunu, 8’i ise ilköğretim öğrencilerinin eğitime öğleden sonra başladıklarını ve geç bitirdiklerini bu yüzden grupların ayrılmasının olumsuz olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir.

66 Aylık Öğrencilerin Uyum Süreci Sonrasındaki Durumları: 1. sınıf öğrencilerinin uyum programı uygulandıktan sonraki durumlarını öğrenmek amacıyla sınıf öğretmenlerine “Uyum Sürecinin 66 aylık öğrencilerin gelişim alanlarına katkısı nasıl olmuştur?” şeklinde soru yöneltilmiştir. Bu soruya sınıf öğretmenlerinin tamamı öğrencilerin sosyal gelişimlerini olumlu yönde etkilediğini, 14’ü psiko-motor becerilerinde olumlu yönde gelişmeler olduğunu, 13’ü bilişsel alandaki öğrenmelerinde gelişmeler olduğunu, 7’si duyuşsal becerilerini geliştirdiğini, 1’i ise dil alanında gelişmeler olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir.

Sonuç, Tartışma ve Öneriler

Bu araştırma ile ilköğretim 1. sınıf öğretmenlerinin 12 yıllık kesintisiz eğitim ve yenilenen program hakkındaki görüşleri incelenmiştir. Nitel bulgulara göre yeni eğitim sisteminin 4+4+4 olarak ayrılması hakkında 1. sınıf öğretmenlerinin geneli olumsuz görüş bildirmektedir. Bu görüşleri, alanyazında vurgulanan çalışma bulguları (Memişoğlu & İsmetoğlu, 2013; Epçaçan, 2014) ile tutarlılık göstermektedir. Araştırma bulgularına göre yeni sistemle birlikte 1. Sınıf öğretmenlerinin geneli farklı yaş grubuna eğitim verirken sorun yaşamaktadır. Sorun yaşayan öğretmenlerin genelinde ise sınıf kontrolünde sorun yaşadığı saptanmıştır. Sorun yaşayan öğretmenlerin Sorun yaşayan öğretmenlerin 10’u sınıf kontrolünde sorunlar yaşadığını, 4’ü 66 aylık yaş grubu öğrenciler ile deneyimlerinin

olmadığını, 4'ü öğrencilere sınıf kurallarını öğretmede zorluk yaşadığını, 5'i ise öğrencilerin öz bakım becerilerinin gelişmediği, hepsinin ayrı ayrı ilgi istediği ve bu yüzden sorunlar yaşadıklarını ifade etmiştir. Bu durum alanyazında yer alan çalışma bulguları ile benzerlik göstermektedir.

Delican (2013) tarafından yapılan çalışmada sınıf öğretmenleri sınıfta farklı seviyelerde çocuklar bulunduğu, etkinliğin sonundaki ürünün çocukları tatmin etmediği, kılavuz kitaplarının yeterince anlaşılır olmadığı, bazı etkinliklerin sınıf ortamına uygun olmadığı, farklı yaş gruplarının sorunlara neden olduğu konusunda görüş bildirmişlerdir. Yeni sistemle birlikte yaşanan sorunların ortaya konduğu diğer bir çalışma Boz (2013) tarafından gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu araştırmaya göre ise sınıf öğretmenleri uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarında okula kayıt yaşı 60-65 aylık olan öğrenciler ile anaokuluna gitmemiş öğrencilerle sık sık problem yaşadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. En çok problem yaşanan alan ise bu öğrencilere kitabı/defteri düzgün kullanma, yönergeleri dinleme, anlama, yerine getirme gibi becerileri kazandırırken yaşanmıştır. Küçük öğrencilerin okula uyumda daha fazla sorunla karşılaştığı ve daha çok hastalık şikâyetinde buldukları ve uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları kitaplarının geç geldiği için bu dönemde materyal bulmada sorunların yaşandığı belirtilmiştir. Son olarak, uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları sırasında anaokuluna gitmeyen öğrenciler ile küçük öğrencilerin aktiviteleri yaparken yoruldukları sınıf öğretmenleri tarafından yaşanan sorunlar olarak dile getirilmiştir.

Aslan'ın (2014) ortaya koyduğu çalışma bulguları da alanyazında yer alan bulguları doğrular niteliktedir. 60 aylık çocukların okula başlamaları ve 60-72 aylık çocukların aynı sınıfta bulunmalarının ortaya çıkardığı sorunları belirlemek amacıyla yapılan çalışma bulgularına göre 60-72 aylık çocukların gelişim durumları incelendiğinde okula başlamada takvim yaşının yeterli olmadığı bunun yanında çocukların zihinsel, sosyal, bedensel, duygusal açıdan olgunlaşması gerektiği, okul öncesi eğitime devam eden çocukların daha başarılı oldukları ve ailelerin çocuk gelişimi hakkında bilgilendirilmesi gerektiği tespit edilmiştir. 60-72 aylık çocukların okula uyum konusunda öğretmenleri ve arkadaşlarıyla iletişim sıkıntısı yaşadıkları, ailelerinden zor ayrıldıkları, yazma becerisi ve kendini ifade becerisi konusunda zorlandıkları, 1. sınıf uyum kitapları ve 1. Sınıf programının çocukları zorladığı, bu yaştaki çocukların öz bakım becerilerini yapamadıkları tespit edilmiştir. Yaşanan sorunları ele alan diğer bir çalışma bulgusuna göre ise sınıf öğretmenleri 72 aylık ve üzerinde olan ve okul öncesi eğitim almış çocuklar için 12 haftalık süreci "zaman kaybı" olarak değerlendirmektedir. 72 aydan küçük çocukların henüz okul bilincine ulaşmadıklarını, etkinlikleri oyun olarak gördükleri ve bir şeyler öğrenme çabasında olmadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca okul öncesi eğitim almadan gelen küçük çocuklara, bu programın okuma-yazma için gerekli temel becerileri kazandırmak için yeterli olmadığı bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır (İnam, 2013).

Araştırmada, yeni eğitim sistemi ve beraberinde ortaya konan "Uyum ve Hazırlık Programı" 1. sınıf öğretmenleri tarafından değerlendirilmiştir. Yenilenen eğitim sistemi öğrencilerin branş öğretmenleriyle erken yaşta tanışması, fiziki ortamın eğitim ve öğretim için uygun olmaması, ilkokula başlama yaşının düşürülmemesi gerekliliği ve pilot uygulama olmadan sistem değişikliği olması açısından sınıf öğretmenleri tarafından olumsuz şekilde eleştirilmektedir. İlköğretim 1. sınıflarda uygulamaya konulan "Uyum ve Hazırlık Programı" ise okuma yazma öğretimini ertelediği, kulüp çalışmalarına yer verilmediği, oyuna daha fazla zaman ayrıldığı açısından olumsuz şekilde eleştirilmektedir. Sınıf öğretmenleri "Uyum ve Hazırlık Programı"nda yer alan etkinlikleri anasınıfı

etkinliklerine benzer olup süresinin uzun tutulması nedeniyle eleřtirirken, öđretmenlerin bir kısmı anaokuluna giden öđrencilerde etkisinin olmadığı fakat anaokuluna gitmeyen öđrencilerde yaşı ne olursa olsun etkili olduğunu belirtmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Uyum ve hazırlık süreci, İlköđretime geçiř, Birinci sınıf öđretmenleri

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