A REVIEW STUDY ON THE EVALUATION OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION'S REFLECTIONS ON SCHOOL MATURITY

Ahmet EROL
Pamukkale University Faculty of Education, Department of Primary Education
Preschool Education
ahmete@pau.edu.tr

Mustafa EROL
Ministry of Education, Ali Fuat Üstün Elementary School
vortex_via@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT
Primary school is an institution where certain academic skills are expected to be gained rather than an institution to which children attend within a certain period of time. Therefore, children are required to have the levels to respond to the requirements of this institution. However, it is quite difficult to say that every child reaches this maturity at the same time and in the same level. Receiving a preschool education is among primary needs in order for children to start primary school under equal conditions. When the contribution of preschool education to school maturity is taken into account, preschool education can be considered an opportunity for preparation to primary school. Therefore, this study endeavoured to evaluate preschool education's reflections on school maturity and recommendations were made for people in question. Consequently, the significance of preschool education was reemphasised.

INTRODUCTION

The only being that is able to think and put his opinions into practice, in other words, turn his opinions into actions is human and there are very significant milestones in the life of this being. Maybe the most important one of these milestones is to start the school (Erkan and Kırca, 2010). When an individual starts the school, he enters an environment that he was not previously used to. He has to gain some certain skills in this environment. For this reason, if the individual does not possess the required qualifications, he will face the consequences of the negative experiences he had here in the subsequent phases of his life. Therefore, it is appropriate to expect some skills from the individual after he reaches the required maturity. For this reason, numerous studies have been conducted on this subject until today.

There is generally a criterion which suggests that children start school according to their age (Gündüz and Çalışkan, 2013). As it is accepted that there are differences between individuals, it is clear that only age does not meet the concept of being ready for school (Kutluca Canbulat and Yıldızbaş, 2013). For this reason, school maturity should be evaluated with different aspects and a strategy should be followed according to the results of this evaluation. An efficient education and training environment can only be created by this means for the child that leaves his family's environment.

When the results of the conducted studies are examined, it is seen that preschool education has numerous influences on school maturity in terms of different aspects. Additionally, in these studies, it is also remarkable that there is a significant level of difference between children who have and have not received preschool education. Receiving preschool education is a precondition in order for children to start school under equal conditions. Therefore, in this study; contributions of preschool education to school maturity were evaluated and recommendations for families, teachers, researchers and authorities were included.

A General Overview on the Concept of School Maturity

Many researchers have defined the concept of school maturity essentially with the same significance until today even though these definitions seem to be different. These definitions can be specified as follows; the concept of school maturity can be defined as preparing individuals' fields of development such as social, emotional, mental, physical aspects and self-efficacy and their different academic skills to meet the requirements of primary education (Oktay, 2013). Similarly, school maturity means that a child is cognitively, physically, emotionally and psychologically ready (Yavuzer, 2010). A child that has school maturity reaches a certain level in terms of physical, psychological and educational aspects and has the capacity to do what is expected from him (Ülkü, 2007). Generally every child reaches the level to gain this maturity. However, in accordance with conducted studies, it has been revealed that school maturity may be affected by some individual and environmental characteristics. This maturity age may vary particularly because of individual differences. In addition, children of families with lower socio-economic levels and educational levels are specified to be behind their peers in terms of reaching school maturity.

 Copyright © International Conference on New Horizons in Education Conference (INTE)

Transition from Preschool Education to Primary School

Every new phase of life has the traces of the previous phase. And this either makes us prepared or helps us adapt to the next phase and makes us face various difficulties (Oktay, 2013). There are tasks that should be carried out in every phase. A child who starts primary school education without developing some skills in preschool education would have difficulties. Similarly, a child who starts secondary school education without having mastered the skills in the primary education would again face difficulties. The maturity specified here is valid for not only primary school education but also all education phases (Dinç, 2013). However, it can be stated that the competences in primary school are more important as these are the first years of life and they have a critical importance.

Primary school is valuable as it includes the most important years of a person's life after preschool education. This is the first time that the child faces tasks such as obeying the rules within a certain program and learning basic skills such as arithmetic, mathematics, and reading and writing (Oktay and Unutkan, 2003). Gaining these skills requires being ready, in other words, a maturity in every aspect. Preschool education and primary school are important as they include the most special periods of a person's life. Both institutions undertake foundations of the task of preparing an individual to life. In this respect, ensuring a coherent transition between the two institutions will facilitate the individual's adjustment to primary school. Easy adjustment to primary school will diminish the period of acquiring academic skills for the student (Akman, 2013). However, children who start primary school after preschool education believe they will go through some difficulties. In a conducted qualitative study, Koçyiğit (2014) specified that preschool children defined primary school as a big, crowded, chaotic and far place and children's sources of information related to primary school were as their families, television and teachers; in addition, it has also been stated that children believed that they could not play games when they start primary school. In line with this study, it should be aimed to enable preschool children love and show interest in primary school.

The Role of Preschool Education in the Development of School Maturity

Preschool period is expressed as the years when the human capacity is at its highest level. This period is the fastest and most critical phase for development and, in parallel, for learning. Therefore, it should be ensured that children take advantage of these years in the best possible manner. Researchers find the idea, which most of the behaviours gained in early ages continue their influence in older ages, the least common denominator. Preschool years are deemed as the period when the foundations of personality are laid and socialisation starts. Social skills that are gained in early ages also facilitate children's adjustment to social order. In short, the phase that includes preschool period can be shown as an important period in terms of having numerous forward-looking effects in the child's life (Akman, 2013; Oktay, 2013).

As specified in the preschool education program of the Ministry of National Education, one of the main purposes of preschool education is to prepare children to primary school (Ministry of National Education, 2013). This purpose is associated with the concept of school maturity. School maturity can be defined as a child's ability to reach physical, mental and social competence (Güler, 2001). Reaching the characteristics specified in this definition for children varies depending on environmental conditions. Therefore, preschool education may also be approached as a requirement for ensuring equality of opportunities in the field of education. Children are required to receive a qualified preschool education in order to start primary school under equal conditions.

It has been reported by conducted studies that children who received preschool education have more sufficient positions in terms of many skills such as cognitive, affective, psychomotor, social and self-care skills than their peers compared to children who did not receive preschool education and they reach school maturity earlier than their peers (e.g.: Yazıcı, 2002; Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm and Waldfogel 2004; Esaspehlivan, 2006; Kırca, 2010; Çağdaş, 2009; Cinkılıç, 2009; Erkan and Kırca, 2010; Teke, 2010; Yeşil Dağlı, 2012; Ahmetoğlu, Ercan and Aral, 2011; Lokumcu Tozar, 2011; Gündüz and Çalışkan, 2013). Additionally, it has also been stated that children who received preschool education are more prone to basic skills related to the concept of mathematics such as recognizing numbers, putting numbers in order, addition, and subtraction (Polat Unutkan, 2007; Dursun, 2009). From another perspective, it has been expressed by researchers that preschool education facilitates adjustment to school (Bekman and Gürselel, 2005; Gülay Ogelman and Erten Sarıkaya, 2013; Yoleri and Tanış, 2014). In short, preschool education has a key role in determining the school maturity which appears before us as a significant point for children who start primary school.

Attending preschool education may not always ensure the desired efficiency, what is important here is that the quality of the education provided in the preschool period should be discussed. In their study, Wong, Lou, Zhang and Rozelle (2013) emphasised that only receiving preschool education was not sufficient for school maturity

and the quality of the provided education should also be high. However, in regions where preschool education is not common, it may be appropriate to attach importance to quantity as the first criterion and quality as the second criterion.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Primary school is a period that has significant influences in a person's life. The child who faces planned and programmed activities for the first time is now in a different atmosphere and there are many tasks expected from him. In this new period, children will need to learn how to read and write and show certain arithmetic skills (Taşkın, 2011). In a period in which so many tasks are expected, it is a precondition that children have the capacity to meet the requirements of primary school education.

According to the results of the conducted studies, the influence of preschool education on school maturity has been revealed. It can be asserted that the children who received preschool education are one step ahead of their peers who did not receive preschool education. When conditions of Turkey are considered, preschool education is a requirement especially for the children of families with lower economic levels. The equality of opportunity in education as specified in our constitution can only be provided through a qualified preschool education. In addition, it is a fact that preschool education supports children in all developmental areas.

Consequently, children should be introduced to preschool education and it should be ensured that they take advantage of this opportunity. All developmental areas of children should be supported in this period. This is the only way for the children to meet what is expected from them in primary school (Yazıcı, 2002). In line with these points, the following recommendations can be given;

- It should be ensured that all children take advantage of preschool education.
- Families should be explained about preschool education and its advantages for children.
- The results of studies conducted until today on school maturity in terms of receiving preschool education should be shared with public through communication tools and it should be ensured that the society is informed on this matter.
- This subject should be approached in more detail in different studies.
- Authorities should take action to extend preschool education and in subsequent phases, to make it obligatory.
- Preschool education teachers should plan different activities to prepare children to primary school and put these activities into practice.

REFERENCES

Akman, B. (2013). In the process of preparation to primary school. T. Erdoğan, (Ed.) *Primary School Readiness and Primary school programs.* (pp. 5-24). Ankara: Eğiten Kitap.

Ahmetoğlu, E., Ercan, Z. and Aral, N. (2011, April). Examination of Opinions of Mothers About School Maturity of Their Children Attending Preschool Education. *2. International Conference on New Trends in Education and Their Implications*, (pp. 1158- 1167). Antalya.

Bekman, S. and Gürselel, F. (2005). *Right start and Preschool Education in Turkey.* Ankara: TÜSİAD Publications.

Kutluca Canbulat, A. N. and Yıldızbaş, F. (2013). Views of preschool and classroom teachers about readiness of 60-72 month-old children for school. *Abant İzzet Baysal University Education Faculty Journal, 14*(1), 33-50.

Cinkılıç, H. (2009). *Examination of effect of preschool education on school maturity of primary school first grade students* (Unpublished Postgraduate Thesis). Selçuk University. Konya.

Çağdaş, A. (2009). *Examination of Effect of Preschool Education on School Maturity of Primary School First Grade Students.* (Unpublished Postgraduate Thesis). Selçuk University. Konya.

Dinç, B. (2013). Transition to primary school and school maturity in preschool education. F. Alisinanoğlu, (Ed.). *Primary School Readiness and Primary school programs*. Ankara: Pegem Academy.

Dursun, Ş. (2009). Comparison of mathematical skills of first grade students in terms of receiving preschool education. *Education Sciences: Theory & Practice, 9*(4), 1691-1715.

Esaspehlivan, M. (2006). *Comparison of 78 and 68 month-old children attending and not attending preschool education institution in terms of school readiness*. Unpublished Postgraduate Thesis, Marmara University. Istanbul.

Erkan, S. and Kırca, A. (2010). Examination of Effect of Preschool Education on School Readiness of Primary School First Grade Students, *Journal of Hacettepe Education Faculty*, 38, 94-106.

Gündüz, F. and Çalışkan, M. (2013). Examination of School Maturity and Levels of Gaining Reading and Writing Skills of 60-66, 66-72, and 72-84 Month-old Children. T*urkish Studies – International Periodical*

 Copyright © International Conference on New Horizons in Education Conference (INTE)

For The Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic 8(8),379- 398.
Gülay Ogelman, H., and Erten Sarıkaya, H. (2013). Examination of school adjustment levels of children receiving and not receiving preschool education at the ages of 5 and 6: two-year longitudinal study. *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies, 6*(7). 417-434.
Güler, T. (2011). Güler, D. S. (2001). *Evaluation of preschool education programs for 4–5 and 6 year olds (*Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation) Ankara University. Ankara.
Kırca, M. A. (2010). *Examination of effect of preschool education on school readiness of primary school first grade children*. (Unpublished Postgraduate Thesis) Hacettepe University. Ankara.
Lokumcu Tozar, S.B. (2011). *Differences between primary school 1st grade students receiving and not receiving preschool education in terms of school readiness and solution proposals.*(Unpublished Postgraduate Thesis) Beykent University. Istanbul.
MEB, (2012). *Preschool education program*, Ministry of National Education. Ankara.
Oktay, A. (2013). Place and importance of preschool education and primary school education. (Ed. by Oktay, A.) *Primary School Readiness and Primary School Programs*. Ankara: Pegem Academy.
Oktay, A. and Unutkan, Ö. P. (2003). Primary School Readiness and Comparison of Preschool Education and Primary School Education. M. Sevinç (Ed.). *Development in Early Childhood and New Approaches in Education*. Istanbul: Morpa Culture Publications.
Ülkü, Ü. B. (2007). *Examination of view of parents and teachers of children attending kindergarten and primary school 1st grade about their school maturity.* (Unpublished Postgraduate Thesis). Çukurova University. Adana.
Koçyiğit, S. (2014). Opinions of Preschool Children Concerning Primary School. *Education Sciences: Theory & Practice, 14*(5), 1861-1874.
Oktay, A. (2013). Primary School Readiness and Main Factors Affecting Readiness. *Primary School Readiness and Primary School Programs*. Ankara: Pegem Academy.
Unutkan, Ö. P. (2007), Analysis of Primary School Readiness of Preschool Children in Terms of Mathematical Skills. *Hacettepe Education Faculty Journal*, 32, 243-254.
Magnuson, K., Meyers, M., Ruhm, C. ve Waldfogel, J. (2004). Inequality in Preschool Education and School Readiness. *American Educational Research Journal, 41*, 115-157.
Taşkın, N. (2011), Primary School Readiness and Main Factors Affecting Readiness. *Primary School Readiness and Primary School Programs*. Ankara: Eğiten Kitap Academy.
Teke, H. (2010). *Examination of effect of Kindergarten Curriculum on Readiness Levels of Primary School 1st Degree 1st grade Students According to Teacher Views*. (Unpublished Postgraduate Thesis). Selçuk University. Konya.
Yavuzer, H. (2010). *Child Psychology*. Istanbul: Remzi Bookstore.
Yazıcı, Y. (2002), Examination of Effect of Preschool Education on School Maturity. *National Education Journal*, 155-156.
Yeşil Dağlı, Ü. (2012). Opinions of Parents with Children Attending Preschool Education Institutions Regarding Primary School Readiness. *Ekev Academy Journal, 16,* 231-243.
Yoleri, S. and Tanış, M. (2014). Investigation of variables affecting school adjustment levels of primary school first grade students. *Journal of Karabük University Institute of Social Sciences, 4* (2), 2014, 130-141.
Wong, H. L. Lou, R. Zhang, R. ve Rozelle, S. (2013). The impact of vouchers on preschool attendance and elementary school readiness: A randomized controlled trial in rural China. *Economics of Education Review, 35*, 53-65.

INTE2015