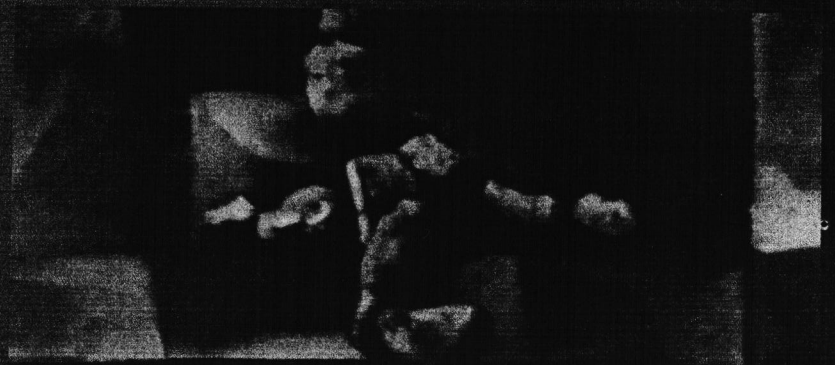
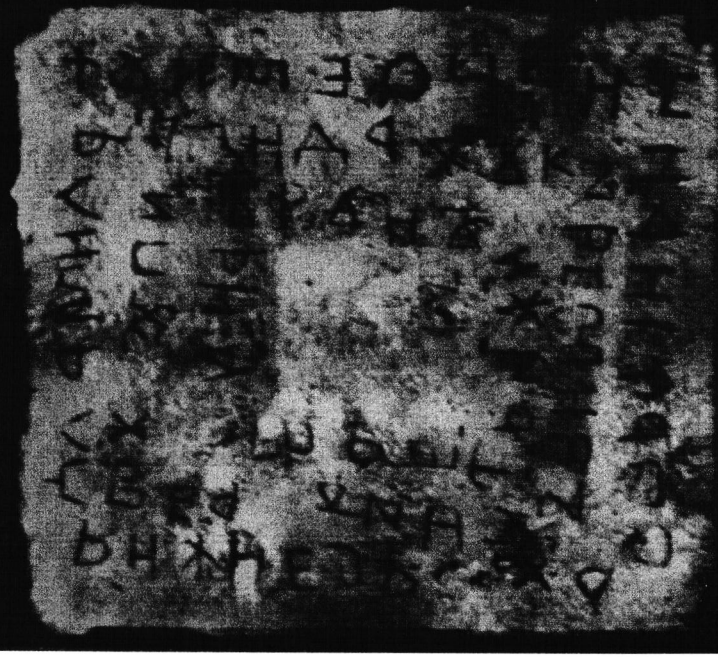
ISBN: 978-9958-16-023-3

PEDAGOGIJA, OBRAZOVANJE I NASTAVA | svezak 1.

PEDAGOGIJA, OBRAZOVANJE I NASTAVA

svezak 1.





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Print Team

CIP- Katalogizacija u publikaciji
Nacionalna i univerzitetska biblioteka
Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo

37(063)(082)

MEĐUNARODNA konferencija Pedagogija, odgoj i nastava (2 ; 2013 ; Mostar)
Pedagogija, obrazovanje i nastava : zbornik radova.- Mostar : Sveučilište, Fakultet prirodoslovno-matematičkih i odgojnih znanosti, 2014.- 448 str. : graf. prikazi ; 24 cm

"Drugu međunarodnu znanstvenu konferenciju Pedagogija, ... u Mostaru od 21. do 23. ožujka 2013. godine."--> predgovor.- Bibliografija i bilješke uz tekst

ISBN 978-9958-16-023-3

FAKULTET PRIRODOSLOVNO-MATEMATIČKIH I ODGOJNIH ZNANOSTI
SVEUČILIŠTA U MOSTARU

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2. međunarodne znanstvene konferencije
Mostar, 21.- 23. ožujka 2013.

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Preschool Teachers' Educational Needs for Effective Guidance

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Summary

The preschool organizations in Turkey do not have enough guidance experts and thus the preschool teachers there carry out the guidance activities that pupils need. This study aims to find out the educational needs of the preschool teachers to do effective guidance activities. The study is in the general survey model and "effective guidance competence scale", developed by the researchers, was used after testing its validity and reliability. The data obtained indicate that the preschool teachers find themselves generally competent in the activities related with 'personal' and 'educational' guidance dimensions and they have partly educational needs.
Key words: Need analysis, educational needs, effective guidance, preschool education

Introduction

Preschool Education, also known as 'Early Childhood Education' covers the years 0-6, the period before a child starts primary school. Education given in these years, called critical period during which personality is formed, affects all the educational stages and even the whole life of a person.

Preschool education is a systematic education period that enables children to develop in accordance with the cultural values of the society. It is essential to put emphasis on preschool education in order to bring up physically and psychologically healthy, self-expressive, self-controlling, respectful, assertive and inquisitive individuals with cultural values and capacity to use his/her own abilities, all of which are qualities necessary to live in a modern and democratic world (Aral and et.al. 2000; Poyraz, 2001; Zembat, 2001; Yılmaz, 2003; OÖEGM, 2006).

The educational environment necessary to make children acquire some certain behaviors and attitudes, and to support their development, is provided by parents at home and teachers at preschool institutions. Children who do not get sufficient education may exhibit developmental deprivation and live with its negative outcomes. Given these facts, it is apparent that the duty of preschool teachers requires great responsibility, which means they should have necessary qualifications to help children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially.

A preschool teacher tries to create a free, warm, comfortable and safe environment that will enable children to develop healthily, live in accordance with school environment, and exhibit their full potential (Yeşilyaprak, 2010). Teachers' guidance competences are very important to create this environment. However, the number of the guidance specialists at preschool institutions is hardly enough, no matter how significantly the MoNE in our country emphasizes the importance of their employment in preschool institutions (Ural and Ramazan, 2007). Therefore, the guidance counseling tasks are fulfilled mostly by preschool teachers according to their personal competences in them.

Preschool guidance is an important issue. Guidance services serves mainly for assisting children to realize themselves, to make use of education period in accordance with their potential and abilities, and to discover and develop their hidden capabilities. It is necessary to determine the guiding competences of preschool teachers to find out whether they can carry out these tasks efficiently or not.

National statistics and studies on teacher training reveal that the most of the higher education institutions result inefficient when bringing up highly qualified teachers. Also, pre-service and in-service teacher training facilities may not fulfill the desired outcomes, which is partly because they are conducted without making needs analyses. Research by Erişen (2001) has shown that teacher competences influence students' achievement significantly. Teachers' qualifications and competences seem to be more important in students' learning and development than many other factors (Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain, 2005). The findings that reveal this significance have been led by many countries, particularly the European Union partners, in order to focus on teacher competences since the early 1980s. The significance of the subject has been stated clearly in various documents and studies. In a decision made by the European Parliament on developing the teacher competences in 2008, the significance of teachers and education is emphasized as follows: the quality of teacher education is seen in the education activities and it has an effect not only on children's knowledge development but also on their character formation particularly in their early education years (European Parliament, 2008: 2). As it can be seen, in particular preschool education teachers' teaching competences are very important for the quality of education in future, which makes it important to determine and meet the education needs in teacher competences.

The Aim of the Study

This study aims to find out the educational needs of the preschool teachers to do effective guidance activities and to seek an answer to the question 'Do preschool teachers need training on educational and personal guidance so that they can fulfill the guidance applications effectively?'

Method

This study is designed as quantitative model with general survey design.

The participants

The study was conducted on 96 volunteers out of 110 teachers in Isparta Province, due to the time, transport and financial limitations of the researchers. 90% of the participants were graduated from preschool education departments of universities, almost all of whom (96%) are women. As for teaching experience, nearly 45% of them worked as a teacher for 5 or less than 5 years. Four fifth of the participants were graduated from education faculties that give four-year education.

Data collection and analysis

The five-Likert type 'effective guidance competence scale', comprehensively developed by the researchers, was used to determine the educational needs of teachers related to the educational and personal guidance competences. The highest point is 5 and the lowest is 1 in the scale. The teachers indicated their competences for each behavior, according to their self-perception. The opinions of experts were asked to determine the content validity of the scale. Pre-testing of the scale was done to determine its structure validity and reliability. The data collected from the pre-testing were evaluated by factor-analyzing. Also the scale was examined to determine whether it had one or more factors through Principal Component Analysis. In the light of the analysis results, it was found that the scale had 2 factors to determine the efficiency perception of preschool teachers on guidance behaviors and their educational needs to conduct these behaviors. These factors were personal guidance and educational guidance. There were 65 items related with the personal guidance competences and 36 items for educational guidance competences. The load value of competences varied between .30 and .73. The total variance explaining of the scale was .49. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability co-efficiency was .97.

The data was collected from the volunteered teachers by the second researcher at preschool institutions during the months April-July, 2012. The SPSS (The Statistical Packet for The Social Sciences) was used in analyzing the data. The arithmetic mean ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (sd) were used in determining the teachers' competences and needs according to the aim of the study.

Results and discussion

Considering the page restriction, the results and discussion are presented in this section in general terms rather than giving them in specific terms. 65 competences related with personal guidance and 36 competences related with educational

guidance were analyzed meticulously. The overall average arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the competences are in the Table 1 below:

Table 1: The Competences of Preschool Teachers in Personal and Educational Guidance

Areas	n	$\overline{X}$	sd
Competences in Personal Guidance	96	3,74	,50
Competences in Educational Guidance	96	3,85	,54

In the light of the findings in the table 1, it could be said that the personal guidance competences are usually performed by preschool teachers who are quite competent at them ($\overline{X}$=3,74; ± 0,50). A great majority of 65 behaviors related to teachers' personal guidance competences were found to be carried out at the level of 'completely or generally' by the participants, some examples of which are 'to help students express their feelings and opinions freely', 'to organize activities that will help students discover their strengths and weaknesses', 'to set up learning environments that will improve students' problem solving skills', 'to make students feel themselves valuable', 'to guide students about how to live in harmony with themselves', 'to help students acquire the skill to recognize and express their feelings'. However, some important competences like; 'to make learning individualized when needed due to learner differences', 'to prepare learning environments so that students can experiment new ideas', 'to enable students to think positively about people and situations in the face of events', 'to predict and prepare students if possible for important changes in their further life (like parents' divorcing, loss of a relative, having a new born sibling, etc.)', 'to follow up training activities related with counseling at preschool education' and 'to participate in in-service training events according to their needs' were found to be conducted 'partly' by the teachers. In other words, it can be suggested that teachers partly need training on personal guidance for some important points. The teachers' fulfillment of guidance competences at preschool education is of significant importance for students to accept themselves, develop positive self and socialize through self-confidence. In the studies conducted by Engin (1996), Yeşilyaprak (2010), Camadan and Sezgin (2012), it was emphasized that teachers find themselves sufficient in terms of personal guidance, and need training to some extent.

In the light of the findings related to educational guidance competences, it could be said that the teachers are generally efficient in this area as the arithmetic mean was found to be $\overline{X}$=3,85; ± 0,54. As for the findings related to educational guidance, the teachers were found to conduct 33 out of 36 competences at the level of 'completely or generally', some of which were as follows: 'to prepare the child for individual and group activities that will develop them socially, physically and psychologically as a whole', 'to develop language and communication skills parallelly with development',

'to make efficient programs for their further elementary education', 'to help children acquire learning skills and studying habit', 'to make children build positive attitude towards learning', 'to take learner differences into consideration while making lesson plans', 'to reinforce children's correct behaviors'. On the other hand, it was found that the teachers could perform 'partly' such competences as 'to create opportunities for children to reveal their personal wishes and desires', 'to carry out activities that will make learning enjoyable', and 'to collaborate and cooperate with authorities, when needed, in performing counseling tasks', which could lead us to conclude they need training on these issues.

The principal aim of educational guidance is to help preschool children learn to learn, and to make learning process efficient. In this direction, preschool education help children acquire various skills such as managing time, making and implementing plans, self-motivating to learn, memory strengthening, coping with learning obstacles and making educational preferences, all of which prepare them for elementary education. It can be concluded that self-efficacy of preschool teachers in terms of guidance competences and efficient adaptation of theory into practice related to this issue will affect the further life of children positively. In a study conducted by Kuzgun (2009) and Yeşilyaprak (2010), it was found that preschool teachers regard themselves efficient in educational counseling services.

Conclusion and recommendations

The conclusion can be given briefly as follows:

1. Preschool teachers generally find themselves efficient in personal guidance competences. However, it can be said that they need training on some significant points such as 'to individualize education when needed due to learning and learner differences', 'to create an environment for children to test new ideas', 'to enable students to think positively about people and situations in the face of events', 'to predict and prepare students if possible for important changes in their further life (like parents' divorcing, loss of a relative, having a new born sibling, etc.)', 'to follow up training activities related with counseling at preschool education' and 'to participate in in-service training events according to their needs'.
2. Preschool teachers think that they generally carry out educational guidance activities during the education process, and see themselves efficient at it. However, it is found out that they partly need some training on the points such as 'to create opportunities for children to reveal their personal wishes and desires', 'to carry out activities that will make learning enjoyable' and 'to collaborate and cooperate with authorities, when needed, in performing counseling tasks'.

The recommendations can be given briefly as follows:

1. Considering the results of this and other similar studies, pre-service training activities should be performed so as to meet the needs of teachers in guidance competences.
2. New studies are necessary to determine the educational needs of preschool teachers related to guidance activities. Those studies should be conducted on a larger scale of sampling groups and some other variables like age, gender, experience, the state of previous pre-service training, school type, etc., should be taken into consideration.

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Obrazovne potrebe predškolskih odgajatelja u pogledu učinkovitog vođenja

Sažetak

Predškolske ustanove u Turskoj nemaju dovoljno stručnjaka u vođenju te stoga predškolski odgojitelji obavljaju aktivnosti vođenja koje su potrebne djeci. Ovo istraživanje ima za cilj ustanoviti obrazovne potrebe predškolskih odgojitelja u pogledu učinkovitih aktivnosti vođenja. Radi se o „survey" istraživanju, a primijenjena je „skala kompetencija učinkovitog vođenja" koju su razvili istraživači uz prethodno testiranje njezine validnosti i pouzdanosti. Dobiveni rezultati ukazuju na to da se općenito sami predškolski odgojitelji smatraju kompetentnima u aktivnostima povezanim s „osobnim" i „obrazovnim" dimenzijama vođenja i da dijelom imaju obrazovne potrebe.

Ključne riječi: analiza potreba, obrazovne potrebe, učinkovito vođenje, predškolski odgoj.