

Values Education and Evaluation of Activities in Preschool Education Program in Turkey

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the views of preschool teachers about values education and activities in the preschool education program. Phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the research. The study group of our research consists of 15 pre-school teachers working in Nevşehir, Turkey. The data of the study were collected with semi-structured interview and analyzed by content analysis. The result of the research demonstrates that the teachers evaluated the values education in five main categories as “creating the foundation”, “educational process”, “behavior”, “responsibility” and “rules”. Some participants found the values education in the pre-school curriculum sufficient. The values that children learn most easily are love, respect, responsibility, tolerance, sharing, honesty and cooperation. In classroom practices, it was concluded that they generally teach the concepts of values education by using visual materials. The majority of the teachers participating in the research suggested that there should be cooperation with the family, teacher, school and environment regarding the values education in the pre-school education program. They also suggested that extra-class activities should be included in the program, in-service training, material support and practical activities should be given more time.

Keywords: values education, preschool education, education program, activity, evaluation.

1. Introduction

Throughout human history, scientists and various researchers have made many and different definitions for the concept of values. Rokeach and Regan (1980) defined values as beliefs determined by people’s acceptance of a behavior or a situation according to events. Some educators have defined values as a set of ideas, norms, goals or behavior patterns that an individual develops to participate in the community (Cooper, 2014; Ryan, Bohlin, & McDonnell, 1999). In the broadest sense, values are our own decisions about what is good and what is bad. It is the specific norms and systematic ideas that enable the individual to interact with society and the social environment, rather than one’s own wishes and desires (Veguelers & Vedder, 2003). There are many more definitions of values. In general, it can be said that there are abstract ideas that provide order in society, affect the preferences of the individual, are based on traditions and customs, and can be transferred to future generations.

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Society is a living and changing system. It is the culture, traditions and values that hold and sustain society. A sustainable society can survive by transferring its culture, traditions and values to future generations (Sapsağlam, 2016). Values education is a process that starts in the family and then progresses with the social environment. In order to learn the universal values of a society, apart from its unique values, and to pass it on to future generations, it is necessary to have experiences covering values. The starting point of these experiences is early childhood (Uzun & Köse, 2017). The age in early childhood is the time period in which the child acquires the values of the environment he lives and the characteristics suitable for the culture of that society (Bilir & Bal, 1989). Children grasp the knowledge about values throughout their lives, but the first concepts they will learn are acquired in the early stages (Uyanık Balat & Balaban Dağal, 2011).

Pre-school education is an education that aims to adapt young children to school, environment and society in the best possible way. Preschool education has a very important place as it is the first beginning of the educational foundations at school. The perception of the child who comes to school for the first time is quite clear at that age. Too many stimuli and activities outside the classroom accelerate the learning of the child. The education given at that age constitutes a step in the child's later life. When we look at the purpose of values education, we understand how important education is actually. In fact, when a good education is given in childhood, the growing generations will be moral, harmonious individuals who do not disturb the social order. Values education is very important in this respect. It is possible for people who have received this training, both in family life and in the social environment, to advance their lives without experiencing many problems.

Values education taught in the pre-school period forms the basis of the child's behavior in the following periods. For this reason, it becomes an important necessity to include values education in pre-school education programs and to have preschool teachers do activities. In this respect, it is thought that this study will contribute to the field. The aim of this research is to evaluate the views of preschool teachers about values education and activities in the preschool education program. Under this general purpose, answers were sought to the following questions:

- What are the views of preschool teachers on the definition of values education?
- What are the views of pre-school teachers about which values should be taught to children in values education?
- What are the views of pre-school teachers about the activities they have done in values education?
- What are the opinions of preschool teachers about the materials they use while doing the activities?
- According to pre-school teachers, which of the values taught is/are the easiest for children to acquire?
- What are the opinions of pre-school teachers about the adequacy and inadequacy of values education included in the pre-school education program?
- What are the suggestions of pre-school teachers regarding the values education in the pre-school education program?

2. Method

2.1 *Research model*

This study was designed as a phenomenology study, one of the qualitative research methods. In phenomenological studies, interviews are conducted with the participants about their

experiences in order to obtain in-depth information about the phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

2.2 Participants

The study group of our research consists of 15 pre-school teachers working in Nevşehir, Turkey. 14 of our pre-school teachers are female and one is male. Easily accessible case sampling was used for choosing the study group as the researcher is working in this province and the sample is easily accessible.

2.3 Data collection

In this study, a semi-structured interview form was used as data collection tool. For the semi-structured interview form, a literature review was conducted on values education, values education in pre-school education, values education in pre-school education program. Questions about these topics have been prepared. Following the arrangements in line with the expert opinions, the final version of the research questions were formed.

2.4 Analysis of data

All the answers from the teachers were transferred in quotation marks in their original form without any intervention in the word document. Question titles were determined one by one according to the answers given by a total of 15 teachers who contributed to the research in the semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher. In the analysis of the answers given, the codes were first created from the cases that were frequently repeated or emphasized. Based on the generated codes, the categories were reached. In the last part of the study, all codes and categories were brought together and the data were interpreted.

3. Results

3.1 Opinions of teachers about the definition of values education:

The findings obtained from the analysis of the research's question "What is values education according to you?" are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Opinions of teachers on the definition of values education

Category	Code	f
Laying the foundation	Human feelings	2
	Being a good person	2
	Being a moral person	1
Educational process	Education of moral rules	3
Behavior	National moral behavior/value	2
	Forgotten behavior	1
	Behavior to remember	1
	Culture and belief	1
	Right and wrong behavior-thoughts	1
Responsibility	Responsibility for the survival of society	1
Rules	Social moral rules	1
	Ethical rules	1

The analyzes found that preschool teachers evaluate values education at an early age in five main categories: “establishing the foundation”, “educational process”, “behavior”, “responsibility”, and “rules”. According to the teachers, values education forms the basis of human feelings (f=2), being a good person (f=2) and being a moral person (f=1). According to some teachers, values education is an educational process that includes the education of moral rules (f=3). According to other teachers, national moral behavior/value (f=2), forgotten behavior (f=1), behavior to remember (f=1), culture and belief (f=1), right and wrong behaviors-thoughts (f=1) form. According to some teachers, values education is defined as responsibility for the survival of society (f=1). Some of the teachers also expressed values education as the whole of social moral rules (f=1) and ethical rules (f=1). The opinions of the teachers about the related question were shared below:

T1: “For me, it is the education of laying the foundations of being a good person and a moral person.”

T6: “The application of social moral rules and moral values to young children through activities is the demonstration of right and wrong behaviors together.”

T13: “Values education is to help children gain good behavior and moral development at an early age in pre-school education.”

T15: “According to pre-school teachers, values education is to bring positive behaviors and thoughts accepted in the society to the child.”

3.2 Teachers’ views on which values should be taught to children:

The findings obtained from the analysis of the research’s question “Which values should be taught to children in values education in your opinion?” are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Opinions of teachers about the values that should be taught in pre-school period

Code	f
Love	13
Respect	13
Responsibility	9
Tolerance	9
Sharing	9
Honesty	8
Cooperation	8
Empathy	3
Patience	2
Justice	2
thrift	1
Peace	1
Self esteem	1
understanding	1
Partnership	1
Generosity	1
Truth	1
Privacy	1
Non-peer exclusion	1
Accepting everyone	1

The teachers participating in the study gave different priorities to the values that should be taught in the preschool period. As a result of the analyzes made, the majority of the

teachers who participated in the research were found love (f=13), respect (f=13), responsibility (f=9), tolerance (f=9), sharing (f=9), honesty (f=8), cooperation (f=8) values should be taught first in the preschool period. Moreover; empathy (f=3), patience (f=2), justice (f=2), thrift (f=1), peace (f=1), self-esteem (f=1), understanding (f=1) partnership (f=1), generosity (f=1), truth (f=1), privacy (f=1), non-peer exclusion (f=1) and accepting everyone (f=1) specified as required values. The opinions of some teachers about the related question are given below:

T3: "Love, respect, honesty, helpfulness, patience, tolerance, responsibility."

T5: "Honesty, helpfulness, sense of responsibility, not excluding peers, accepting everyone, sharing, empathy."

T7: "Subjects such as love, respect, helping each other and sharing may be of priority."

T14: "Truthfulness, honesty, fairness, love, privacy."

3.3 Opinions of teachers about the activities they have done in values education

The findings obtained from the analysis of the research's question "What are the activities you have done within the scope of values education?" are shown in Table 4.

Table 3. Opinions of teachers about the activities they have done in values education

Category	Code	f
Activity	Drama activity	8
	Art event	5
	Language activity	4
	Game activity	3
	Field trip	1
	Family involvement	3
Visual material	Visual products	5
	Pano works	2
	Values tree	1
Examples	Examples from daily life	1
Values month	Values month	4
	Specific days and weeks	1
Project	Project	1
Responsibility	Plant and animal care	1

As a result of the analysis, it was determined that most of the teachers who participated in the research included values education in activities that are generally in the daily flow. Teachers stated that they mostly deal with values education through drama (f=8), art event (f=5), language (f=4), game (f=3) activities. They also deal with values education with field trip (f=1) and family involvement (f=3) activities. Some teachers stated that they handled values education with some customized visual materials such as visual products (f=5), pano works (f=2) and values tree (f=1). In addition, a teacher stated that he gave values education with examples from daily life (f=1). Some of the teachers also stated that they did the values month (f=4) and specific days and weeks activities (f=1). It was also stated that activities such as project work (f=1) and plant and animal care (f=1) were also carried out.

The opinions of the teachers who participated in the research about the related question are given below:

T9: “As a preschool teacher, I include values education with various art activities, educational videos, stories and drama activities within the integrated activities in the classroom.”

T12: “There are many visuals related to this, but it can be supported with more practical assignments. An environment where he can present his love can be prepared. If the subject is respect, elders may be asked to visit. More boards and funds are made, but I do not think that they have an effect on the child. More real events can be included.”

T14: “More places are given to games in Turkish language activities.”

T15: “There are many visuals related to this, but it can be supported with more practical assignments. An environment where he can present his love can be prepared. If the subject is respect, they may be asked to visit the elders of the family...”

3.4. Teachers’ views on the materials they use in values education

The findings obtained from the analyzes of the research regarding the question of “Which materials do you use when including values education in your activities?” are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Teachers’ views on the materials they use in values education

Category	Code	f
Visual and audio materials	Story books	6
	Drama materials	6
	Movie/Video	6
	Concept cards	2
	Puppets	4
	Toys	3
	Songs	4
	Coloring pages	2
	Gift boxes	1

As a result of the analyzes made, the teachers participating in the research had story books (f=6), drama materials (f=6), film/video (f=6), concept cards (f=2), puppets (f=4), songs (f= 4), toys (f=3), coloring pages (f=2) and gift boxes (f=1) are among the materials they use. Accordingly, it can be said that teachers frequently use visual and auditory materials in values education. Below are the opinions of the teachers participating in the research about the related question.

T1: “Coloring pages, educational films and slides, songs.”

T4: “Books, puppets, educational materials, videos, narrations.”

T8: “Different materials can be used for each learning outcome. Stories about these values can be read and then supported with drama studies.”

T11: “As I value patience, I prepare small gift boxes and ask them to take them without opening the packages for a week. At the end of the week, the patient ones (all of the class) will receive the gifts and patience medals in the box.”

T12: “...I tell the song “Let’s show respect while giving the value of respect” and the story of the respectful elephant using puppets.”

3.5 Teachers' views on which values children acquire most easily while teaching values education

The findings obtained from the analysis of the research's question "Which of the values taught according to you, do children gain the easiest?" are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Opinions of teachers about which values they gain the easiest while teaching values education

Code	f
Love	11
Responsibility	8
Solidarity	7
Sharing	7
Respect	5
Tolerance	1
Justice	1

According to preschool teachers, love (f=11) was stated as the easiest value to teach in early childhood. Responsibility (f=8) is also seen as one of the most easily taught values at this age. In addition, solidarity (f=7), sharing (f=7) and respect (f=5) are among the values that can be gained most easily in early childhood. Tolerance (f=1) and justice (f=1) were stated as the other values that young children gain most easily. The opinions of some teachers about the related question are given below:

T2: "For me, the most easily gained value is love."

T3: "Children gain the easiest responsibility, respect for the elderly, not throwing garbage on the ground, and love for animals."

T6: "I think it is easier for them to acquire the concepts of love, respect, responsibility, cooperation, sharing etc."

T12: "Love, sharing, taking responsibility."

T14: "Responsibility... Actually, I think they will gain all the values when explained appropriately."

3.6 Opinions of teachers about the adequacy/insufficiency of values education included in the pre-school education program

The findings obtained from the analyzes of the research regarding the question of "What do you think about the adequacy/insufficiency of values education included in the pre-school education program?" are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Opinions of teachers about the adequacy/insufficiency of values education included in the pre-school education program

Code	f
Sufficient	9
Partly enough	3
Insufficient	3

The majority of the teachers participating in the research stated that they thought that the values education included in the pre-school education program was sufficient (n=9). While some teachers (n=3) thought that the values education included in the program was partially

sufficient, others (n=3) stated that it was insufficient. The opinions of the teachers about the related question were shared below:

T1: “I think that the values included in pre-school education programs are sufficient.”

T3: “I don't see much as enough. It can be applied more systematically.”

T5: “I find it sufficient as it is now.”

T7: “It is at a sufficient level, it is the concepts that should be basic.”

T12: “I think there is no deficiency.”

3.7 Suggestions of teachers regarding values education in pre-school education program

The findings obtained from the analyzes of the research regarding the question of “What are your suggestions regarding the values education in the pre-school education program?” are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Suggestions of teachers on values education in preschool education program

Category	Code	f
Partnership	Family	4
	Teacher	3
	School	2
	environment	2
Out-of-class applications	Excursion	2
	Cinema	1
	Theatre	1
Education	In-service training	3
Materiel	Visual material	1
	Story books	1
	Coloring books	1
	Drama	1
Incentive	Certificate	1
	Reward	2
hands-on activities	by doing/experiencing	2
	Developmental follow-up	2
	Privacy	1
	Empathy	1
	Moral values	1
	respect differences	1

The majority of the teachers participating in the research suggest the partnership on values education in the preschool education program. They stated that they thought that the family should be included in this process (f=4). They also stated that they find teacher (f=3), school (f=2) and environment (f=2) are important in values education. Teachers who see out-of-class practices as important in values education, out-of-class activities (f=4); They stated that they thought that activities such as excursion (f=2), cinema (f=1) and theater (f=1) should be included in the program. It was also underlined that there should be in-service training (f=3). Some teachers talked about material support and mentioned the importance of visual materials (f=1), story boks (f=1), coloring books (f=1), drama (f=1) in their own opinion. There are teachers in the research group who think that incentive certificate (f=1) and rewarding (f=2) are also necessary. In

addition, there are applications on learning by doing (f=2), developmental follow-up (f=2), privacy (f=1), empathy (f=1), moral values (f=1) and respect differences (f=1). They said it should be given more weight. Some of the teachers who participated in the research think about this issue as follows:

T1: "I think that more opportunities and convenience should be offered for the values that should be taught outside the classroom. In addition, it is necessary to cooperate with families and the environment in values education."

T3: "I would very much like children to be talked about more in terms of morals and values and to have activities. I think it takes a lot of work for that."

T5: "I think that privacy related activities should be expanded and more emphasis should be placed on it."

T11: "I think that subjects such as justice, respect, freedom and respect for differences should be researched and put into programs in accordance with this age group. I believe that long-term behavior change should be followed on these issues."

T15: "I think that values can be gained by supporting them through good habits and behaviors in order to provide education. Home visits, excursions, class environment suitable for the subject can be created. Animation drama plays can be performed. After giving the concept and making sure that the child has acquired that behavior, the children can be encouraged by preparing a document. In addition, teachers can be provided with in-service training on values education."

4. Conclusion and discussion

In order to determine the opinions of preschool teachers on the evaluation of values education and classroom practices in the preschool education program, the results obtained with the data obtained as a result of semi-structured interviews with preschool teachers are given below

The definition of the concept of values education, which was asked to the teachers in the study, changed according to the experiences of each teacher. It has been found that teachers evaluate values education at an early age in five main categories: "establishing the foundation", "educational process", "behavior", "responsibility", and "rules". According to the teachers, values education forms the basis of human feelings, being a good person and being a moral person. According to some teachers, values education is an educational process that includes the education of moral rules. Some of the teachers also expressed values education as the whole of social moral rules and ethical rules. Looking at the opinions of teachers about which values should be taught to children in the study, mostly teachers said that the values of love, respect, responsibility, tolerance and sharing should be taught to children. In the study conducted by Erkuş (2012), it can be said that preschool teachers give priority to the values of love, respect, sharing, tolerance and cooperation among the priority values that should be taught to children. In addition, in Türk's (2009) study, it was seen that teachers mostly gave importance to the value of respect. These studies support our research findings.

In the research, it was seen that the majority of preschool teachers included activities in the daily flow within the scope of values education. Teachers stated that they mostly deal with values education through activities such as drama, art, language games and family participation. In addition, they stated that they practiced in the form of a month of values by giving responsibilities to children with examples from daily life and visual materials in the activities. In his study, Çengelci (2010) concluded that teachers try to benefit from current events, drama activities, and activities applied outside the classroom in values education. Kaya et al. (2015) concluded that values can be given to children through drama education. In another study, it was revealed that children can gain values through activities such as family involvement (Dereli-İman,

2014). Model behaviors of parents are very effective in children's learning of values. For this reason, family involvement is important for children to learn and behave values. Family participation studies ensure that the values taught at school are repeated at home and strengthen the unity between school and home (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). These studies support the views of teachers in our study.

In the study, it was concluded that teachers frequently use visual and auditory materials while giving place to values education in classroom practices. Story books, drama materials, film/video, concept cards, puppets, songs, toys, coloring pages are among the materials they use. Akdemir (2012) stated in his study that the materials most preferred by teachers in classroom practices are easily accessible materials, and the data he obtained supports this research. However, Akdemir (2019) stated that the building construction materials used in preschool improve many skills, especially spatial skills, of children. The preschool period corresponds to the preoperational period within Piaget's developmental periods, and children have difficulties in understanding abstract concepts in this period. That's why, it is important to embody the behaviors towards the values that will be taught to children (Aral, 2011).

In the research, when the preschool teachers were asked which values they gained the easiest while teaching values in classroom practices; values of love, responsibility, cooperation, sharing and respect. Yuvacı (2013) stated that children have difficulties in teaching values such as honesty, kindness, respect, love, cooperation and responsibility. This does not support the views of teachers in the study. The reason for this may be the effect of the environment and culture.

The majority of the teachers participating in the research stated that they thought that the values education included in the pre-school education program was sufficient. In addition, it has been determined that there are teachers who find it partially sufficient and inadequate. Yazar and Erkuş (2013) concluded in their research that teachers found the values education included in the curriculum insufficient. The majority of the teachers participating in the research suggested that there should be cooperation with the family, teacher, school and environment regarding the values education in the pre-school education program. They also suggested that extra-class activities should be included in the program, in-service training, material support and practical activities should be given more space.

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