

# Preschool Teachers' Opinions about Non-Stop Education in Kindergartens

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine opinions of preschool teachers working in educational institutions affiliated to the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey about non-stop education process. The study was conducted with 12 preschool teachers working in Kartepe and Körfez districts of Kocaeli province in Turkey. Participants of this qualitative study were selected using convenience sampling method. In the study, four questions were asked to the teachers to determine problems and difficulties they experienced in daily 300-minute non-stop education in kindergartens and effects of this practice on their students. In addition, teachers' suggestions for alternative practices were received. The teachers' opinions were collected using a semi-structured interview form and analyzed through the descriptive analysis method. The study found that daily 300-minutes non-stop education in kindergartens has negative effects on both teachers and students. The teachers stated that they did not meet their physiological needs, their efficiency decreased, and they were badly affected due to the current practice. The students were observed that they were bored and distracted, and they displayed behavioral problems based on the duration of this education. According to the participants, this practice is incompatible with human rights. They also had the opinion that they were treated differently from teachers in other branches and faced the problem of salary injustice. Assigning an assistant in nursery classes, allowing preschool teachers to have break times, and branch teachers' inclusion in activities of nursery classes are suggested.

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### Keywords:

Preschool education, 300-hundred-minute non-stop education, preschool teacher, teacher opinions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Preschool education is a process that contributes to the cognitive, emotional, physical and social development of children, provides them with rich stimulating and environmental opportunities, directs them to be individuals who foster cultural values of society and prepares them for primary school (MoNE, 2013).

Preschool education whose importance increases across the world and in Turkey every day is considered to contribute to preschool children's social-emotional, psychological, cognitive, language and motor developments. Preschool education is also regarded as an art rearing of human beings. Character and personality of individuals are largely shaped in preschool education period. Preschool education helps a child gain a safe independent personality by creating environments that allow them to express themselves (Yaşar & Aral, 2010).

Preschool Education Program has been developed to support children who attend preschool education institutions to reach the highest level in their cognitive, language, motor, and social emotional fields, acquire self-care skills, develop healthily and prepare for primary school thanks to their rich learning environments. It is a versatile program with supportive and preventive dimensions because it aims to prevent deficiencies that can be met in all areas of development as well as supporting development of children (MoNE, 2013).

Preschool education is the first step of systematic formal education. Learning environment is structured in accordance with characteristics of children and within the framework of the programs prepared along with their own development features, and children are prepared for basic education in a social environment together with their peer groups (Şahin, 1998).

The main purpose of preschool education is to prepare the child for primary school as well as providing efficient education in a suitable environment by supporting their development in all areas. Even if the family makes significant contribution to child's development during this process, it may not be sufficient. In the preschool period, where the development of the child occurs very quickly, preschool education

contributes to a large extent by providing experiences appropriate for the age and developmental characteristics of children (Başal, 2005).

Regulations regarding activities, lessons and procedures for teaching in preschool education institutions in Turkey have been reported in the Ministry of National Education Regulation on Preschool Education and Primary Education Institutions. According to this Regulation, preschool education is given in non-stop six activity lessons, each of which is 50 minutes, in a double-shift system a day. Primary education institutions are taken as an example in determining this period. In primary education institutions, one lesson hour is 40 minutes. Breaks which are at least 10 minutes are regulated by the school administration. In preschool education institutions, these 10-minute breaks were added to the lesson hours making them a 50-minute time frame (MoNE, 2014).

Preschool teachers cannot have break times at all, which builds a barrier for them to have supportive and constructive interactions with their colleagues on issues such as sharing work and experience. Teachers in other branches, on the other hand, have the opportunity of constructive meeting and support in matters related to teaching profession. This causes teachers to feel insulated and increases their despair (Sparks and Hammond, 1981 as cited in. Ergel, 2014).

A country's pre-school education program is prepared according to its perspective on education and the goals that are desired to be achieved through pre-school education. Effective and qualified preschool education programs are child-centered approaches. These programs include activities initiated by the child. In such programs, the teacher is a guide and supporter. (Oktay, 2004). A preschool teacher plays a very important role in education process and reaching the goals of preschool education. Furthermore, it is the main factor in determining the quality of preschool education institutions (Koçyiğit, 2014).

A preschool teacher is the determining factor in organizing educational environment and conducting educational activities. The high level of motivation of the teacher and student during education process affects the efficiency of the education. Children discover themselves in supportive environments where they feel safe and make use of the learning opportunities offered. The most important determinant of this supportive environment is the teacher (MoNE, 2013).

In the light of the aforementioned information, preschool period is an important process in terms of cognitive, social emotional, motor and language development of the individual. Healthy development of an individual in all these areas is closely related to quality preschool education. Preschool teachers undoubtedly are key people in the quality and effectiveness of preschool education. The fact that teachers feel happy, their motivation is high and that they can meet their physiological needs in education process positively affect efficiency of education. Therefore, the study was conducted to examine preschool teachers' opinions on the effects of daily non-stop application of preschool education. The problem and sub-problems that the study discussed are as follows:

What problems do preschool teachers working institutions affiliated to the Ministry of National Education face in the process of conducting non-stop lessons without breaks or having a rest?

**Sub-problems:**

- 1) What are the effects of 300-minute non-stop preschool education on teachers?
- 2) What are the effects of 300-minute non-stop preschool education on students?
- 3) What are the opinions of preschool teachers about their lack of having a break time in terms of human rights?
- 4) What are the preschool teachers suggestions for other practices regarding the subject?

**2.METHOD**

The study used a semi-structured interview method which is defined as a study where qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview, document analysis are used, and a qualitative process is applied to reveal perceptions and events realistically and holistically" (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008) . An interview form was developed to get the preschool teachers' opinions about non-stop education period and it was finalized based on expert opinions. The form included four open-ended questions. Teachers opinions

about the practice of non-stop preschool education period, the problems they encountered and their suggestions were discussed.

### Study Group

The study group was determined through convenience sampling method. In a convenience sampling method, a researcher chooses a situation that is close and easy to access, and increases pace and level of practicality of the study (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). The study group was formed from preschool teachers in the province of Kocaeli in Turkey by using the convenience sampling method. Sociodemographic characteristics of the participating teachers were shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants**

Participants	Gender	Age	Experience in profession (year)
Teacher 1	F	33	11
Teacher 2	F	30	8
Teacher 3	F	46	24
Teacher 4	F	29	8
Teacher 5	F	35	11
Teacher 6	F	30	6
Teacher 7	F	33	11
Teacher 8	F	34	11
Teacher 9	F	33	10
Teacher 10	F	37	11
Teacher 11	F	31	8
Teacher 12	F	34	10

As Table 1 shows, all the participating teachers (n=12) were female and their mean age was 33.75 (min 29 - max 46). In addition, the teachers their mean job experience was 10.75 years (min 6 - max 24).

### 2.2. Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using an interview form developed by the researchers. The form included four open-ended questions and the participants wrote down their thoughts on it. Open-ended research questions provide researchers with a flexible and open-ended approach to what they want to examine (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). The interview forms were sent to teachers' e-mail addresses; they were asked to complete them in their houses and send back via e-mail due to the pandemic. The participating teachers answered all the questions in the form by writing their opinions.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Data obtained from the responses of the teachers were analyzed using descriptive analysis method. Descriptive analysis consists of four stages: creating a framework for descriptive analysis, processing data according to the thematic framework, defining results and interpreting them (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). A thematic framework was determined by the researchers for the analysis of the data. In this context, data were first coded separately by each researcher. Then, the data were compared and common encoding was made based on common themes in agreement by the researchers. Written texts, in other words, responses of the teachers were examined repeatedly, and the data that served the purpose of the study were coded; then, the themes explaining the coded data in general were determined. The teachers were coded as T1, T12, and

the results were arranged in tables. Direct quotations of the teachers were included while interpreting the results.

### 3.RESULTS

Opinions of preschool teachers, who have worked in institutions affiliated to the Ministry of National Education, about non-stop three hundred minutes preschool education were shown in tables below. Opinions of the teachers about the effect of non-stop three hundred minutes preschool education on teachers were shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Teachers' opinions about the effects of 300- minute non-stop preschool education on teachers**

Theme (Categories)	Codes	N	%
<b>Effect of Non-stop Education On Teachers</b>	Failure in meeting physiological needs (T1,T2,T5,T6,T7,T10,T12)	7	25
	Decrease in efficiency in lessons (T2,T4,T9,T10,T12)	5	18
	Feeling psychologically bad (T1,T5,T8,T10,T11)	5	18
	Low motivation (T1,T3,T6)	3	11
	Physical fatigue (T1,T9)	2	7
	Feeling uneasy and anxious (T2,T7)	2	7
	Negative effect on health (T3,T8)	2	7
	Decrease in attention (T1)	1	3.5
	Failure in establishing academic and social communication (T3)	1	3.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>28</b>	<b>100</b>

As seen in Table 2, themes based on the teachers' responses regarding the effects of non-stop preschool education on teachers were failure in meeting physiological needs (25%) , decrease in efficiency in lessons (18%), feeling psychologically bad (18%), low motivation (11%), physical fatigue (7%), feeling uneasiness and anxious (7%), negative effect on health (3.5%), decrease in attention (3.5%), failure in establishing academic and social communication (3.5%). Examples of teachers' expressions that helped to develop these themes were given below.

#### **Failure in meeting physiological needs**

*"Giving daily 300-minute non-stop education reduces teacher's attention and motivation after a while. It is because working for such a long time is a little over human capacity. For example, a teacher cannot leave the children in the classroom, even to meet their needs (restroom, photocopying, administrative affairs, etc.). Even if the teacher has to leave, they have to leave them under the supervision of one of the personnel in the institution. Although people get used to this working order over time, sometimes last lesson hours are quite difficult because the teacher gets tired both physically and spiritually." (T1)*

#### **Decrease in efficiency in lessons**

*"I think that the non-stop education process affects teachers negatively because they cannot find time to meet their own needs, and when they have to leave the classroom for their urgent needs, they feel uneasy and anxious. The practice of daily non-stop education also reduces efficiency of teachers by causing fatigue and decreases their energy and efficiency in lessons." (T2)*

#### **Feeling psychologically bad**

*"Staying in a room for 300 minutes without a break makes a teacher feel psychologically bad. Considering the number of students staying together, 21 people who spend 300 minutes in a class without a break have biological problems. The teaching environment becomes easily stuffy. The teacher and students need a break, breathing. If they cannot, they can get a little bit nervous. They need a break. Fresh air, clear mind." (T8)*

Effects 300-minute non-stop preschool education on students were analyzed based on the teachers responses and codes were shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Teachers' opinions about the effects of 300-minute non-stop preschool education on students**

Theme (Categories)	Codes	N	%
<b>Effects of Non-stop Education on Students</b>	Exhibiting bored behavior (T1,T2,T3,T7,T8)	5	26
	Attention deficit (T5,T6,T8,T12)	4	21
	Behavioral problems (T1,T3,T4)	3	16
	Reluctance to participate in activities (T3,T4)	2	11
	Being affected by the effect of the process on the teacher (T9,T10)	2	11
	Being negatively influenced (T2,T12)	2	11
	Having problems in socializing (T3)	1	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>

As Table 3 indicated, themes and codes developed according to teachers' responses regarding the effects of non-stop preschool education on students were exhibiting bored behavior (26%), attention deficit (21%), behavior problems (16%), reluctance to participate in activities (11%), being affected by the effect of the process on the teacher (11%), being negatively influenced (11%), and having problems in socializing (4%). Examples of teachers' statements that helped to develop these themes were given below.

#### **Exhibiting bored behavior**

*"Because children are tired of staying in the same place for long, they tend to go to restrooms frequently and want to spend time in the corridors and restrooms, which is a sign that shows they are bored. There may be different places in kindergartens, but because there is no such opportunity in nursery classrooms, children become reluctant or their behavior changes after a certain period of time. Although nursing classrooms are frequently ventilated through windows to provide fresh air, unfortunately, air quality of the environment decreases in crowded and small classes soon. Children cannot be motivated for education as they have a feeling of being closed somewhere. Children who know only their children and friends in their class have difficulties in socializing with other peers and teachers."*(T3)

#### **Attention deficit**

*"Students need a time frame in which they can run and play freely. Their attention is quickly distracted and drawing their attention to lessons becomes difficult due to non-stop education."* (T6)

#### **Behavioral problems**

*"Because children get tired, they do not want to participate in activities in last hours and start to show behavioral problems."* (T4)

The practice of 300-minute non-stop preschool education was analyzed in terms of its compatibility with human rights and the themes and codes developed were shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Teachers' opinions about 300-minute non-stop preschool education in terms of human rights**

Theme (Categories)	Codes	N	%
<b>Compatibility with Human Rights</b>	Incompatible with human rights (T1,T2,T3,T4,T6,T8,T9,T10,T11,T12)	10	45
	Failure in meeting most basic needs (T1,T2,T3,T5,T6,T12)	6	27
	Being treated differently from other branches (T4,T7,T9)	3	13
	Salary injustice (T7)	1	5
	Workload and work responsibility (T10)	1	5
	Psychological pressure (T8)	1	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>

As Table 4 shows, the themes were: the opinion of being incompatible with the human rights (45%), failure in meeting their most basic needs (27%), failure in meeting most basic needs (13%), being treated differently from the teachers in other branches (5%), salary injustice (5%), workload and work responsibility

(5%), and psychological pressure (5%). Examples of teachers' statements that helped to develop these themes were given below.

#### **The idea of being incompatible with human rights**

*"Preschool teachers have been forced to provide non-stop education. Their workload and responsibility have been increased. I think having preschool teachers worked this way is incompatible with human rights."* (T10)

#### **Failure in meeting their most basic needs**

*"Need for meeting our simplest human needs sometimes becomes a problem. "It is really against human rights that we have to call someone to be in the classroom and keep an eye on students because we don't have time to meet our institutional or personal needs. I think, the fact that both the teacher and students have to spend non-stop 300 minutes in a place is against human rights. "* (T3)

#### **Being treated differently from teacher in branches**

*"It is injustice that teachers in other branches have some rights but preschool are deprived of them. It would be better if we were allowed to have one or two breaks, or at least 10-minute short breaks, even if many breaks like other teachers have...."* (T9)

Preschool teachers' opinions and suggestions for different practices were obtained and themes and codes developed based on the analyses were shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Preschool teachers' opinions and suggestions for alternative practices to the current approach**

Theme (Categories)	Codes	N	%
<b>Alternative Practices to Current Approach</b>	An assistants should be assigned (T2,T4,T5,T6,T8,T9,T12)	7	32
	The right of having a break should be given (T1,T3,T4,T5,T7)	5	23
	Teachers from different branches should be included (T1,T5,T10)	3	14
	School time for classes should be shortened (T2,T5,T12)	3	14
	Number of students should be limited (T3,T6)	2	9
	Physical conditions of classrooms should be improved (T3)	1	4
	No suggestion (T11)	1	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>

As seen in Table 5, the themes were an assistant should be assigned (32%), preschool teachers should be given the right of having a break (23%), teachers from different branches should be included in nursery classrooms (14%), school time for classes should be shortened (14% ), number of students should be limited (9%), and physical conditions of classrooms should be improved (4%). Among the teachers, one (4%) did not make a suggestion. Examples of teachers' statements that helped to develop these themes were given below.

#### **Assistants should be assigned**

*"I think this negativity will be solved by assigning assistants whose job description and limits of authority have been determined."* (T8)

#### **The right of having a break should be given**

*"School time for classes in preschool education should be reduced to less than 50 minutes. For the safety of students, an assistant should be available in every kindergarten or nursery classroom. Branch teachers should also guide students to discharge their energy during breaks."*(T5)

#### **Teachers from different branches should be included**

*"If a new system other than the current one is practiced, at least a 15-20-minute break should be given in the middle of the day, even if breaks in every 40 minutes, as in other teaching levels, are not applicable. In fact, this is not appropriate for children at this age. Moreover, branch teachers who attend classes such as arts, music or physical education can be included in nursery class and they can make children involved in activities that will both refresh and entertain them . "*(T1)

#### 4.CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In Turkey, preschool teachers work with children for 300 minutes without break a day. This study, in which opinions of preschool teachers regarding the effects of this practice on teachers, students and education process were taken, revealed some significant results.

Preschool teachers cannot meet their most basic physiological needs such as having a rest, going to the restroom etc. They reported that they felt uneasy when they have to leave the nursery classroom for their needs. The problem of not meeting the physiological needs is followed by the decrease in teachers' efficiency in the classroom. Non-stop education causes teachers to continue their activities without having the opportunity to rest, and as a result, a decrease in their efficiency. Teachers also had the opinion that non-stop education had negative impact on their psychology. A study conducted by Yalçın and Yalçın (2018) found similar results reporting that preschool teachers said they could not rest due to continuing the activities without having a break, they could not meet their basic needs and therefore they felt very tired toward the end of the day, and lessons were not covered effectively.

Another study, carried out by Demirtaş, Çağlar and Han (2019), reported that non-stop education causes teachers not to have opportunity to have a rest, to eat and drink and to meet his basic needs, and to decrease the efficiency of the teacher, which supports the results of the current study.

Unlike the current study, Demirtaş, Çağlar and Han (2019), found some positive outcomes of non-stop education. For example, non-stop education ensures that activities continue without intervals, and because children are always supervised by the teacher, security problems are avoided.

Teachers expressed that non-stop education period had some outcomes not only on teachers but also on students. According to them, first of all, students showed bored behaviors in the lesson. Non-stop education process causes students to show bored behaviors because they spend a long time in the same environment. Teachers also said that they had observed situations regarding students such as attention deficit, behavioral disorders, unwillingness to participate in activities, being affected by the effects of the teacher, and having problems in socialization. Yalçın and Yalçın (2018) found similar results, and reported that teachers in their study noted continuing activities without any breaks had caused distraction and had made children feel bored. They also pointed out that non-stop education was a disadvantage for children to communicate with their peers. It is clear that preschool children cannot participate in activities for 50 minutes because they have short attention spans. Continuing activities uninterruptedly prevents them from communicating and socializing with their friends and other teachers in their school (Yalçın and Yalçın, 2018). Preschool teachers also expressed their opinions regarding compatibility of non-stop education with human rights. The vast majority of participants thought that it was not compatible with human rights. It is because practice of non-continuous education is not applied any other teaching branches. On examining the statements of the teachers, apart from incompatibility with human rights and being treated differently from other teachers, the teachers also mentioned some other problems. Among these were not being able to meet their basic needs, salary injustice, excessive workload and responsibility, and being exposed to psychological pressure. Preschool teachers were also asked for their suggestions for different or alternative approaches from the current practice. Some thought that assigning assistants in the classroom may be a solution for this issue. Other suggestions were as follows: Preschool teachers should be given the right to take a break, teachers from different branches should be included in nursery classrooms, school time should be shortened, the number of students should be limited, and classes should be physically improved. A study conducted by Demirtaş, Çağlar and Han (2019) found similar suggestions made by the participating teachers and school administrators most of whom thought normal break time practice should be applied or long breaks can be allowed once or twice during the day. Similar to the results of the current study, they also stated that making assistants available for nursery classrooms could also be a solution. In this regard, some teachers and administrators suggested that the school yards and interiors should be made safe and well-equipped, and multi-purpose halls should be designed. Some suggested that 300-minute non-stop teaching and activity time should be shortened. In addition, few teachers were of the opinion that additional tuition fees should be increased.

The study clearly showed that daily 300-minute non-stop preschool teaching practice had negative effects on both teachers and students. Moreover, the current practice causes failure to meet physiological



needs, which are the most fundamental right of teachers. It was obvious that teachers were negatively affected by the current practice both psychologically and physically. Looking at the issue in terms of students, staying in the same environment for a long time leads to make them feel bored, distracted , and as a result, show behavioral disorders.

It was found as a result of the statements of the teachers that the current practice had some shortcomings regarding its compatibility with human rights. Preschool teachers have to stay in the same environment for a long time. When teachers leave the classroom to meet some of their needs, they are held responsible for any negative situations in the classroom occurring during the time when they are out of the classroom. This situation causes teachers to feel uneasy and have to postpone or waive meeting their basic needs. In addition, teachers from all other branches get additional tuition fees over a 40-minute class time; however, pre-school teachers are paid additional tuition fee over a 50-minute class time. Preschool teachers cannot have a break during daily teaching process and their lesson time is kept longer than that of other teachers. All these show that the current practice also causes salary injustice.

## 5.SUGGESTIONS

The results of the study clearly shows that changes are needed to lessen negative effects of the current practice –300-minute non-stop education– on teachers and students. Based on the statements of the participating preschool teachers, the following regarding the problematic aspects of the practice can be suggested :

1) First of all, teachers’ opinions on the right of having breaks should be taken and problems they experienced should be discussed. Problems experienced by teachers and resulting from school time should be discussed and recorded in branch teachers’ meetings at schools or in district branch teachers’ meetings.

2) Like all employees, preschool teachers have their most basic rights to have a rest and meet their physiological needs. Therefore, they should be given the right to take a break, and when they take a break, an assistant should replace them to take care of the children in nursery classrooms.

3) As in all other classes, teachers from different branches should be able to attend classes in nurse classrooms for some activities. In the meanwhile, preschool teachers can have an opportunity to have a rest and meet their needs.

4) Additional tuition fee is calculated over 40 minutes for teachers in other branches but it is calculated over 50 minutes for preschool teachers, which is an unfair practice. Payment policy regarding additional tuition fee should be improved and preschool teachers should have the same rights as other teachers regarding additional tuition fee.

5) Preschool teachers have undoubtedly play a major role in providing quality preschool education. Teachers, who cannot find an opportunity to meet even their most basic needs are unlikely to be efficient in classrooms. This injustice done toward preschool teachers must be taken into consideration by relevant authorities and the problems experienced by teachers during non-stop education period must be eliminated.

6) Very few academic studies on practice of 300-minute non-stop education, which is the subject of the current study, were found in the literature review. Further scientific studies should be conducted on this issue, and problems experienced by teachers should be highlighted.

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