

PRESCHOOL TEACHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY AND HUNGARY

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1. Introduction

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in countries as the fundamentals of education. The institutes of early childhood education (such as preschool) are the places where children and their families gain their first experience regarding education, and later success in school years becomes determined (Smith & Smith, in Aldrich, 2002).

The characteristics of early childhood education in a country are defined by two factors: "(1) ideas about children, childhood and learning; (2) socio-political perspectives on the purpose and outcomes of educational provision in the early years" (Stephen, 2006, 5.).

Since there are different types of educational institutes before school years in several countries there is a confusion in terminology. To clarify the levels of education UNESCO (2012) has established a terminology for that: International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011. ISCED level 0 is called Early childhood education that is followed by Primary education (ISCED 1).

"Programmes at ISCED level 0, or early childhood education, are typically designed with a holistic approach to support children's early cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and introduce young children to organized instruction outside of the family context. ISCED level 0 refers to early childhood programmes that have an intentional education component. These programmes aim to develop socio-emotional skills necessary for participation in school and society. They also develop some of the skills needed for academic readiness and prepare children for entry into primary education." (UNESCO, 2012, 26.)

ISCED 0 is divided into two categories: early childhood educational development (0 to 2 years) and preprimary education (from the age of 3 to the start of school).

Taking the mentioned into consideration there is no doubt that training of preschool teacher candidates plays a crucial role in the aspect of early childhood education.

In this study the preschool education systems have been described and the preschool teacher education programs have been compared in Turkey and Hungary. Since the quality of preschool education is highly related with the qualifications of preschool teachers (Barnett, 2003), preschool teacher education has been a central research area for decades. The educational programs and investments are shaped by the needs and demands of society for each country. Then, it would be useful to have a deeper look at the teacher training programs and compare them in terms of their aims and outcomes across countries.

Turkey has been a rapidly changing country in terms of population, education, and economy. As a developing economy, Turkey aims to be a member of the European Union and tries to achieve the European standards in education (Kılıç, Baskan, Sağlam, 2010). Early education is important for developing countries to advance their citizens' participation in education and community life and combat the negative cycling effects of poverty cross generations (Berk, 2012). As a developing economy, it's crucial for young Turkish children to have equal access in preschool education for further quality education and employment. World Bank (2013) explains that through the quality early childhood education, the poverty cycle could be broken by enriching the individuals right at the beginning of their lives.

Hungary is already a member of the European Union and has a great historical background regarding both the system of preschools and the training of teachers (e.g. Janek, 2017). Although Hungary is a European country society is always changing and changes are detected related to the educational system. Besides the changes in rules and society there is constant intent to develop the institutes of early childhood education and teacher training as well.

Depending on the rationale explained below, in this review, (1) the structure of the preschool programs, (2) the brief history of preschool teacher training, and (3) the preschool teacher training programs have been described and compared in Turkey and Hungary. The differences were discussed and further suggestions arising from those comparisons have been provided.

2. The structure of the preschool programs

2.1. Enrollment rates

Preschool education in Turkey has been improved in the last decade thanks to the support from the governmental and non-governmental organizations. The enrollment in preschool education raised from 1.9% in the 1980s to 67.23% in 2018 (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2010, 2019). Following the introduction of new regulations in education in 2012, the beginning age to the primary education is dropped and the preschool and kindergarten education is still not compulsory causing a significant decrease

in the enrolment ratios in Turkey. The current age span for preschool education is 36-66 months, and the 66 months old children must begin the compulsory primary education (MoNE, 2017).

Preschool education is compulsory from the age of 3 in Hungary since the Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education has been introduced. Previously kindergarten was compulsory from the age of 5 and only an opportunity of education from the age of 3 (Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education).

Recently children follow preschool education until they reach the compulsory school age of 6 years. Hence upon the suggestion of an expert, a child can follow the preschool program for one more year (Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education).

Due to data from the academic year of 2017/2018, proportion of participation in preschool education was around 84,5% meaning 322.7 thousand children (which was 0.7% more than in the previous academic year). The average ratios are the followings: 10,3 child / teacher and 21,7 children / preschool group. In year 2017/2018 9200 preschool-aged children with special educational needs were registered, most of them (82.2%) attending integrated settings (Eurydice European Commission, 2019).

2.2. Finance

In Turkey preschool education is provided mostly by the government and it's free except some expenditures like food and other additional services (Eurydice, 2019). Since, there's no compulsory preschool and kindergarten education and the additional needs such as food and transportation are to be met by the families, the enrollment percentages in preschool education is far below of the developed economies (Aksoy & Eren-Deniz, 2018).

In Hungary preschools can be established and owned by the state and in the frames of local governments (either those of nationalities), churches, other people or organizations. The opportunity of free education is provided. (Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education). Of course parents meet financial needs regarding preschool education, at least food, but there are situations that provide opportunity to decrease the amount of payment or completely delete is (Act XXXI of 1997 on child protection and guardianship administration). Preschools belonging to churches or private owners can require tuition fees (Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education).

2.3. The main goals

The main goals of preschool education in Turkey are; (1) providing children with healthy physical, cognitive, and emotional gains, (2) supporting the

transition to primary level, (3) providing an appropriate learning environment for young children coming from disadvantaged families and environments, (4) enriching the oral Turkish language.

The characteristics of preschools are regulated by the Govn decree 363/2012 (XII. 17.) on the Core Program for Kindergartens in Hungary. The Core program for Kindergartens clearly defines the main goals and principles of preschools:

- "A child - seen as a developing personality - shall be entitled to be treated with warm care and special protection.
- Upbringing of children is primarily the right and duty of their family. Preschool education has an additional and disadvantage compensating role.
- Preschool education should concentrate on supporting development of the personality of children. It should focus on the respect of human rights and children's rights and equality in receiving high quality education." (Govn decree 363/2012 (XII. 17.) on the Core Program for Kindergartens)

The main goals and tasks of Hungarian preschool education is to satisfy the needs of preschool-aged children. Including: health education; emotional, moral oriented social education and development and education in the fields of cognitive and native language skills (Govn decree 363/2012 (XII. 17.) on the Core Program for Kindergartens).

2.4. The program

The current Turkish preschool education program for young children between 36-72 months was developed in 2006 by a panel of experts (MoNE, 2006). The preschool program consists some certain goals and developmental indicators in five curriculum areas; (1) social emotional, (2) motor, (3) cognitive, (4) language, and (5) self-care. Besides, there're cognitive concepts supposed to be achieved by each age group. The program also provides many sample activities using those goals and indicators, and concepts with easy to reach materials. The booklets of the program and some supportive materials are provided by the MoNE for the preschool teacher assigned in preschools. The appropriate modifications for special needs are also included in the program (MoNE, 2016).

The program also explains learning centers and activities. The learning centers are defined as the centers with clear boundaries equipped with specific materials for each area such as; block, book, music, art, science, and drama. There're four activity types defined as (1) individual, (2) small group, (3) large group, and (4) integrated. Integrated activities are defined as the ones including diverse activities with appropriate transitions. The activities could be actualized in different domains such as Turkish language,

art, drama, music, movement, play, science, math, early literacy, and field trips. The preschool teachers are supposed to organize monthly plans in which they describe the goals and indicators, and concepts to be included in the activities. The monthly plan also includes the family involvement activities and assessment. The assessments are based on the observations of children. The teachers also prepare daily plans including the free play and activity time (MoNE, 2016).

As it was mentioned previously characteristics of Hungarian preschools are regulated by the Govn decree 363/2012 (XII. 17.) on the Core Program for Kindergartens. This program provides the main principles and framework of preschool education. Hungarian preschools develop their local programs based on the Core Program and they are expected to work according to it.

Besides the principles (ideas of child and preschool) and tasks of preschool education the Core Program gives a clear framework of preschool life. There is a description of objective and personal conditions of preschools, daily routine (as being flexible and focusing of the crucial role of play) and the relationships of preschools (e.g. families, social institutes). Establishing the daily and weekly routine is the competence of teachers. Tracking the development of children is also one of the tasks of preschool teachers.

Free play and play-based learning have crucial roles in scaffolding the development of children to reach school readiness.

The Core Program draws a picture about the types of activities in preschool education level: Play (as the fundament of preschool education); Rhyming and Storytelling; Drawing, Painting, Making Patterns, Handwork; Singing, Music, Singing Games, Children's Dances; Becoming Actively Acquainted with the Outer World (content in environmental and content in mathematics); Movement (physical activity); activities of a work nature (e.g. taking care of animals, plants); activity based learning.

The Core Program also provides a brief descriptions of characteristics of the development stage of school readiness. It is an important aspect that Hungarian preschools develop and improve skills of children to reach school readiness. The aspect is that children reach skills at the end of preschool that help them in the process of transition to school. (Govn decree 363/2012 (XII. 17.) on the Core Program for Kindergartens)

3. Preschool teacher training

3.1. The history of preschool teacher training

Teaching has been regarded as a sacred profession back in the history of Turkey. At the beginning of the constitution of the Turkish Republic, the great importance has been given to the primary level of education because of the importance of educating the literate citizens equipped with the proper citizenship values. Since the constitution of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the preschool teacher training programs had been offered by the vocational

high schools for women. Beginning with the 1960s the ECE attracted more attention in Turkey. In 1982, the Council of Higher Education was established, and all the teacher institutes were centralized under this governing body.

Currently, all the preservice teacher training programs in all areas are offered by the faculties of education. Beginning with the 1990s, the first 4-year bachelor's degrees in preschool teacher education have been offered in Turkey. In the last decade, the number of universities offering such programs have been multiplied due to the increase in the enrollment and investment in the preschool education. Universities offer day and nighttime classes to meet the high demand from students (Kayhan & Kılıç, 2011). Students graduating from these undergrad programs are entitled to teach in public and private preschools and kindergartens (Aldemir & Kurt, 2014).

Hungarian preschool teacher training dates to the 19th century. The first preschool (kindergarten) was founded in 1828 by Teréz Brunszvik. It is interesting that in the first years mostly male teachers worked in those institutes (Hegedűs & Baska, 2013). Women were also found competent for being preschool teachers in later years, slowly this profession became an opportunity for women (Janek, 2017). Parallel to establishments of preschools, new types of educational institutes of teacher training has also developed. The first preschool teacher training institute was established in 1837. The length of training was first 1 than constantly 2 year long. Legal background of preschool teacher training was also established in the 19th century (1891) naming it as a form of middle level education in public education.

In the 20th century new regulations in the preschool education had been shaped. The length of studies had been increased (3 years theoretical, 1 year practical training). After World War II the need of preschool emerged since women started to get employed. This involved the need of teacher training as well. Besides preschool teacher training institutes also other types of training institutes were developed (1949) meaning one year education after graduating from secondary school. Part time trainings were also introduced. In the 1970's due to the increased number of children sent to preschools, vocational schools also appeared. Through a regulation decreed in 1958 preschool teacher training has begun to be offered in the higher education level, besides the vocational schools. Preschool teacher training in "training institutes" was terminated. In 1959 training in middle level institutes stopped and higher education training was offered to students (2 years). Preschool teacher training was raised to college level in 1985 (from 1989 with the length of 3 years). After 1993 only colleges began offering preschool education programs to the students (Hegedűs & Baska, 2013; Golyán, 2018). Recently, preschool teacher training programs are offered by the universities on the level of bachelor's degree (3 years), both through full and part-time programs.

3.2. *Preschool teacher training programs*

The four-year preschool training program at the undergraduate level has been revised in 2007 and 2018 in Turkey in line with the European Higher Education Area. In both revisions, it's clear that the Turkish preschool teacher candidates take courses on child development, educational sciences, general culture, and practicum. The latest program revised in 2018 has been in force for the first-grade students beginning from the 2018-2019 educational year. The program is consisted of courses of teaching profession (35%), general culture (19%), and field education (46%). In the first year, the general courses regarding teaching profession (e.g.; Introduction to Education), general culture (e.g.; Atatürk's principles and Turkish Revolution); and field education (e.g.; Introduction to Early Childhood Education) are introduced.

In the second year, more intense courses about the field is introduced (e.g.; Science Education in Early Childhood, Mathematics Education in Early Childhood; Music Education in Early Childhood). In the third year, more field courses are introduced and the fourth year the practicum courses are introduced per semester. The practicum courses require the student to put his theoretical knowledge into practice at the Turkish state preschools run by the Ministry of National Education.

The elective courses throughout the program have been offered beginning with the first year in all three domains (teaching profession, general culture, and field education). Some examples of those elective courses would be; teaching profession (e.g.; Educational Anthropology; Critical and Analytical Thinking; Museum Education; Adult Education and Lifelong Learning); general culture (Nutrition and Health; Economics and Entrepreneurship; Traditional Turkish Handicrafts; and Professional English); and field education (Traditional Children's Games in Early Childhood Education; Rhythm Dance and Orff Education in Early Childhood, Education of Hospitalized Children; Children At-risk and Education) (Council Of Higher Education, 2018). As seen the new program offers a variety of courses offered throughout the program and so the students can choose the ones in line with their interest areas.

The characteristics of Hungarian preschool teacher training are the following. It is practice oriented; theoretical and practical training are parallel; and beside university teachers, mentor preschool teachers play important role in the development of students profession (Golyán, 2012).

The Training and Outcome Requirements of Hungarian preschool teacher training are clearly defined (Chapter IX 4 of Annex 3 of Ministry of Human Capacities Decree 18/2016 (VIII.5.)).

Training and Outcome Requirements describes professional competences that are expected to be studied through preschool teacher programs. These are presented in four fields: (1) knowledge, (2) skills, (3) attitudes, (4)

autonomy & responsibility. By completing their studies students graduate as Preschool Teachers or Ethnic Minority Preschool Teachers (with this degree they can work in ethnic minority preschools) (Chapter IX 4 of Annex 3 of Ministry of Human Capacities Decree 18/2016 (VIII.5.)).

The training program contains four modules (Chapter IX 4 of Annex 3 of Ministry of Human Capacities Decree 18/2016 (VIII.5.)):

- pedagogy, psychology, social sciences, computer sciences
- the methodology of the types of activities in preschool education (play; nature language and literature; mathematics; environmental sciences, music and singing; physical education)
- other specializations or ethnic minority professional knowledge
- practical training

As an example the fields of preschool teacher training of Eötvös Loránd University are shown below:

Basics of Psychology; Basics of Education; Pedagogy as a Profession; Preschool Teacher's Role in Society; Digital Pedagogy; Music and Its Methodology; Native Language and Its Methodology; Children's Literature and Its Methodology; Mathematics and Its Methodology; Environmental Studies and Its Methodology; Physical Education and Its Methodology; Visual Skills and Its Methodology; Preschool Practices; Comprehensive Preschool Practice; elective courses (e.g. preparation for bilingual education). (<https://www.tok.elte.hu/en/content/kindergarten-education-programme-ba.t.5021?m=102>)

It is a quite new introduction that preschool teacher training programs are available in English as well.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

This study aimed to point out the main similarities and differences between Turkish and Hungarian preschool teacher training systems. Since the preschool education in Hungary had become compulsory for the 36 months old children in 2011, the enrollment percentages is higher in Hungary. It's suggested that the preschool education would also be compulsory for Turkish children to create equal beginnings coming from different socioeconomic levels as stated in the main goals of Turkish preschool regulatory. Such a compulsory preschool education would also create more education and job opportunities for Turkish women (World Bank, 2013).

One of the factors setting barriers to expansion of preschool education in Turkey would be the lack of quality and accountability assuring systems as explained by World Bank (2013). Some research (e.g. Dağlı and Dağlı, 2012) highlighted the inconsistencies in the developmental plans regarding the early childhood education since the 1950s and they stressed the need

for the regulations to be based on the objective evaluations of the previous applications in the field in Turkey. Another factor causing the lower enrolment rates in preschool education in Turkey would be that the coverage for the food, cleaning services, and educational material is demanded from the families, which prevents the integration of socioeconomically disadvantaged families and children in ECE in Turkey (Aksoy & Eren-Deniz, 2018). Hence, the inclusion of the socioeconomically disadvantaged in the preschool education can set the stage for equal beginnings and gains for the further education (World Bank, 2013).

When the preschool educational programs were compared, it's seen that the Turkish preschool program is might be structured and the goals and aims for each developmental area have been made clear through activities. Hungarian preschool program puts more emphasis on free play. The Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education provides the rules must be obeyed regarding preschool education. Beside that the Core Program gives principles, framework (that must be obeyed as well). Based on these principles programs of preschools and plans (e.g. monthly plans) can be constructed in details regarding the profile of each preschool.

The Turkish preschool teacher education programs offer four-year college training since 1990s and the current Hungarian preschool teacher education program offers three-year BA training. In Hungary primary school teacher training takes four years. Three years sometimes might be seen as short, it can be especially a challenge for international students. Support for international students is a need since Hungarian universities attract more attention from the international students each year.

Additionally, the introduction of the practicum courses at the last year of the preschool teacher program would rise some issues for Turkish students. Generally, the practicum classrooms and schools are the first places for the students to meet young children and educational environment and put their theoretical knowledge into practice. Although it's documented that the love for children was the main cause for Turkish students to opt for preschool teaching (Aldemir & Kurt, 2014; Unal & Kurt, 2018), the students have the first chances of genuine educational experiences with young children through the practicum courses. Therefore, it would be more beneficial to put the practicum courses at the very beginning of the college years so that the students could achieve a better perspective about her qualities as a preschool teacher. The Hungarian program puts a great emphasize on practical training (cf. Golyán, 2012). Due to this, practical training is constant during the whole training period providing experience and growing autonomy for students. After 5 semesters of practice students have to prove their skills during the comprehensive practice which gives them more experience and also opportunity for training places to work with potential employees.

It's believed that the exchange of international experience and knowledge can help in improving preschool curriculum and teacher training programs in both countries.

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