



Preschool Education in Türkiye from Past to Present

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ABSTRACT

The pre-school period is an important period in which significant progress is made in the development of the child and the construction of the future is made. Pre-school education has always been important in Türkiye and different studies have been carried out in each period. These studies have focused on the value and importance given to the child. As a matter of fact, before Türkiye become a republic country in 1923, the child was seen as an important person who would shape the future and the importance of the family was emphasized in the education of the child. Before the Republic, different educational institutions were opened for the education of children. These developments continued in the Seljuk period and the early periods of the Ottoman Empire. After the proclamation of the Republic, primary education was given more importance due to the conditions of the country. Initiatives for the education of children were discussed in development plans and National Education Councils. At the same time, importance was given to the family education. During these developments, programs were created in parallel with the development of the period and priority was given to the training of teachers. Considering these topics, in this study, pre-school education in Türkiye, the development of the pre-school education program and pre-school teacher training are to be discussed.

KEYWORDS

Historical process; pre-school education; pre-school program; pre-school teacher.

INTRODUCTION

One of the important indicators in the development of a society is the health of people. The health of children and providing environments that help children develop their potential play a major role in people's well-being. In this context, different educational approaches have been adopted and different teacher training models have been applied in the education of children from past to present in Türkiye (Derman & Başal, 2010).

Ibn-i Sina, Gazali, and Farabi, who are important thinkers and lived in the pre-republican period, gave importance to the education of children, and made a name for themselves even today with their views. These people stated that the education to be given to children should be systematic and underlined the necessity of different practices. In the Seljuk period, the education of children was given importance. While it was mentioned that the family should be at the forefront in the education of children in the old Turks, it is noteworthy that systematic pre-school education institutions were opened in the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires (Akyüz, 2012; Sağlam & Aral, 2016; Yavuzer, 2019). As a matter of fact, when the studies on the education of children in Türkiye are examined, it is found that the education of children also took place in the pre-Republican period and that pre-school education continued under the name of "Sıbyan Schools" in the 15th century (Akyüz et. al., 2005; Türk, 2011).

After the proclamation of the Republic, especially until 1932, since the literacy rate in the country was not at the desired level, primary education became the focus of education. After this date, it is seen that the necessary studies for pre-school education started to be carried out. In this context, the importance of making necessary innovations for the pre-school period was emphasized in the development plans and the National Education Councils. In order to embody these ideas, Pre-School Education Programs were prepared, tried to be implemented, and the deficiencies in the application were determined and the elimination of these deficiencies was emphasized (Altay, 2011; Gül, 2022). In this context, family education programs were prepared and implemented especially for children who could not benefit from pre-school education and their parents (Kılıç, 2010). In addition, special attention was paid to the training of the people who would implement these programs.

Teachers do not only affect the individuals to whom they provide educational services with their education, fields of expertise, behavior, and attitudes, but they also have the capacity to influence a society. In this context, especially pre-school teachers are very valuable as they are the first experiences of children after the family (Şenol & Ergün, 2015). Therefore, the importance of training pre-school teachers is obvious. Special attention was given to the training of pre-school teachers in Türkiye (Güler & Öztürk, 2003). It is seen that the first studies on the training of pre-school teachers were in the 1960s. It is emphasized that the initiatives to train teachers in the field of child development and education of the Girls' Technical Higher Teacher School started in 1979. Today, there are Pre-school Teaching Programs in 75 universities in Türkiye (Bardak & Topaç, 2022). In the light of this information, the development journey of pre-

school education in Türkiye, the historical adventure of Pre-School Teaching and its current situation are explained below.

THE DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN TÜRKİYE

The development journey of pre-school education in Türkiye is explained in two parts as pre-republican and republican period.

Pre-School Education in the Pre-Republican Period

Turks gave special importance to the education of children. It is noteworthy that the Turks, who led a nomadic life in the early ages and were a hunter and warrior society in order to continue their lives, generally educated their children to gain these characteristics from a very early age. In the early ages, boys were asked to ride horses well and be hunters from a very early age, while attention was paid to girls to keep the house running (Akyüz, 2012). These skills provided children with important gains in terms of life skills.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna) who deeply influenced the Turkish Islamic educational thought. He was born in 980 in Afshona- Uzbekistan and died in 1037 in Hamedan Iran, and wrote about 200 books in different fields, focusing on medicine and philosophy. He is known by the Westerners as the founder of modern medieval science and the leader of physicians. He stated that the process of going to school should start at the age of six, and that mothers were responsible for the education of the child before this process (Akyüz, 2004). He also pointed out that music and games should be used in the education of children (Yavuzer, 2019). Besides Ibn Sina, Farabi also gave importance to the education of children.

Farabi known as Alfarabius in the West, Farabi lived between the years 872 (Otrar-Kazakhstan)-950/951 (Damascus- Syria) and made important contributions to the science of logic. He is among the medieval Islamic intellectuals, is a scientist who talked about individual differences among children, expressed the concept of role-models, stated the importance of play and emphasized that children could learn through play. Farabi emphasized that it is important to convince children in their education, or to use force if it is not possible to make them believe, and underlined that children can learn in any way (Akyüz, 2019; Yavuzer, 2019). Yusuf Has Hacib, another thinker who lived in the same period. He lived between 1017 -1019 (Balasagun-Kyrgyzstan)/-1077 (Kashgar- China), learned Arabic and Persian as well as the valid sciences of his age, stated in his work "Kutadgu Bilig" that the education of the child should be started from a very early period. Yusuf Has Hacib emphasized that many skills that are taught to children in the early period would be permanent for a long time. Similar to the views of Farabi and İbn-i Sina, Yusuf Has Hacib also indicated that parents have very important roles in the education of children and children take them as role models (Dönmez & Koçak, 2018).

Ghazali lived between 1058 (Tus/Iran)-1111 (Tus/Iran). He is also known for criticizing philosophy and giving fatwas to some philosophers of the period. He is one of the most famous Islamic scholars who lived in the Great Seljuk period, who was an important thinker in the Great Seljuk state in 1037. It was founded by Tuğrul Bey (1016-63). The state consolidated its political

map shortly after its establishment, advocated the necessity of children's education to begin at school. Underlying that the most important job of the child is play, Gazali defended the necessity of using the game for the skills that are desired to be taught in order for the children to get used to the school. Unlike other thinkers, Ghazali includes teachers among the people whom the child takes as role-models. Ghazali emphasized that the behaviors of parents and teachers are very important and effective in the education of the child. Arguing the importance of the impact of the environment, Gazali also mentioned that a quality environment should be provided in the education of the child and underlined the importance of reinforcers in the subjects desired to be taught to children. At the same time, he indicated that children have individual differences and they should be given an education appropriate for their development (Çamdibi & Keskiner, 2012; Durakoğlu, 2014; Yavuzer, 2019).

After the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, it became an independent state in 1299. It spread to three continents in the 16th and 17th centuries. After the victory of the Turkish War of Independence between 1919 and 1922, the 623-year-old Ottoman state was abolished, the first educational institution included in kindergartens in Türkiye was the "Sıbyan Schools". Sıbyan schools are expressed as the place where education first started, they were founded by sultans, notables of the state, merchants or philanthropists with good economic status. It is stated that Sıbyan schools first started in the 15th century and have an important place in the education of children from the age of four. It is pointed out that these institutions are also the first kindergartens (Akyüz et. al., 2005; Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007; Koçer, 1991; Türk, 2011).

Education in Sıbyan schools was basically carried out in spaces designed like homes. In these schools, children were initially given religious knowledge. They became institutions preferred by families because children played games and acquired religious knowledge there. In time, education such as writing and social studies began to be given in Sıbyan schools (Demirtaş, 2007).

These trainings continued in different ways until 1908, and this period was included in the history books as a period like the Renaissance in Turkish history. In this context, important developments and advances were made in many areas in the state. Among these developments and advances, changes in the field of education have an important place. Kazım Nami Duru, who was responsible for the National Education, tried to establish an education system similar to the Frobel model in 1909. The first product of these studies was carried out in Thessaloniki. These institutions, called "Ravza-i Sıbyan", were opened in school gardens and trainings were continued by teachers who received Frobel training from abroad. However, due to the outbreak of the Balkan Wars and the inability to obtain the desired efficiency in education, the studies had to be left unfinished (Gurbetoğlu & Atlı, 2014; Türk, 2011).

In 1913, under the chairmanship of Ahmet Şükrü Bey, an education inspector, the "Tedrisat-ı İptidayi Kanun-ı Muvakkâtı" was put into effect for the first time. In the aforementioned law, regulations for pre-school education took place officially for the first time. It was emphasized that pre-school education institutions should be included in primary

education, kindergartens were responsible for the education of children between the ages of four and seven, and the developmental areas should be supported by considering the development of children in this period. In order to achieve this, it was also indicated that game, travel, music and physical education curriculum should be included, kindergarten would be expanded all over the Empire, and pre-school education institutions would be opened in places where there were no pre-school institutions, in addition to primary education institutions (Akyüz, 1996; Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007; Türk, 2011).

İsmail Mahir Efendi, who was mentioned as an authorized person from the Ministry of National Education of the period, examined similar laws and regulations in Europe in order to implement the regulations after the enactment of this law. After this research, the first pre-school education institution in Turks was established in Istanbul in 1914 under the name of Darülmualimat. In this institution, which especially took into account the principle of equality in education, socioeconomically disadvantaged children also started to receive education in the same educational institution with their peers who were in good financial status. In this institution, education was applied with the game method, in which mental and physical characteristics were prioritized for the developmental characteristics of children. Besides this educational institution, a private enterprise was carried out by Satı Bey in 1915. With the decision to implement an education similar to the Montessori model, the children of families with good financial status were reached. At the same time, Satı Bey opened teacher schools called "Darülmürebbiyat" in order to train pre-school teachers (Erdem, 2008; Türk, 2011).

A regulation was prepared in 1915 for pre-school education institutions. In this regulation, information on where and how pre-school education institutions could be opened, and what were the admission conditions for children were included. According to the regulation, pre-school education institutions would be opened next to girls' schools depending on the primary school, the structure of pre-school education institutions would be robust, they would be designed in accordance with the development of children and would be planned to provide paid or free services to children between the ages of four and six. When children were admitted to school, it was made mandatory to check whether they had a contagious disease and monitor their vaccination status. Children who did not meet these conditions were not enrolled in school. In addition, it was made compulsory for the children who were enrolled in schools to have health checks at least once a week during their education (Akyüz, 1996).

As can be seen, the studies expressed are in parallel with today's understanding of education. However, due to the conditions of the Empire, these developments and advancements unfortunately had to come to an end, and the teacher schools that were opened to train pre-school teachers were closed after a short time (Akyüz, 1996).

Pre-School Education in the Republican Period

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, education in the young Turkish Republic was seen by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as a very important country problem. However, due to the restructuring process of the country, the developments in pre-school education started after the 1930s. The

most important reason underlying this situation is the very low literacy rate after the war. As a matter of fact, the literacy rate of 9-10% after the establishment of the Turkish Republic necessitated giving priority to primary schools, and pre-school education was left to the families (Akyüz, 2012).

In 1932, a kindergarten was opened by the Istanbul Municipality due to the fact that working women did not have a place where they could leave their children during their working time. After this application made by the Istanbul Municipality, there was a rapid increase in the number of private kindergartens. Despite the high number of private kindergartens, no official kindergarten organization was established during this period (Altay et. al., 2011; Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007; Deretarla Gül, 2008). It is seen that there were 80 pre-school education institutions throughout the country in those years (Derman & Başal, 2010; Martı, 2020).

In addition to these developments, the importance of pre-school education and arrangements for pre-school education institutions were also made in the National Education Councils held. In the 4th National Education Council held in 1949, the importance of family education was emphasized. In addition, agreements were made on the fact that the family is primarily responsible for the education of pre-school children, and therefore, it is necessary to provide education for families (MEB, 2022a)

At the 5th National Education Council held in 1953, it was agreed to examine the education and program prepared for pre-school education and training (MEB, 2022a)

In 1961, "Primary Education Law No. 222" came into effect. In the law, pre-school education is referred to as institutions affiliated to primary education institutions. Articles 6 and 13 of the Law also include the expression "*Children who have not reached the age of compulsory education are educated in pre-school education institutions*" (Resmi Gazete, 1961).

In 1962, the 7th National Education Council was convened. At this Council, it was decided to update the pre-school education in the "Primary Education Law No. 222" and to disseminate the regulation prepared in 1962-1963 throughout the country. After the decisions taken and the studies carried out for pre-school education, public and private pre-school education institutions started to become widespread throughout the country (MEB, 2022a). In addition to these developments, in line with the Third Five-Year Development Plan (1973-1977), private sectors were activated in pre-school education and six pilot kindergartens were put into practice in Ankara, Adana, Bolu, Gaziantep and Zonguldak. After the pilot kindergartens, the number of kindergartens in the whole country reached 118 (DPT, 1973)

After the preparation of the Third Five-Year Development Plan and its entry into force, the "National Education Basic Law No. 1739" was enacted in 1973. Pursuant to the law, the purpose and application forms of pre-school education were determined. According to the law, pre-school education institutions can be opened as independent kindergartens or kindergartens within the scope of primary education or as pre-school education institutions within the body of other state institutions. Further, It is also stated in the related law that pre-school education

is not compulsory and it is for the children of families who want it, and includes children who have not reached the age of primary education (MEB, 2022a).

In 1981, at the 10th National Education Council, opinions were presented that pre-school education covers children between the ages of zero and five, it was not compulsory, but it would be made compulsory in time. In addition to these opinions, it was underlined in the same Council that pre-school education institutions should be expanded throughout the country, primarily in rural and socioeconomically disadvantaged regions (MEB, 2022a)

Following these developments, 602 kindergartens, two of which were practical kindergartens, were opened between 1981 and 1982, and 354 kindergartens, 10 of which were applied, were opened between 1982 and 1983 (Oktay, 1983).

According to the Social Services Law No. 2828 dated October 27, 1983, the task of inspecting and opening kindergartens was transferred to the Social Services and Child Protection Agency. In line with this law and the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan (1985-1989), it was aimed to increase the schooling rate in pre-school education to 10%. In line with the stated purpose of the Social Services and Child Protection Agency, it was aimed to make maximum use of private and state institutions (MEB, 2022a). The pre-school education institutions given to the Social Services and Child Protection Agency were inspected by the institution until 1992, and the "General Directorate of Pre-school Education" was established in line with the "Law on the Organization and Duties of the Ministry of National Education" approved in 1992 (MEB, 2002).

In 1993, at the 14th National Education Council, recommendations were made regarding the opening of institutions, employment, the number of children who would continue to the institution, and the qualifications of the teachers who would work in the institutions. These decisions are as follows (MEB, 2022a)

- Article 14- Disseminating the Pre-School Education by developing it and reaching the targets in the Development Plans will be ensured.
- Article 15- From Pre-school Education institutions serving the same age group; kindergarten will be defined as "Private and Public Pre-School Education institution affiliated to the Ministry of National Education, opened for the education of 36–72-month-old children" and the nursery schools will be defined as "Pre-school Education Institution opened within the body of public and private kindergartens and primary schools for 60-72 months old children".
- Article 16- In cooperation with the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security and the Ministry of Health, the practice of opening a nursery in enterprises will be ensured, and necessary legislative work will be initiated to expand its scope. It will be ensured that this issue is taken into account in health reform studies.
- Article 17- The qualifications, duties and responsibilities to be sought in the personnel for all levels and duties in the field of Pre-School Education will be determined and these qualifications will be linked to a certificate system.

- Article 18- Necessary studies will be carried out to include the establishment of pre-school education institutions in sufficient number and capacity in mass housing projects.
- Article 19- In order to develop social facilities and their structures such as Nursey, day care centers, kindergartens providing Pre-School Education services for 0-72 months old children and rehabilitation centers for the disabled, etc. efforts will be made to increase State Loans and incentives and to reduce taxation.
- Article 20- Municipalities, State Economic Enterprises, Foundations, Religious Organizations and other private entrepreneurs will be encouraged and supported to open Pre-School Education Institutions.
- Article 21- Legal arrangements will be made for the allocation of treasury lands for this purpose and the utilization of municipalities and cooperatives for the construction of the Pre-School Education Institution building.
- Article 22- In order to train parents in Pre-School Education, “mother and father school” practices will be expanded.
- Article 23- A research project will be prepared and carried out in order to obtain accurate and reliable numerical data on pre-school education services throughout Türkiye.
- Article 24- In addition to the incentives given to education investments for the purpose of developing and disseminating Pre-School Education, additional plus points will be given in the incentives given to pre-school education and the “home nurseries” project will be expanded.
- Article 25- “Pre-School Education Fund”, which will collect a certain percentage of the revenues from municipal revenues, deposit revenues, shares to be received from private institutions that make profits in the education sector, revenues from the sales of goods at customs, and a certain percentage of the revenues from the housing fund, will be established for the development, dissemination and institutionalization of Pre-School Education.
- Article 26- A project for kindergartens that will provide dual education will be carried out in centers with low-income families living in small provincial and district centers and in districts with socioeconomic disadvantages.
- Article 27- Necessary renovations will be made in the empty buildings of the Ministry of National Education and other public institutions and organizations so that they can be included in Pre-School Education and the existing buildings and resources will be used rationally and efficiently.
- Article 28- The Build, Operate, Transfer model will be used in the dissemination of Pre-School Education and type projects suitable for the conditions of the regions will be developed.
- Article 29- The Ministry of National Education will prepare package programs in cooperation with Universities, these programs will be implemented in pilot schools, and

according to the results obtained, these programs will be developed to meet the needs of the child and within a scientific framework, adhering to the principle of flexibility according to different institutions and organizations.

- Article 30- Based on the approval of the Ministry of National Education, tax and customs reductions and, if necessary, credits will be given to businesses that produce and/or import materials such as pre-school children's books and toys, and they will be encouraged.
- Article 31- By establishing "Pre-School Education Centers" programs, materials, counseling and guidance services will be provided to teachers, and "Teacher Resource Units" will be established.
- Article 32- Necessary arrangements will be made regarding Pre-School Education in the National Education Basic Law No. 1739. Necessary work will be done to enact a "Pre-School Education Law" covering all legislation related to Pre-School Education.
- Article 33- In cooperation with the Ministry of National Education and universities, "program development studies" will be carried out to provide integrity in the programs of higher education institutions that train teachers for Pre-School Education and practice kindergartens will be opened within these institutions. It will be ensured that the child development and education teaching program in higher education institutions that train teachers will be separated from the kindergarten teaching program. Practice Kindergartens will be added to these institutions.
- Article 34- Pre-school Education will be included in the programs of the Education Faculties that train classroom teachers, and courses related to classroom teaching will be included in the programs of the faculties that train pre-school teachers.
- Article 35- "Student quotas within the scope of Law No. 3580" to be allocated to university students who choose Pre-school Education will be increased.
- Article 36- The task analysis of the personnel to be employed in Pre-School Education institutions will be made and the Pre-School Education teachers to be assigned abroad will be selected from among the successful teachers. These teachers will undergo a preparatory training that includes foreign language.

Considering the recommendations made, it is seen that serious steps were taken for the dissemination of pre-school education, the necessary importance was given to pre-school education and a separate structure from primary education was initiated.

In 1996, at the 15th National Education Council, it was decided to make pre-school education compulsory for two years in addition to the ones mentioned above (MEB, 2022a). In addition to these decisions, in the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan (1990-1994), it was aimed to increase the schooling rate to 11.5% by expanding the kindergartens and nursery schools (DPT, 1996). However, although the planning is in this direction and the number of schools required increased, it is seen that the schooling rate remained at 5.3% (Şahin & Çağlar Özteke,

2003). As a result of the failure to reach the goals, the schooling rate was requested to be 16% in the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan (1996-2000). However, this target was also not realized, and the schooling rate reached only 9.8% (DPT, 2000). The number of pre-school education institutions reached 9882 in 1993-2000 through the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Family and Social Services (Şahin & Çağlar Özteke, 2003).

Since the desired number of enrollment rates could not be reached in the Sixth and Seventh Five-Year Development Plan, the need for more radical decisions came to the fore in the Eighth Five-Year Development Plan (2001-2005). In line with this purpose, it was decided to develop a standard that was determined in order to eliminate the dualities between institutions providing pre-school education, and to prepare programs by taking into account national, moral and spiritual values, based on the characteristics of school-based and early periods. The schooling rate was determined as 25% in the 2001-2005 period (TC. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı, 2023)

In 2004, a regulation was introduced for the children of working mothers. Accordingly, this situation is clearly seen in Article 15 of the Regulation on Nursing Rooms and Child Care Dormitories on the Conditions of Employment of Pregnant or Nursing Women. In the relevant article, it was decided to establish childcare centers close to the workplaces for the care of children between the ages of zero and six in workplaces employing 150 or more female workers, regardless of their marital status (Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı, 2012).

Although more radical decisions were taken regarding pre-school education in the Eighth Five-Year Development Plan, the targeted rate was still not reached. Since the targeted number could not be reached, the recommendations made in the Ninth Five-Year Development Plan (2007-2013) focused on meeting the teacher and physical infrastructure deficiencies, providing educational services by diversifying, doing the necessary studies to raise the level of social awareness, and increasing the early childhood and family education studies. Thus, it was stated that the schooling rate should be 50%. However, the schooling rate remained at 44% (DPT, 2007). In addition to these developments, it was stated at the 18th National Education Council in 2010 that pre-school education should be compulsory for one year (MEB, 2022a). However, pre-school education has not been made compulsory until today.

Pre-school education institutions remained affiliated to the General Directorate of Pre-School Education from 1992 to 2012. After this date, they were affiliated to the Early Childhood Education Department under the General Directorate of Basic Education (MEB, 2023a)

In the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2014-2018), a recommendation was made to expand the pre-school education in a way that would contribute to the social, emotional, mental and physical development of all children, especially those with financial difficulties. Thus, it was foreseen that the pre-school education enrollment rate would be 70% in 2018. However, this number could not be reached (Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2013). Although the targeted number of schooling rates could not be reached, pre-school education was enriched in terms of quantity and quality in this process. In the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2019-2023), regulations

were tried to be introduced to increase the stated schooling rate. In this context, decisions were taken to increase the supervision of institutions providing early childhood education, to regulate the numbers in a qualified manner, to include the age of five in compulsory education (TC. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı, 2019)

Looking at the numerical history of pre-school education institutions, there were 80 pre-school education institutions between 1923 and 1924 (Derman & Başal, 2010). Between 1983-1984, there were 2501 pre-school education institutions (Şahin & Çağlar Özteke, 2003). A total of 70383 schools (56200 public schools, 14179 private schools, 4 open education schools) served in formal education in Türkiye in the 2021-2022 academic year. 14124 of these schools were in the pre-primary education level. In terms of schooling rate, it was determined that it was 48.84% at the age of three-five, 61.18% at the age of four-five, and 92.17% at the age of five (MEB, 2022b).

In addition to these initiatives, studies were also carried out for children and their parents who were in early childhood but did not have the chance to reach pre-school education institutions. Some of these studies were carried out by the state, some by universities, and some by non-governmental organizations. They are briefly described below.

HOME-CENTERED EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAININGS IN TÜRKİYE AFTER THE DECLARATION OF THE REPUBLIC IN 1923

In Türkiye, early childhood training is implemented for children and their parents through the following institutions, apart from pre-school institutions.

Mother-Child Training Program (MOCEP): Since the desired schooling rate could not be achieved in pre-school training as stated in the development plans, it was a program developed especially for pre-school children and their mothers living in socio-economically at-risk areas. This program was applied to children between the ages of three and five in the socioeconomically disadvantaged regions of Istanbul and their mothers in 1982-1986. After the successful results obtained from the studies, the trainings were made more systematic and the name of the program was updated as Mother-Child Training Programs (Kağıtçıbaşı et al., 2005).

The Mother-Child Training program is a home-based program applied to children aged five-six who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and do not have the opportunity to access pre-school education, and their mothers. In the program, it is aimed to support mothers' parenting skills and to raise awareness of mothers in order to improve their children's developmental areas. The program has been carried out in the form of 3-hour group meetings per week in the Public Education Centers affiliated to the General Directorate of Apprenticeship and Non-formal Education of the Ministry of National Education since 1993 and covers a period of 25 weeks. In the program, trainings are carried out to support children in terms of development, and mothers are provided with emotional relief, as well as better positioning in their parenting skills and self-confidence (AÇEV, 2018).

Since 2000, AÇEV has been supported by the World Bank loan and has been carried out within the scope of the 1st and 2nd Phases of the Basic Education Project. Thus, children who are at risk and cannot receive pre-school education are provided with an equal start in life with their peers who receive pre-school education, and the developmental areas of children are supported (Temel, 2003). In addition to the group meetings held at the institution, home visits are made by expert educators. During home visits, parents are shown practically how they can support their children in the child's natural environment and contribute to the mental development of the child, while trainings on reproductive health and family planning are given to mothers (Çağdaş & Seçer, 2005).

Child Training Program (CTP): It is a program implemented by the Mother Child Training Foundation. In the program, it is aimed to support the language development of children who live in a socioeconomically disadvantaged region and do not have the chance to be supported by their environment and to prepare children for school. The program is implemented for 24 weeks. Pre-school teachers trained by AÇEV work with children with pre-school practice materials (AÇEV, 2018).

AÇEV Summer Kindergartens for Syrian Children Project: It is a program prepared based on the children's adaptation problems at school after the intense migration from Syria. The aim of the program is to increase the school readiness of children. This program was implemented for pre-school children for a short time in the summer of 2016 in Esenler district of Istanbul. In the program, the existing Pre-School Training Program was applied to 128 children (AÇEV, 2017).

An Equal Start Project for Children Living in Rural Areas: This project, carried out by AÇEV, was initiated in 20 villages in Tokat Province in 2012. The aim of the project can be summarized as supporting the development of the children in the pre-school period in the best way and making the children who do not have the chance to reach pre-school education have an equal start in life with their peers. In addition to supporting the development of children, it is also aimed to raise awareness in families about the development of their children. The project was carried out through the Dere Tepe Women's Support Programs. In 20 villages reached for children, 20 kindergartens were equipped, and pre-school education was given to children 48 months and older. The program was implemented for a total of 24 weeks in September and June (Kuzutürk & Yılmaz, 2016).

Multi-Purpose Classroom Early Intervention Program: It is a training model prepared by Çelebioğlu Morkoç and Aktar Acar in 2014 for the four-six age group. This program was developed especially for the children of families in the lower socioeconomic level. Considering the Pre-School Education Program aimed in the program, it can be summarized as supporting all development areas of children and ensuring family participation. The program, which also includes home visits, is limited to 13 weeks (Çelebioğlu Morkoç & Aktan Acar, 2014).

Mobile Kindergarten Project: In this project, in order to support the cognitive development of children who were not benefited from pre-school education activities, training was given by going to the region where these children live by a bus organized as a kindergarten. In this

context, it is aimed to ensure that children living in a lower socioeconomic level and with poor environmental conditions live in a safer environment and have better conditions in the fields of health, nutrition and education. Another aim of the program is to provide counseling services to families. Necessary trainings are planned and given according to the situation of the children and the needs of the families. Mobile kindergarten services also undertake the function of establishing permanent kindergartens in the region it goes to (Tezel Şahin & Özyürek, 2016).

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education Family School: It was a program developed and implemented by the Ministry of National Education after the COVID-19 outbreak. As it is known, most of the routines in daily life had to be changed during the COVID-19 epidemic. As seen in the whole world, schools were closed in Türkiye and distance education studies was started. Especially in Türkiye, a group that included pre-school children was first banned from leaving the house and then limited to a certain period of time. All of these situations greatly affected pre-school children and their parents. For this reason, the family school project was developed and implemented by the Ministry of National Education. The aim of this project, which was started in March 2022, can be summarized as supporting the social-emotional development of pre-school children, supporting parents in this period, and improving the teacher-parent-child relationship. In this context, “Family School Trainer In-Service Training Course, Family School Trainer Training Non-Formal Training Course, Family School Training (For Parents) Non-Formal Training Course” programs were prepared and implemented. In the first two programs, pre-school teachers received in-service training and were assigned to deliver the training they received to families in their regions. In this context, “Family School Training” was given to 112,752 families as of 27.09.2022 (MEB, 2023b)

It is seen that the programs were mainly implemented for children who could not benefit from pre-school education in socioeconomically disadvantaged regions. It can be expressed that the important thing in pre-school education is to support the child with a quality program in the most special times of life and to have an educator who understands the soul of children. In this context, the progress of pre-school education programs and the change of pre-school teaching from past to present will be discussed below.

HISTORICAL JOURNEY OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM

It is seen that the framework programs and principles related to pre-school education have been determined for a long time and the programs have been prepared and used by teachers. Although the 1952 Framework Program, which included the first information about the Pre-School Education program, included daily activities for pre-school education institutions, teacher qualifications and family participation studies, this framework program could not reach its full purpose due to the conditions in the country (Ural, 1986).

The features and objectives of the 1952 Framework Program and Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education 1989, 1994, 2002, 2006, 2013 and 2023 Pre-school Education

Programs, both of which made important contributions to the historical journey of Pre-school Education Programs in our country, are briefly explained below.

1952 Pre-school Education Framework Program: It is considered as a program accepted with the approval of the commission established by the Ministry of National Education in accordance with the “Law on Protection of Children in Need of Protection” No. 5387. This program, which can also be expressed as Kindergartens Program and Regulation and Teacher Training Regulation for Kindergartens, was accepted at the 5th National Education Council. Although the program did not include details, it provided information on what kind of activities can be done with children during the day. Objectives and evaluation dimensions were not included in the program, and family involvement studies were included in a limited number (Alisinanoğlu & Bay, 2007).

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education 1989 Pre-School Education Program: The program, which was prepared to be tried and developed, was developed by educators who were field experts in order to prepare and implement resource books that would help teachers, and to determine what the missing parts were. In the program, scientists such as Pestallozi, Frobel and Montessori and the basic principles of national education were considered, and the program was shaped according to child development theories. Annual plan, unit plan and daily plan were included in the 1989 Pre-school Education Program, which was the first and only program prepared with a thematic approach. Teachers were responsible for the preparation of the plans (Gürkan, 2006).

The program was structured to include all pre-school education institutions that children between the ages of four and five attended. The program included activities and daily plan activities prepared for different age groups of children. In the program, the daily plan could be embodied in a schedule and additions, or deletions could be made according to the needs. It was stated in the program that the evaluation would be made under three headings, and the evaluation of the child and the teacher was given more space (MEB, 1989).

In the program, what needed to be done for the improvement of all developmental areas of children was discussed (Öztürk et al., 2013). However, although this was the case, the subject was predominantly studied in the improvement of developmental areas (Çalık, 2004). The objectives and target behaviors desired to be acquired by the children were created by the teachers using the Journal of Announcements. The fact that the situation remained at this level could not provide sufficient progress in the developmental areas of children (Gelişli & Yazıcı, 2012). Considering the deficiencies expressed, the draft program was repealed in 1994.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education 1994 Pre-School Education Program: Although the program had some shortcomings, it was the first developmental program officially prepared for 0-72 months children in Türkiye. The program was prepared for three different age periods. These programs were prepared as a kindergarten program for 0-36 months children, a kindergarten program for 37–60-month-old children, and a kindergarten program for children 61-72 months old. In addition, the program was considered important because it was the first

program prepared for children aged 0-36 months in Türkiye. In all of the programs, supporting children in all areas of development was prioritized, and the targets were presented in a table (Düşek & Dönmez, 2012). The developmental areas targeted in the program were as follows: Self-awareness, self-care skills, fine and gross motor development, emotional development, cognitive development, social development, development of creativity and language development. Some subjects were used as a tool in gaining the target and target behaviors in the program and subject analyzes were made. Within the scope of the program, annual, unit and daily plans were prepared. Tables of specifications were created to determine whether children could reach the goals set in their developmental areas. Examples of the preparation of the educational environment and activities were presented to the teachers. Attention was also paid to the importance of family participation. Unlike other programs, the evaluation element was also included in this education program. In the program, it was emphasized that the evaluation should be made in the form of annual and daily evaluation. It was also stated that the evaluation should be done after the activities carried out every day. However, there is no field for the teacher's self-evaluation (MEB, 2002).

Although the 1994 Pre-School Education Program eliminated the deficiencies in the 1952 Framework Program and the 1989 Pre-School Education Programs, it was revised on the grounds that the desired ones could not be achieved and the 2002 Pre-School Education Program was created and started to be implemented (Kandır et. al., 2010).

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education 2002 Pre-School Education Program: As a result of the problems experienced in the 1994 Pre-School Education Program, the necessity of making a new program emerged and the 2002 Pre-School Education Program was developed. In this program, a developmental-based philosophy was adopted. The most important innovation in this training program was to define developmental areas and to associate creativity with all developmental areas. In the program, supporting the psychomotor, social and emotional cognitive and language development of 36–72-month-old children and gaining self-care skills were prioritized. At the same time, the obligation to make daily and annual plans for teachers was introduced and targets were set for the center (MEB, 2002). Child-centeredness and flexibility were taken into consideration in the program, and the principle of making necessary arrangements for children in need of special education was adopted. A Teacher's Guidebook was prepared to set an example for teachers. While family education was more limited in the previous education programs, in the 2002 Pre-School Education Program, the family was obliged to participate actively in education. In addition, the reason and necessity of home visits to children's homes was presented to the teachers and home visits were ensured. How families can participate in education is also clearly stated in the program (Kandır, 2002; Yazar et. al., 2008). Although there were innovations and clarity in many areas in the 2002 Pre-School Education Program, the 2006 Pre-School Education Program was developed and started to be implemented due to the deficiencies.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education 2006 Pre-School Education Program: One of the most important reasons for the development of the 2006 Pre-School Education Program can be expressed as the developments in the world. In previous programs, it was seen that the teacher was more active, and the children were in the position of receiving what was given. However, the most important factor in realizing learning was that learners were actively involved in the system. Therefore, the need for an education program in which children would be actively involved necessitated the development of the 2006 Pre-School Education Program (Tuncer, 2015). In the program, children started to take an active part in the education system, and the interests and wishes of children were considered both in the planning and implementation of the activities (Demirel, 2003).

In the program that focused on holistic development, a spiral program approach and an eclectic model were adopted. Goals and target behaviors in previous programs were changed as gains. Objectives and gains of the 2006 Pre-School Education Program were prepared to develop and support the psychomotor, cognitive, language, social-emotional development areas and self-care skills of 36-72-month-old children. The program was prepared for children aged 36-48 months, 48-60 months, and 60-72 months. The program was based on the annual and daily plan, which was the responsibility of the teacher. In the program, explanations about the subjects that teachers needed to increase their competencies were included. In order to set an example for teachers, a Teacher's Guidebook, which included annual and daily plans and examples of activities, was prepared. The evaluation part of the program was prepared in more detail and presented in the program. The features of the program were explained in detail (MEB, 2006).

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education 2013 Pre-School Education Program: This program had similar features with the 2006 Pre-School Education Program. In this program, there was a holistic development and the spiral program approach and the eclectic model were taken into account. Newly introduced applications and concepts were also included in the program. First of all, there were gains in this program and indicators under each gain. These indicators had the feature of clearly explaining the gains. In addition, all gains and indicators were aimed at all children. At the same time, this program required the teachers to know well all the developmental characteristics of the children in their class. The teacher should be able to choose the gains and indicators specified in the program according to the developmental characteristics of the children. At the same time, they had the freedom to choose the acquisitions and indicators that were not included in the program under the developmental characteristics of children, the purpose of pre-school education, and the general objectives of Turkish National Education (MEB, 2013).

In the Ministry of National Education 2013 Pre-School Education Program, the annual plan and daily plan, which were in the program since 1989, were removed and it was adopted to prepare a monthly plan and daily education flow and an activity plan. The centers called interest corners in the program were changed into learning centers. Learning centers were

explained and a list of materials that should be included in the centers was presented. In addition, an Activity Book was prepared to set an example for teachers. A family support training guide was created that guides teachers' activities with families. In this context, the Family Support Education Guide (OBADER) integrated with the Ministry of National Education Pre-school Education Program and the Family Support Education Guide (EBADER) for families of 0-36 months old children were prepared for the first time in the 2013 Pre-School Education Program, which emphasizes the importance of family education and participation. Multi-dimensional evaluation was included in the program, and it was emphasized that the evaluation should be done in the form of child, program and teacher self-evaluation. The features of the program were explained in detail (MEB, 2013). Another innovation introduced in the program, different from other programs, was the children in need of special education. Thus, it was made easier for the child in need of special education to receive education with equal rights among their peers. How to include children with special education needs in the educational environment was also given to teachers in the adaptation section of the program (Zembat et al., 2016).

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education 2023 Pre-School Education Program: This program was a developmental program like the 2013 Pre-School Education Program, and the spiral curriculum approach was considered as an approach and the eclectic model as a model. The program included gains and indicators. Outcomes and indicators were formed in line with the general objectives of Turkish National Education, the aims of pre-school education, and the philosophy and characteristics of the program (MEB, 2023c).

In the Ministry of National Education 2023 Pre-School Education Program, it was adopted to prepare a monthly education plan and a daily plan. Learning centers were explained in the program and a list of materials that should be included in the centers was presented. Reading and listening center and writing awareness center were added to the learning centers, and early literacy and out-of-school learning activities were added to the activities. In order to set an example for teachers, a Teacher's Guidebook for development areas, a Children's Activity Book for children in different age groups and story books were prepared. A Family Education Guide was created that guides teachers' activities with families. Multi-dimensional recognition and evaluation were included in the program, and it was emphasized that the evaluation should be done in the form of self-evaluation of the child, the program and the teacher. The features of the program were explained in detail (MEB, 2023c).

Although the programs are important, the teachers who will carry out these programs are just as important. The journey of pre-school teachers from past to present is mentioned below.

STATUS OF PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS FROM PAST TO PRESENT

It is thought that it is important to briefly focus on the importance of the teaching profession and therefore the pre-school teaching profession before embarking on the historical journey of pre-school teachers.

Teaching profession is one of the most important professions in providing the manpower to be trained in a country and in the development of desired behaviors and attitudes in the society in general. Teachers shape the society with the field knowledge that requires special skills and expertise they have received during their education. Moreover, not only this knowledge and attitudes of teachers, but also their behaviors and perspectives on life have important effects on the society that expects service from them (Zembat, 2014). When considered in this context, the effects of pre-school teachers on a society are clearly revealed. Pre-school teachers, to whom families entrust their most valuable assets, are both a harbor for children to open up to the community after the family and the first opportunity to experience their relationships with adults. Therefore, pre-school teachers should also be individuals who love children, can use their field knowledge and expertise in the best way, and can set a good example for children with their attitudes and behaviors (Karaca et. al., 2011; Uyanık & Kandır, 2010). Considering the importance of the teaching profession, it is obvious that their training is also very important. In this context, a special value has been given to the teacher in Türkiye from the past to the present, and the necessary institutions have been opened to train them in the best way. Firstly, the historical development of the teaching profession in general is explained, and then the historical journey of pre-school teaching is emphasized below.

The Position of the Teaching Profession in the Historical Process: The attempt of the teaching profession to become a professional line of business is encountered for the first time in the Great Seljuks Period. It is noteworthy that in this period, teaching was intertwined with the religiosity and the names “muallim” and “mudarris” were used. In this context, the teachers working in the Sibyan Schools were given the name “muallim”, while the teachers working in the madrasahs were given the name “mudarris” (Yalçınkaya & Aktepe, 2016). When considered in general, it is seen that these people have distinctive features from other people in the society. These people are separated from the society with their outer clothes such as gowns and turbans and continue their lives with high salaries. In parallel with the muallim, the duties of the mudarris continued for a lifetime, they served as orators or ambassadors, and talented students were chosen as “muids” to help these people. The duty of the muids are to be responsible for the academic success of other students, they undertake the task of being a bridge between the mudarris and the students (Akyüz, 2012; Güven, 1992).

The activities of the mudarris in the Ottoman state continued until 1848. In Turks, 1848 is expressed as the date when an official teachers’ school was opened. On this date, “Rüştiye Teachers’ School” was opened and thanks to the graduates of this school, the teaching profession was enacted for the first time between 1869-1892. With the effect of these laws and the Second Constitutional Monarchy, new developments took place in the teaching profession and decisions were taken. In this context, the establishment of a large teachers’ school and training of teachers for all levels of education were in question (İlter, 2009).

It is seen that the importance given to teachers increased due to the establishment of the Republic and the situation of the country. As a matter of fact, it is possible to see this

situation in Atatürk's statement. *“The Republic demands intellectual, wise, physically strong, and high-class guards. It is in your hands to raise the new generation with this quality and ability.”* Around this view, innovations were made for teachers. The first of the innovations was the establishment of the Teachers Association, where teachers can come together and express their views and thoughts to each other (Cicioğlu, 2019). On March 13, 1924, the “Secondary Education Teachers Law” numbered 439 was accepted and teaching became a profession. In order to become a teacher, it was obligatory to graduate from a teacher’s school and to do an internship for one year according to the field he/she completed. The names of the “Darümuallim” schools established during the Ottoman Empire were changed to “Muallim School” and finally “Teacher School” (Akdemir, 2013).

One of the topics discussed in the Teachers’ Association, where the teachers were together, was the villages. A breakthrough was made for the villages by emphasizing the importance of training teachers for the villages. In this context, efforts were started to open a “Village Muallim School”. “Village Institutes”, which is very important in Turkish history and the architect of many developments, started its activities in 1926 in Kayseri under the name of “Village Muallim School”. Based on the importance of institutes on society, the first official curriculum was published in 1943. Students attended village institutes for five years after primary school and contributed to their regions by taking culture, agriculture and technical courses for 114 weeks. However, the village institutes, which were very important, could not maintain their value and were connected to primary schools in 1954 based on the Law No. 6234 (Akdemir, 2013; Akyüz, 2012).

After these developments, with the National Education Law No. 1739 enacted in 1974, it was stated that teachers should have higher education. In this context, firstly, two-year education institutes were opened to train primary school teachers. These colleges, which were opened in 1982, were gathered as education colleges. Since 1989, the education period has been increased to four years (Baskan et. al., 2006).

After the establishment of the Higher Education Council, teacher education was tied to four-year terms with the decision of Council of Higher Education in 1989. In 1997, the course contents of the teaching programs in the education faculties were arranged and the applications were started to be applied for the third and fourth grades (Genç, 2005). Based on 2022 data, it is stated that there are 118 education faculties among universities in Türkiye (High Education Information System, 2023).

The Position of the Pre-school Teachers’ Profession in the Historical Process: When we look at the place of pre-school teachers in the historical process, it is seen that there were teachers who worked in Sıbyan schools during the Seljuk Empire (Yalçınkaya & Aktepe, 2016).

When we look at the period of the Ottoman Empire, it is stated that religious education and pre-school education were carried out together until 1913. With a law enacted in 1913 (Primary Education Law), Kindergartens Regulation was published. According to this charter, a “Main Teacher School” was opened where the education period was limited to one year (Oğuzkan &

Oral, 1983). Girls attended this institution, and in 1916 the duration of education was determined as two years (Bardak, 2010). This institution, which was opened for two years, continued its activities in Istanbul Girls' Teachers School until 1928, but later it was closed due to the need for primary school teachers rather than pre-school education (Bardak & Topaç, 2022).

After the proclamation of the Republic, "Temporary Teacher Training Program for Kindergartens" was prepared by the Ministry of National Education in 1952. Depending on the decisions taken at the 7th National Education Council, the "Child Development and Education" department was established in Girls' Institutes in 1959.

In 1961, in accordance with the Primary Education and Education Law No. 222, the name of the "Cutting-Sewing-Embroidery" discipline within the scope of Girls' Technical Higher Education was changed to "Child Development and Education" and it was aimed to train pre-school teachers.

In 1970-1971, the education period of education faculties was increased from two years to four years, and "Pre-School Education" was added as a course. After the addition of this course, it was made easier for teachers who graduated from primary school to practice their teaching profession in kindergarten.

As a result of the obligation to attend higher education for all teachers within the scope of the "National Education Basic Law" enacted in 1973, "Child Development and Education" departments began to be opened in order to train pre-school teachers (Oğuzkan & Oral, 1983). Education faculties, which were affiliated to the Ministry of National Education before 1982, were affiliated to the Higher Education Institution.

After 1998, the name of the programs that train pre-school teachers was changed to "Pre-School Teaching" within the scope of the renovation works of the Education Faculties by the Higher Education Council (YÖK, 1998).

In 1998, the number of Pre-School Teaching Undergraduate Programs in Türkiye was determined as 23.

Today, there are 100 Pre-school Education Undergraduate Programs, 68 of which are at state universities and 32 at foundation universities (YÖK, 2023)

CONCLUSION

It is known that one of the important forces in the society is the education level of the individuals who make up that society. It is an important requirement in today's conditions that this education should be given starting from the very early periods. The most important reason underlying this necessity is the potential of the knowledge gained by the children in the early period to follow them for a lifetime.

From the point of view of the historical process, although the value given to the child in Türkiye has changed according to the periods, it is generally thought that the child is an individual in need of protection. The value given to children has always been very important,

especially in Turks, since the ancient times, it was stated that the children should be educated first by their family, and then by an institution. Children were taught to shape their future personalities, approached through play, and supporting their development was always important.

When we look at the pre-school education studies, it is seen that systematic studies were collected in every period, especially in the Republic period. In particular, depending on the decisions taken in the development plans and the National Education Councils, the education of children in the early childhood period was given importance, it was desired to increase the schooling rate and different practices were developed for this purpose. Necessary measures were taken to ensure that the children of families who were economically disadvantaged or at risk could start life on equal terms with their peers. Teachers were given value and importance in every period in Turkish society. Depending on the conditions of the period, their education was organized, and the teachers served as the important architects of the society.

As a result, the value given to children and families in early childhood in Türkiye has been important in every period of pre-school education. The fact that the number of institutions that train pre-school teachers is quite high today can be expressed as a concrete proof of this situation.

The research was limited to the development of the pre-school education system in Türkiye. In other words, the research was limited to Türkiye. In this context, it can be suggested that the research should be examined comparatively between the development of preschool education in Türkiye and the development of preschool education worldwide.

In addition, it has been determined that all the development plans and the studies for the development of pre-school education are not at the desired level. In this context, it can be suggested that information studies be carried out in order to create the necessary understanding in the whole society in order to develop pre-school education.

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