

PRESCHOOL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM TO BRING PRE-SERVICE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS IN PROFESSIONAL ETHICS VALUES

Umran Alan , Sevcan Yagan , Muhammet Ozden

Anadolu University (TURKEY)

ualan@anadolu.edu.tr, syagan@anadolu.edu.tr, mozden@anadolu.edu.tr

Abstract

As an application area of ethics, professional ethics can be define as the accepted rules, approaches, attitudes and behavior that one must consider and individualize while professing a job and share with others in same profession. All profession groups have their own ethical principles. Parallel to this as an profession Pre-school Teaching has its own ethical principles. However when Program in Pre-school Education is analyzed it is seen that there is not any course that primarily aims to get students comprehend professional ethic principles. Especially, the internalization and application of professional ethic by the pre-school teachers working with young children will contribute the comprehension of ethic rules by next generations. In this context, it is important for pre-school teachers to know and internalize professional ethic principles. The basic aim of this survey model employed study determine the ideas and opinions of 4th grade Pre-school Education Program students and the factors and courses that served to form those ideas and opinions. Towards this basic aim focus group interview was done with 10 4th grade preschool education program students. The purposes of choosing focus group interview for data gathering is provide students exchange their consideration with their friends and researchers and examine the subject detailed. Data will be analyzed by descriptive analysis technique and results will be presented and discussed in the congress.

Keywords: Pre-school teaching professional ethics, pre-service pre-school teachers.

1 INTRODUCTION

The word “ethics” is derived from the Greek word “ethos” meaning morals, tradition, custom, habit, permanent sensitiveness, character, humor, temperament [8]. Ethics can be defined as a discipline of philosophy studying the values, norms, rules forming the fundamentals of individual and social relations [9] and also as behavior norms specifying how to behave as a friend, parent, child, citizen, businessman, teacher professional etc. [4]. The application areas of ethics are professional ethics, organizational ethics and administrative ethics. According to Dev, Altunsay and Erçetin, one of these application areas professional ethics is the entirety of the professional principles commanding the members of the profession, forcing them to behave specifically, limiting tendencies, precluding unprincipled members, regulating competition [7]. Professional ethics is the observable behavior rules of the professions directly related to human being [9]. One of the most important characteristics of professional ethics is that people all over the world with same profession must obey those behavior rules [7] Each profession group develops its own professional behavior rules. Professional ethics principles serve to determine what is right or wrong, fair or unfair in the decision making process of those rules [10].

Since teaching as a profession is directly related to human it is impossible to ignore professional ethics in this profession. According to Haynes, ethics has a special importance in education [3]. Because teachers and managers are surrounded with moral questions and also they have the responsibility of the education and moral goodness of the students, namely the next generation. In this context, the most important dimension of ethics in education is that the ethic behavior of teachers and managers will affect the next generation’s level of ethical thinking and behaving.

It is known that in the preschool period when the personality is grounded school as well as family is an effective institution to constitute value judgment for children. Teachers’ attitudes and behavior affect children’s development of ethics. According to Dewey, in preschool period saying children to behave moral and planning activities about ethics have a little effect on children for development of ethics [1]. That’s why it is very important to being role model to children with ethical and moral behavior as a

teacher. In this context, teachers are supposed to be conscious of their ethical responsibilities. In order to apply these ethical responsibilities it is important to teachers know what these ethical responsibilities are.

Although some countries as America (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2006) and Australia (Early Childhood Australia, 2006) have professional ethics principles for the preschool teachers, in Turkey just a part about preschool teachers' ethical responsibilities take place in Preschool Teacher Education Program which is renewed in 2006. In addition to this there is not any course such as "Teaching Profession Ethics" in preschool teacher education program. Therefore, it becomes an important problem that pre-service teachers do not know how to learn their ethical responsibilities and what to do when necessary. However, it is important to learn professional ethics principles in pre-service education process in order to apply and internalize these values. In this context, the basic aim of this study is to examine Preschool Teacher Education Program in terms of bringing pre-service preschool teachers in professional ethics values based on students views. Towards this main purpose answers to these questions were seek:

- What are the opinions of students about teaching profession ethics?
- What are the internal and external factors that affect students' professional ethics values?
- What is the level of preschool teacher education program in terms of living and upgrading ethics principles?

When preschool teacher education literature was reviewed it is seen that there is limited number of studies about teaching profession ethics. Therefore, it is thought that this study will contribute the literature and encourage the researchers to study this topic.

Preschool period includes the early years of human life and constitute the basis of human life (Oktay, 1999). It is known that the effect of early childhood experiences relatively continue lifelong and basic tendencies developed in childhood significantly affect subsequent life [11]. Early childhood experiences also affect the children's point of view about life [6]. According to Dewey, childhood is the most efficient period of human life in terms of learning values and skills about socialization and guiding future society [2]. In this period as a teacher it is very important to being role model to children to gain ethical behavior. Teachers aware of ethical responsibilities to children, colleagues, families, school administration and behaving according to these responsibilities will contribute to educate individuals with ethic principles.

However, in order to internalize basic ethic values teachers have to know and live them in pre-service as well as in-service. In this context this study has an importance in terms of revealing the case of pre-service preschool teachers about gaining ethical values in pre-service education. As this study examine the preschool teacher education program in terms of bringing pre-service preschool teachers in professional ethics values it is predicted that this study will contribute development of teacher education program process.

2 METHOD

Phenomenological approach, one of the qualitative research designs is used in this study. In phenomenological approach it is aimed to discover and interpret individual perceptions and point of views about a phenomenon. One of the purposeful sampling, criterion sampling was used to select participants for the study [12]. The criteria for sampling are being 3th grade student, being taken Special Education Techniques I-II and School Experience and being voluntary for the study. The study was conducted at a university in Turkey in July 2011 with the participation of 6 girl, 4 boy total 10 students. The age of participants was between 20 and 23.

In this study it is aimed to examine pre-school pre-service teachers' views about Preschool Teacher Education Program in terms of bringing pre-service preschool teachers in professional ethics values via focus group interviews. Focus group interview was done in order to make pre-service teachers interact about the research topic and increase the content and depth of the answers to the question towards group dynamics [12]. According to the mentioned aim two focus group interviews were done. Interviews were done in the faculty that participants study in and video camera was used to record interviews. The first fosuc group interview was 56 minutes and the other was 45 minutes.

Descriptive analysis was used to analyze data [12]. The data analysis conducted during data collection and after data collection. Analysis was done by three researchers. Firstly, researchers derived themes individually. Then themes were compared and examined. Findings were presented in

two topic according to the sub-purposes. In each topic direct quotations of participants were interpreted.

3 FINDINGS

3.1 Findings Related to Teaching Profession Ethics

In this sub-title students' views about teaching profession ethics and preschool teaching profession ethics take place.

Students define professional ethics as treating fairly, not making discrimination, being respectful individual differences, privacy in teacher-parent relationship, being respectful to colleagues, neutrality, paying importance to profession, sacrifice and not profiting from profession. Views' of students defining professional ethics as not making discrimination and treating fairly are given below.

S1: "Teacher must give education fairly by not discriminating students regarding to their language, religion, gender and respect individual differences".

S2: "Teacher mustn't be discriminative and must treat fairly according to the equality principle in education. For example, teacher can have a problem with a parent. S/he mustn't reflect this to the child".

S6: "First thing is neutrality. Teacher must be neural anyway. For example social, economic, language, religion, race etc..".

It is remarkable that whenever students asked about professional ethics they made a definition as not making discrimination. Students mostly focused on treatment of teacher to children while talking about professional ethics. Just one of the students mentioned about the ethic responsibilities of teachers towards parents. S3 expressed her opinion:

S3: "Teachers must pay attention to privacy in relation with parents. And also pay attention to professional ethics in group works with other teachers".

Two of the students made connection between teaching profession ethics and being respectful to teaching profession and receptive to development. S10 and S5 mentioned their opinions:

S10: "Teachers must always develop themselves. Teachers must develop themselves in order to make lessons interesting and be beneficial to children".

S5: "Teaching profession ethics is firstly requires to being respectful to teaching profession. Teacher respecting her profession already respect to children and families".

It is also asked to students that whether there is any difference between professional ethics and preschool teaching profession ethics. All of the students expressed that the concepts they mentioned for professional ethics are also acceptable for preschool teaching profession and new concepts can be added. Students emphasized that ethics is very important in preschool education as preschool has an important role in child development. For instance, one of the students S1 made a connection between child abuse, ethic principles and preschool education and expressed this:

S1: "Especially it can be different in physical and emotional abuse. Preschool education differentiates from other education step in this aspect. Because preschool period is the most critical period of human life in terms of physical and social and personal development and any unethical and immoral treatment can damage personal development. Therefore, close attention to this issue is needed".

S1 is also mentioned that preschool children are affected more from any abuse circumstance. In addition to this S1 did not only mention about physical and sexual abuse but also love abuse:

S1: "I think that children mustn't be abused physically, sexually and also emotionally. Teachers must be competent in some psychological areas as irrelevancy and disregarding".

S3 asserted that it is very important to being role model to children with ethical and moral behavior as a teacher in order to make children internalize ethical principles and therefore, preschool education is very important:

S3: "There is another thing. Preschool education is the first step of education. Children and parents will see a teacher first time and they will always remember their preschool teacher. Therefore, preschool teachers, first role models, will have an important place in children's lives. In this context, points that my friends touched on gain much more importance. Therefore, teacher as a first role model is at a critical point".

Whenever students' views about teaching profession ethics examined overall it is seen that students mostly mentioned about teachers' ethical responsibilities towards children but they did not mention about ethical responsibilities of teachers towards parents, managers, colleagues and workers. In this context, it can be said students have limited information about teaching profession ethics.

3.2 Findings Related to Preschool Teacher Education Program in Terms of Bringing Pre-service Preschool Teachers in Professional Ethics Values

In this sub-title students' views about "Preschool Teacher Education Program" in terms of bringing them in professional ethics values take place.

Students remarked that Preschool Teacher Education Program is insufficient in terms of bringing them professional ethics principles. It is seen that students mostly mentioned about two basic problems. One of these problems is the content of courses in teacher education program and the second one is lack of teaching staff as role model. 2 of 10 students expressed opinions about lack of teaching staff as role model whereas 8 students mentioned about the courses in teacher education program and their contents. Opinions about the courses and their contents mostly focused on not practicing the theoretical knowledge, not taking teaching profession courses convenient for the preschool grade and not touching on social and contemporary topics in courses. For instance, one of the students S3 expressed that courses are theoretical not practical and they are not related to real life:

S3: "In our education a pink-colored world is reflected to us and it is assumed that everything is perfect. However, we see that it is not the fact when we go to preschool for teaching practice. I think that it will be better if it is assumed more realistic and courses are arranged to the program taking into consideration this fact".

Another student S10 stated her opinion about the importance of practical courses in terms of bringing them in ethics values:

S10: "Observations in 2nd grade course school experience contributed me a lot about being ethic. We observed the relation between the children and the teacher, behavior of the teacher, and if there is a discrimination. I understood better that I mustn't act as the teacher in the points that I disagree. I understood this. This is the most impressive point".

S1 asserted that teacher education program is not aimed at problem solving skills and therefore, she does not know how to behave in problematic situations. Also she mentioned that this disability to solve problems causes not internalizing professional ethics values:

S1: "One of the most important things to internalize professional ethics is that the property of the program making pre-service teacher gain high problem solving skill. However, cases of any problem are not told us in our program. And also, our problem solving skills are not tested. The upper standards of as it should be in preschools are told. We do not know how to cope with the problem by not negatively affecting children's zones of development and also by protecting our own values since concepts like professional ethics are given to us mostly in theoretical".

Both S1 and S3 pointed out that, courses are theoretical and the theoretical information is not reflected to practice. S3 also stated that courses Teaching Profession Courses are not aimed at preschool period and therefore, they can't make most of the information concrete:

S3: "The common problem of Teaching Profession Courses is not being aimed at preschool education. For instance, we take Guidance course. However, this course touches on preschool education a little bit. It is mostly related to elementary and secondary education as the lecturer from educational sciences give the course. We can't concretize and internalize what we have to do for preschool education. I think the real problem is that program courses' contents are not suitable for preschool education. Namely both books and lecturers expressions are for elementary and

secondary education. For example, in Measurement and Assessment course we have seen anything related to preschool education”.

S1 stated that in Turkey in education program there is insensitivity to social and contemporary topics and it is avoided to mention about these topics:

S1: “For example, we avoid to speak contemporary topics in our teaching profession courses. We mention about these topics in some courses. Anyone tell us about how to deal with the problems that we can face with when assigned to east of Turkey. For instance, no one tell us about the customs and how to contact with children living in east of Turkey. We always ignore and escape from these. Everything is told with the assumption of ideal environment”.

It can be said that as well as teacher education program, teaching staff have an important role to bring students in professional ethics values. Two of the students made a connection between gaining professional ethics values and the prestige of teaching profession. They mentioned that teaching profession is honourable however; society considers preschool teaching profession negatively. In additions to this teaching staff do not motivate them about this issue and do not be role model:

S1: “In other words we lost our belief that our profession is improvable. I believe that both society and our teachers appreciate us. It is always said that being a teacher is a good profession but there is not any feedback from the society and our teachers proving this. Society considers us as babysitter and developing ourselves seems to be unnecessary”.

S2: “Teaching staff must be role model to us about professional ethics values”.

S10: “It must be the most important thing that treating us as we will be teachers. Sometimes they treat us as we can’t be teachers or the image they make is like this. It discourages our enthusiasm. You do not want to attend classes or you do not enjoy anything. Your desire to learn runs out. Namely, teaching staff must treat us ethically”.

3.3 Suggestions Related to Education Program in Terms of Bringing in Professional Ethics Values

In this sub-title it is asked to students for suggestions about education program. It is seen that with respect to students’ suggestions it is necessary to increase the functions of some courses, make some elective courses must, make Teaching Profession Courses’ content aimed at preschool education, make teaching staff share their experience with students. One of the students’ S1’s opinions about teaching staff’s experience share with students is as below:

S1: “Our teachers can share their experience more. They make observations and researcher anyway. For instance, they can give recent information about research made. They can pass along new information from symposiums and seminars they participated to us”.

In terms of courses’ content S1, S3 and S5 pointed their opinions:

S1: “Teaching staff giving common courses must have education towards preschool Education”

S3: “First person is the teacher who will meet with students need special education. However, there is 3 credit course called Special Education in preschool education program. It is very limited. We were lucky. There was a student needing special education in our practice class. We observed the process a little. But, some of our friends could not observe this”.

S5: “For instance, we have taken a course called Mental Health in Children, just theoretically. One of our friends went to Poland with Erasmus program. They have taken a course similar to ours. However, they have gone to Children Mental Health Center and made observations. I wish we had an opportunity like that. For instance, we learn about autistic children theoretically but we do not have chance to observe them”.

S1 stated that teaching profession courses must be aimed at preschool education. Another student S3 mentioned that the function of special education courses must be improved in order to understand

individual differences of students who need special education and help them. S5 expressed about the requirement of the education in environments that enable observation of students needing special education.

S4 and S5 pointed out the requirement of making some elective courses must:

S4: It is essential to make some elective courses must. For instance I have taken a course called Behavior Modification. I think it is very beneficial”.

S5: For instance Children’s Identification Techniques course is an elective course but it is very fundamental”.

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, which aims to identify opinions regarding raising ethical value levels in preschool teacher education program, pre-service preschool teachers defined teaching profession ethics as equal treatment, respect to differences, secrecy on teacher-parent relationships, respect among colleagues, neutrality, caring the occupation, not looking after benefits, and devotion. While expressing ethical responsibilities, teacher candidates mainly focused on ethical responsibilities towards children; by excluding responsibilities towards parents, colleagues, administrators, and staff. Yet, in Preschool Teacher Education Program for 36-72 months, which is renewed by The Ministry of National Education, the chapter called “Professional Ethics and Teacher Proficiencies” handles the subject by touching the issue Ethical Conduct in Preschool Education and deals with responsibilities of teachers towards children, parents, colleagues and society respectively, just after defining the term “ethics”. Only referring to ethical responsibilities towards children, it can be concluded that pre-service teachers are quite not aware of ethical responsibilities. On the other hand, pre-service teachers indicated the importance of ethical principles in preschool period. Pre-service teachers drew attention to increased significance of teachers’ ethical conducts for both being a role model for students and possible affection of students in a ethical violation situation.

According to pre-service teachers’ views, it can be said that preschool teacher training program is insufficient in order to make students gain ethics principles. The content of teaching profession courses is not convenient for preschool teaching and lecturers of these courses do not have content knowledge about preschool education. Therefore, these affect the learning and internalization of ethics principles by the pre-service teachers. Pre-service teacher emphasized that lecturers touch on ethical issues inadequately. Inadequate education about professional ethics principles by lecturers and deficiencies of pre-service teachers about teaching profession ethics are parallel to each other. Although there is a chapter called “Professional Ethics and Teacher Proficiencies” in Preschool Teacher Education Program for 36-72 months, which is renewed in 2006, it is very striking that pre-service teacher did not expressed about this dimension of the program. This can be explained as students do not examine the program or lecturers do not touch on this topic.

The limited knowledge of pre-service teachers about professional ethics principles is parallel to the findings of the study conducted by Pelit and Güçer in 2006 [10]. In mentioned study, 24.1% of pre-service teachers stated that they have taken ethics education whereas 75.9% of participants expressed that they have never taken ethics education. It can be said that, deficiencies of pre-service teachers about ethics values are related to not taking any course about this issue. In this context, as all profession it very important to bring up preschool teachers internalized ethics values. Teacher internalized ethics values will be role model to children and thus will contribute bringing up individuals caring about ethics values. In this respect, it can be suggested that following arrangements can be made in preschool teacher education program:

A must course called “Preschool Teaching Profession Ethics” can be given to pre-service teachers.

- Teacher education program can be renewed taking into consideration socio-cultural and economic facts of Turkey.
- Contents of teaching profession courses can be renewed taking into consideration properties of preschool education.
- Teaching staff of teaching profession courses must have preschool education content knowledge.
- Teaching staff must touch on profession ethics concept and be role model to pre-service teachers.

- Teaching staff must share their experiences with students.
- Teaching staff must make students gain problem solving skills by creating and solving example problem situation with students.

REFERENCES

- [1] Dewey, J. (1995). Egitimde Ahlak İlkeleri. (Ed: F. Oğuzkan). Ankara: Gul Yayıncılık.
- [2] Gömleksiz, M., Kilimci, S., Vural, R., Demir, Ö., Koçoğlu-Meek, Ç. & Erdal, E. (2008). School Yards Under The Magnifying Glass: A Qualitative Study on Violence and Children' s Rights. Elementary Education Online, 7(2), 273-287. Retrieved from : <http://ilkogretimonline.org.tr/vol7say2.html> on 13 May 2008.
- [3] Haynes, F. (2002).Eğitimde Etik. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları .
- [4] Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University. (2009). A Framework for Thinking Ethically. Retrieved from : <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/framework.html> on 7 May 2011.
- [5] MEB (2006). 36-72 Aylık Çocuklar için Okulöncesi Eğitim Programı Ankara: YA-PA Yayıncılık.
- [6] Oktay, A. (1999). Yasamın Sihirli Yılları: Okulöncesi dönem. İstanbul: Epsilon Yayıncılık
- [7] Örenel, S. (2005). Öğretmenlerin Mesleki Etik İlkeleri Kapsamındaki Davranışlarının İlköğretim ve Orta Öğretim Öğrencilerinin Algılarıyla Değerlendirilmesi . Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi. İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi
- [8] Özlem, D. (2004). Etik-Ahlak Felsefesi. İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi.
- [9] Pehlivan Aydın, İ. (2001). Yönetiş Mesleki ve Kurumsal Etik. 2. Baskı. Ankara: Pegem Yayınları
- [10] Pelit, E. & Güçer, E. (2006). Öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleği ile ilgili etik olmayan davranışlara ve öğretmenleri etik olmayan davranışlara yönelik faktörlere ilişkin algılamaları. Ticaret ve Turizm Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 2, 95-119.
- [11] Yeşil, R. (2002). Okul ve ailede insan hakları ve demokrasi eğitimi. Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım
- [12] Yıldırım, A., Şimşek, H. (2006). Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri. Ankara: Seckin Yayıncılık