

DIFFICULTIES TEACHERS EXPERIENCE IN 4+4+4 NEW EDUCATION SYSTEM AT
FIRST GRADE LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

DIFFICULTIES TEACHERS EXPERIENCE IN 4+4+4 NEW EDUCATION SYSTEM AT FIRST GRADE LEVEL

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This study aimed at investigating the difficulties teachers experience at first grade level in 4+4+4 new school system that was initiated in 2012-2013 academic year and the factors which affected these difficulties along with teachers' strategies of dealing with these problems. Through a self-administered questionnaire, data were collected from 301 first grade teachers working in public and private schools in certain districts of Ankara and Antalya, Turkey. Background characteristics of the participants, difficulties, problems or challenges they faced in the new school system in implementing adaptation and preparation activities, planning school year, implementing game and physical activities, teaching academic and basic skills and managing classroom were reported in frequencies, percentages, and means. In addition, a series of one- way ANOVA and independent samples t- tests were run to explore the effects of the background variables on the difficulties encountered by first grade teachers. The results revealed that teachers had most difficulties in teaching to 60- 65 month- old students while they experienced difficulties in teaching to 66- 71 month- old students to a middle extent, and besides in dealing with these, they used various strategies. These difficulties were found to differ in relation to type of school, class size and the number of 60- 65, 66- 71 and 72 (and more) month- old students in class.

Keywords: Turkish education system, educational change, early school entry age, mixed-age classrooms, implementation of education policy

ÖZ

4+4+4 YENİ EĞİTİM SİSTEMİNDE BİRİNCİ SINIF ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN KARŞILAŞTIKLARI ZORLUKLAR

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Bu çalışma, 2012 yılında yürürlüğe giren 4+4+4 yeni okul sisteminin ilkököl birinci sınıf düzeyinde getirdiği değişikliklerle öğretmenlerin karşılaştıkları zorlukları ortaya çıkarmak ve bu zorlukları etkileyen faktörler ile öğretmenlerin problemlerle başa çıkarken kullandıkları stratejileri saptamak amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler, Ankara ve Antalya illerinin belirli bölgelerindeki resmi ve özel okullarda çalışan 301 birinci sınıf öğretmeninden anket yoluyla toplanmıştır. Katılımcıların kişisel özellikleri ile uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarının uygulanmasında, birinci sınıf eğitim-öğretim programının planlama sürecinde, oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersini uygulamada, temel ve akademik becerileri kazandırmada ve sınıf yönetiminde karşılaştıkları sıkıntı, zorluk veya sorunlar frekans, yüzde ve aritmetik ortalamalarıyla sunulmuştur. Aynı zamanda, katılımcıların kişisel özelliklerinin bu sıkıntı, zorluk ve sorunlar üzerindeki etkisini incelemek amacıyla bir dizi tek yönlü varyans analizi ve bağımsız örneklem t- testi teknikleri kullanılmıştır. Sonuçlar, öğretmenlerin 66-71 aylık öğrencilerle orta düzeyde sorun yaşarken 60-65 aylık öğrencilerle sık sık sorun yaşadıklarını ve aynı zamanda öğretmenlerin bu sorunlarla başa çıkmak için kullandıkları çeşitli yöntemleri ortaya çıkarmıştır. Okulun türü, sınıf mevcudu, 60- 65 aylık ve 66- 71 aylık yaş gruplarının sınıf dağılımının, yaşanan sorunlar ile ilişkili olduğu saptanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 2012- 2013 ilköğretim ve eğitim kanunundaki değişiklikler, 4+4+4 eğitim sistemi, okula erken başlama yaşı, birleştirilmiş karma-yaşlı sınıf, eğitim politikalarının uygulanması

To the Dreams of Children Born in 2007

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MONE	Ministry of National Education
UNICEF	The United Nations Children’s Fund
NGO	Non- Governmental Organization
TUSIAD	Charter of Turkish Industry and Businessmen Association
TMMOB	Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects
NIEER	National Institute of Early Education Research
CEIEC	Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood
ECF	Early Childhood Forum
NICHD	National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background to the study, the purpose and significance of the study, and the definitions of the important terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

Between 1th and 5th of November in 2010, in the 18th National Education Council held by the Ministry of National Education (MONE), an important decision was taken as following:

Compulsory education should be rearranged for 13 years as one-year kindergarten education, four-year basic education, four-year inducement and preparation for high school education, and four-year high school education through giving students chance of getting educated in different contexts by taking age groups and individual differences into account. (2010, p. 8)

In concordance with this decision, in the early months of the year 2012, the act 6287 named as *amendment in primary school and public education law* was introduced. Basically, the law introduced deep changes to the structure and curriculum of Turkish education system as listed below:

1. Establishment of 12- year compulsory fragmented system
2. More elective courses
3. Increased weekly class hours for the 5th graders
4. Earlier school starting age

Immediately after the law was issued, it created big public debate among opposition party members, big business associations, NGOs, think- tanks, universities, education unions, chambers of industry; in other words, discussions were arisen from all walks of life. The law was labeled as *4+4+4 educational change* publicly, in newspapers and by cabinet members.

In fact, each one of the changes listed above created its own public debate, and even opposition and support groups. It is worth mentioning these discussions and debates held by people from all levels of the society in order to reach the whole picture behind the change.

At first, in the new system, uninterrupted 8-year compulsory school structure was changed with an establishment of 12-year compulsory fragmented system¹: elementary, middle and high schools. The reason behind the 12-year compulsory schooling initiative was attributed to increase average school years of the country in the Legal Ground section of the Draft Bill. Especially, at that time, Education Minister Ömer Dinçer also emphasized that Turkey was in need of such a change to increase its already - low-average year of educational attainment (6.5 years). However, discussions were extended quite fast to outside the walls of the Ministry, and fragmented system was the object of most fierce discussions and debates in the media and among certain interest groups.

In the Legal Ground section of the Draft Bill, the rationale behind changing 8 year uninterrupted system to three leveled fragmented system was mostly grounded on separating the primary and middle school settings to support moral and physical development of primary school children (2012, p. 8). Moreover, it was claimed on the report *questions and answers* published by the MONE (2012) that fragmented system was needed to increase rural children's school access as it claimed uninterrupted system created problems of long way transitions for children.

Besides, on the next page of the Draft Bill (2012, p. 9), opening more vocational middle schools was proposed to get children to make their career choices immediately after middle school since the draft pointed out that vocational/career choices after middle school age would not be right and healthy. Especially this part led to huge oppositions coming from leading interest groups such as TÜSİAD, TMMOB, educational unions, think- tanks, NGOs, and especially from universities. People or groups who were opposed to this part in the Bill basically claimed that opening vocational schools would foster child labor issues and bringing distance education options for middle schools would jail girls at home. Additionally, the issue of re- opening of the middle part of imam- hatip schools (religious schools or schools where religious subjects are studied in detail and depth) was also discussed intensely as opposition groups were charging the government for having a political agenda to convert the society into a more religious one.

Secondly, for middle and high schools, more elective courses were decided to be included in the curriculum. Elective courses of Quran and the life of the Prophet were already determined by the Formal Bill to be included, and the determination of other elective courses was left to the charge of the MONE in the Bill. Accordingly, afterwards, in the

¹ As a matter of fact, Turkish education system was three- leveled till 1998 when the 53th cabinet of the Republic of Turkey issued a law of un-fragmented 8 year compulsory education.

second and third level of the system, different elective courses related to five main subject areas such as religion, Turkish language, arts and sports, social sciences, and natural sciences and mathematics, were introduced by the MONE. Students were to take 8 hours weekly out of elective lessons. These initiatives were based on the idea of giving choices to the students for selecting courses so that they could make their choices according to their interests, needs and career aspirations (MONE, 2012). However, Quran and the life of the Prophet courses led to hot debates and were harshly criticized by those who opposed to the decision. Again, some criticized the government of their religion- based educational agenda.

Thirdly, weekly class hours changed, and for the first level it did not change; it is still 30. However, for the second level, it was increased from 30 to 36 while for the third level; it was increased from 30 to 40. This change was the most well-welcomed compared to other changes. Increase in weekly hours was decided for the sake of elective courses, and it did not create any opposition, as just concerns about the time when the classes would start and finish were arisen.

Finally and most importantly for this thesis work, compulsory school starting age was decreased from 72 months to 60 at first and then increased to 66 before the academic year started. It was decided that starting school would be compulsory for the 66-72-year-old children while for the decision for 60-66 years old students' enrolment was left to the parents. The reason behind this initiative was articulated as "to ensure that students make their school to work transition one year earlier" (MONE, 2012, p. 9). Although cabinet members of the party who proposed the Bill were trying to justify their points by giving examples from other countries (such as England and Germany) where school starting age is 5 years; people who were against this point were trying to back their opinions up through research findings showing that starting school early would not bring about fruitful outcomes in inadequate school contexts (inappropriate settings for small children). With the decrease in age, transition practices were intensified. For the first three months of the first grade, teachers would be required to do adaptation and preparation activities (kindergarten type of activities) for children to get them ready for learning. In addition, the content and name of sports lesson was changed into weekly-five-hour game and physical activities lesson.

Different reasons behind these changes were claimed and discussed; lots of arguments were arisen meanwhile. In the course of these protests and tensions, some changes were made in the regulations. Now, only imam- hatip middle schools were opened as vocational schools among all, and distance education option for middle schools was not put into practice. The rest of the changes started to be implemented starting with the 1st, 5th and 9th

grades in the 2012-2013 educational year. Before 2013-2014 academic year starts, MONE made some changes in regulations and accordingly compulsory school starting age was still 66 months unless parents of children aged up to 69 months claim with a petition that their children are not ready for school or the ones of children aged between 68-72 months document it with a medical report. Rest of the changes are still being followed and implemented.

Around such discussions, at the second year of the implementation of this nationwide educational change, researching how the new school system has been experienced in school settings at first grade by teachers is of utmost importance. Such an inquiry may provide governmental and nongovernmental (favorably NGOs) organizations with feedback and information about the difficulties teachers have had with a part of this system; and to increase the motivation of decision makers or interest groups to take actions on them. Plus, through researching this change, it is aimed to capture the attention of all affected and public on the implementation process and present recommendations to contribute to the practices at schools.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out (1) what difficulties and challenges first grade teachers have experienced in terms of (a) teaching to different age groups, (b) implementing new adaptation and preparation period, (c) introduction of the course game and physical activities during the 2012-2013 academic year, (2) what kinds of strategies teachers have used to handle the difficulties teaching in these changes, (3) what relations there are between difficulties and background variables. These background variables are class size, school type, teaching experience and the number of different age groups in class, and they are chosen as they are believed to be important in terms of their relations with classroom practices, which is believed to be affecting how teachers approach changes in the classroom practices. The rationale behind these choices is explained more in detail in the review of the literature of this study. Specifically, research questions of this study are listed as below:

1. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience during the adaptation and preparation activities in the new school system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?

2. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in planning the academic year in the new school system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?
3. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in implementing game and physical activities in the new school system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?
4. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in teaching basic skills to (a) 60-65 month-old students, (b) 66-71 month-old students, (c) 72 and over month-old students in the new school system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?
5. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in teaching academic skills to (a) 60-65 month-old students, (b) 66-71 month-old students, (c) 72 and over- month-old students in the new school system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?
6. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in managing classrooms in terms of different age groups in the new school system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?
7. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in teaching to (a) 60-65 month-old students, (b) 66-71 month-old students, (c) 72 and over month-old students in the new school system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class

size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?

8. What strategies do first grade teachers use to deal with the challenges they experience with?

1.3. Significance of the Study

The study is considered to be significant for a number of reasons. First of all, 2012-2013 academic year was the first year of the implementation of this new school system. Hence, there is a big gap in the literature regarding how this new school system is experienced at local levels and by major actors of implementation such as teachers. Especially, there is an absence in studies inquiring the experiences of first grade teachers in this new system. This study hopes to contribute to the literature in terms of the experiences of first grade teachers with this new school system.

Secondly, it is argued that policymakers have very little information about the actual process of changes they have started, the potential problems and difficulties which schools face during implementation (O'Sullivan, 2002). As any evaluation and analysis does, this study also seeks to provide feedback from bottom to top, in other words from state bureaucrats to policy and decision makers. In addition, since this is a nationwide change and widely discussed topic in all layers of the society, it also seeks to provide information to all affected and interested individuals and groups.

Thirdly, this study contributes to the literature in relation to the implementation of new school structures in education. As Bardach, Berman and McLaughlin, Elmore, Pressman and Wildavsky, Van Meter and Van Horn (as cited in McLaughlin, 1987) put forward, implementation determines the outcomes in a way that even the consequences of the best planned initiatives (policies, changes, reforms) depend on how the individuals in the system interpret and put them into practice. As Datnow, Hubbard and Mehan (2005) discuss that reforms leave some significant points of implementation to the judgment of the micro-level reform agents such as principals, teachers etc. Therefore, teachers and principals are the key players in the implementation of countrywide educational changes. This thesis work is important in terms of this point since the main aim is to bring out how a nationwide change is implemented in a school context by *one group of these key players, teachers*, and what affected this implementation.

Fourthly, in the literature, most of the attention is given to the formulation of changes or reforms, but there is a neglect of implementation issues as underlined by many scholars

(Swanson and Stevenson, 2002). As Hall and Hord (2001) underline, especially the development part of the change initiatives takes the most attention while the implementation part is challenged with the loss of attention and support. Especially our information on how reforms or changes are experienced by teachers and their strategies to cope with the new systems is limited. Therefore, this study is important since it is concerned with capturing attention on implementation of a nationwide change in local contexts. Furthermore, a case from Turkey to the literature would bring a different angle to the implementation studies.

To sum up, this work provides feedback to all the affected about the first year of the change and how it is being experienced. Besides, it is important to add new cases of implementation experiences and take the attention on implementation process in the literature.

1.4. Definitions of the Terms

In this part, definitions of the terms used throughout the study are presented.

Change: Even though how one interprets *change* wholly depends upon that person's background, profession, relevant cultural context, ideological and philosophical positions held, it generally means transformation of an idea, practice, activity in society, science or nature to something new.

Policy: Achieving one definition of policy in the literature is difficult (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997). One of the definitions agreed most is that it is both a document or text and the process of putting this document or text into action. Mostly, both the text and the action taken are imposed by governmental bodies, and enacted/controlled by them. Fix all below like this one.

Reform: Dictionary meaning of *reform* is change for the better. Hence, it has an implicit meaning of improvement.

Restructuring: According to Conley (1993), the term restructuring in education means improving student learning and dealing with changing "fundamental assumptions, practices and relationships both within the organization and between the organization and the outside world" (p. 8).

In this work, restructuring, change and policy are used interchangeably in the literature review; as the essence of the work, restructuring, new school system or new school system is used in the rest of the work.

Implementation: Implementation basically means putting ideas into practice. In the interest of this work, it is putting changes into practice. The definition of this concept is defined in detail below.

Difficulty/ Problem/ Challenge: Challenge is approached as resistance to the changes or reforms in most of the studies (Dyer, 1999). However, in this study it means difficulties experienced and problems emerged in meeting new expectations and changed roles and responsibilities changes propose. Difficulty is defined as how difficult it is to teach in these new expectations and responsibilities. All three terms, challenges, difficulties and problems are used interchangeably in this work.

Child Development: Child development is a process when the child learns and masters the skills in the development trajectory. Different skills are attributed to different development domains such as motor, physical, psychomotor, emotional, social, moral, cognitive/ intellectual, language development (Berk, 2006; Bukatko & Daehler, 2003; Kail, 2011; Lindon, 2010; Santrock, 2010).

Motor Development: Motor development is the development of muscles.

Psychomotor Development: Psychomotor development is linked to the relationship between cognitive and motor skills; in other words, it is learning gross motor skills such as running, hopping, jumping and fine motor skills such as using fingers and hand.

Physical Development: Physical development is linked to physical growth of children in terms of weight, length, stature.

Emotional Development: Emotional development is the ability to identify and express how one feels and differentiate different feelings of others and one 's self. It is also development of self- esteem, self- concept, self- control and attachment to others. These are also represented as socio- emotional development since they all emerge in social environments and through relationships with others.

Social Development: Social development is development of relationships with family, peer and school and cultural concept.

Cognitive Development: Cognitive development is the development of thought and reason and how a child makes sense of the world. Language development is the acquisition of language spoken around children

School Entry Age: The age officially required for a child to start first grade or kindergarten is labeled as school entry age. School starting age, compulsory age of starting school, starting age for school are all used to refer to this idea and used interchangeably in this study.

Transition to School: In the interest of this work, transition can be defined as moving to the first grade from kindergarten or home environment.

Mixed-Age Class: It is used to describe a classroom of different ages. However, in the literature, it is sometimes referred by different terms such as multi- ability, multi- grade or combination classes. The difference among these concepts is explained further below.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

- I do not want to go to school. I cannot play with ants there, but I could at our garden.

A six year-old first grader named Esma, 2012

This part is divided into three main focus areas to reach a meaningful and complementary picture of this work. In a general sense, this thesis work aims to examine the implementation challenges of a nationwide policy, and this policy is about changes regarding curriculum and mixed age children getting educated in a classroom which is composed of the ones required to start school at their own age and the ones required to start earlier due to the change in policy. Therefore, at first, how public policies as mandated changes are experienced by micro- level actors and the reasons behind the challenges of implementation are explained. Later, in school contexts, how teachers experience mandated policies or changes in general are strived to be presented.

Secondly, core considerations regarding child development are explained briefly to provide information on the way child development occurs and should be approached. Developmental domains are presented to provide information on how children develop different domains and what can be expected from children at particular ages and what cannot be. Lastly, issues related to first grade education in the interest of this work are investigated as they are in the literature.

2.1. Implementation Challenges of Public Policies

Implementation means the practice of putting ideas, activities, plans, programs, or a component of reform or reforms into action (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002; Fullan, 2011). According to Hill and Hupe (2002), it is between what is expected by written policy documents and what is resulted. These definitions involuntarily may give the impression that it is an easy act to do. However, as mentioned in numerous works and studies starting with the work of Pressman and Wildavsky's *Implementation* (1973), it is nonlinear, complex and constrained (Ball, Maguire & Brown, 2011); it is not certain that these ideas, activities, plans or programs would be followed by the results expected initially. Furthermore, a quick look at the literature on policy or reform implementation reveals many failed ones or unsuccessful efforts. Nudzor (2009, p. 501) emphasizes that policy- practice literature mainly deals with

“a paradox” which is outcomes of a policy formulated is different from its “intended purposes and provisions enacted.” Clearly, this makes the act of implementation a challenging endeavor for all the involved. There are a number of reasons behind this challenge. (fix all paragraph space and indentation like this)

At first, although the idea of reform or policy as planned change with a determined direction may be assumed that it involves a certain degree of stability and predictability in the social environment; in real contexts, this assumption is usually inaccurate because the social environments are in constant change which causes “spontaneous adaptive reactions (Karpov & Lisovskaya, 2005, p. 23).” As Datnow et al. (2002, p.13) point out, change can constrain or shape actions, however it cannot wholly determine them. Also, because it is not really possible for any change process to bind up strictly to a text/ document, initiatives in implementation may differ from their beginning plan eventually.

Secondly, “... [Policy] is subject to interpretation and then recreated” (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992, p.21) due to the fact that in each context implementers interpret and adapt them according to their “pre- existing norms, routines, and standard operating procedures.” Mainly, as many scholars agree, implementers are key players of any implementation process. Subsequently, implementation can be claimed to be how policy implementers respond to it within specific contexts according to their own perceptions of these documents and their experiences with it. Moreover, as Nudzor (2009, p. 937) holds the view that policy implementation is also “a process of interaction, dialogue, feedback ... coping with mixed feelings and values ... micro-politics, frustration, and muddle.” That is the reason why initial expectations are shaped in the hands of local agents within certain contexts which determine the future of a policy. As Lipsky’s breakthrough (1980) in street level bureaucracy outlines, implementers of the policies in social life are the state level bureaucrats “shaping actions at the frontlines of the policy implementation” and the ones who can be called as real policy makers due to their discretionary decisions that frontline staff make when delivering policies to citizens and organizations (May & Winter, 2007, p. 453). According to Maynard- Moody and Musheno (2000), discretion in street- level work is inevitable, therefore policies in relation to public service are felt and experienced firsthand in the daily contacts with state bureaucrats and it is determined by how they perceive policies and implement them. Even though for some policies, this point can have serious impacts on the implementation of the policies, some approach it from a different angle highlighting the pressure of this on these actors.

Thirdly, Fullan (2001) puts forward that there are other factors affecting implementation of a change. These are basically the characteristics of change (need, clarity, complexity, quality and practicality), local characteristics (district, community, principal, and teacher), and external factors (government and other agencies). Ball et al. (2011) states that what also affects policy enactment are the resource environments they entered. Furthermore, Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) and Madsen (1994) for the agents of implementation, knowledge, skills, personnel, and other resources are essential to work in the way policies require. Hence, these factors can have an important effect on the implementation of the changes.

Fourthly, it is worth mentioning not all mandated or desired changes may be a direct response to the problems they tackled (this can also be traced back to the point explained by Fullan as the characteristics of change). Some policies can be an *inappropriate response to the problem* as defined by *symbolic policy* by Hill and Hupe (2002, p. 145). Accordingly, when these types of policies do not reach its desired outcomes, it would not be the failure in implementation but rather in the formulation of them or the relationship between the expected and resulted outcomes.

These points explained so far are some of the important points covered in the policy implementation literature vastly. However, these do not represent whole; the challenge of implementers' discretion and reaction is one of the most mentioned one though.

As a part of public policies, these points are valid for education policy implementation as well, and in the next part, as state- bureaucrats and key players of education policies, teachers and their reactions to mandated changes were elaborated.

2.1.1. Teachers and Education Policies

Educational policies should be considered carefully because they influence whole society directly or indirectly. They also affect other policy areas and redistribute today's resources and affects future's. Besides, they shape future's social mobilization and political legitimacy (M. Bayırbağ, personal communication, April, 2013). As highlighted above, teachers are of utmost importance in shaping education policies and they are the key players (Hargreaves, 1997; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001). As Smit (2005, p. 300) highlights "... realization that teachers are imperative as implementers of policy calls for a focus on teachers who are often seen as impervious, unaffected, or resistant to education policy," and as Hargreaves (1994) discusses that the way teachers think or believe or act upon all have implications on how policy is translated into actions. Hence, reactions teachers

show towards mandated changes are important to outline although these reactions change specifically in unique ways for each policy or reform.

According to the literature, teachers show behavioral, cognitive and emotional attitudes and reactions towards centrally directed policy changes, and it is mostly discussed that our understanding of the processes of cognitive, behavioral or emotional changes teachers experience provide information to the practitioners and policymakers about how to make conscious decisions and effective plans.

As the literature underlines, at first, teachers find themselves in different roles after a policy is imposed. Then, as Tummers, Vermeeren, Steijin & Bekkers (2012) claim, teachers go through role ambiguities and conflicts during their experience with change. Mainly, these roles can be related to the discrepancies between the requirements of a policy and teachers' professional roles/ behaviors, and the conflict teachers find themselves in trying to find a way between the demands of a policy and parents or pupils. Tummers et al. (2012) discuss that these are one of the reasons behind teachers' unwillingness to implement the policies.

Secondly, in implementation of mandated changes, teachers are emotionally likely to feel confusion, conflict, frustration, ambiguity (Fullan, 2007; Nolan & Meister, 2000) regardless of gender, teaching background or so on. Even these negative emotional impacts can be magnified by the extent of teachers' commitment to do the best for students (Wedell, 2009) and their willingness or unwillingness to implement the change.

Thirdly, how teachers feel and behave is affected by what teachers think, therefore teachers' values and ideas and assumptions are all affected by and affect the change process they undergo. Most studies propose that teachers hold negative views for the reforms or policies mandated (Gordon, 2003; Hargreaves, 2004; Turley, 2005) because they find low value and meaning in the proposed change while they are comfortable with the voluntary ones or the ones which they feel connected to and ownership of.

All in all, teachers always strive to mediate between their own values and habits or even personal ideologies and their emotional stance with the change imposed. In addition, this mediation does not wholly depend upon the individual as a single entity, but a number of factors determine the intensity and direction of their reactions. As Wedell (2009, p. 24) underlines there are some aspects which are likely to affect the implementation of policies, in turn teachers responses in local contexts, which are: class sizes, training and professional development received by teachers, teaching and learning resources available in classes, content and format of high- stakes assessment systems, cultural assumptions prevailing a school context and other issues related to the quality of the school infrastructure. Huberman

(cited in Anghelache & Bentea, 2012) considers this point more or less the same way. He claims that teachers' attitudes are not confined to their individual stance, but also to the relationship among groups of pupils or teachers available in a school and the institutional framework/ culture, and these all have an effect on the extent or the way they show reaction to a mandated change. Among all these factors, there are some factors influencing classroom practices and hence have potential impact upon the implementation of education policies. These are explained below.

2.1.2. Some Important Aspects Influencing Classroom Practices

As pointed out above, there are some important aspects among many others influencing or relating to classroom practices and hence directing the education policies being implemented at the time and affecting teachers' reactions towards changes and its intensity, which are all worth mentioning in the interest of this thesis work.

At first, class size is approached from different angles in the literature, and it is at the heart of discussions among parents, teachers, principals and policy makers in terms of how it affects learning and whether there is an ideal number which would increase the effectiveness of classroom learning or student achievement. The literature provides inconclusive results regarding possible effect of class size on classroom practices (Akerhielm, 1995; Paola, Ponzo & Scoppa, 2013). Some argue that it significantly affects on student learning or there is a positive relationship between class size and student learning (Bruhwiler & Blatford, 2011; Heinesen, 2009; Graue, Rauscher, Sherfinski, 2009; Mosteller, 1995) while some argue that it has no clear significant effect or relationship with student achievement (Cho, Glewwe & Melissa, 2012; Ecalle, Magnost & Gibert, 2006; Hoxby, 2000; Milesi & Gamoran, 2003). Pedder (2006) discusses based on his comprehensive meta- analysis that there is not any clear conclusion of whether class size is an important determinant of achievement and academic gains, and clearly states that class size alone cannot be accountable for the differences; how class size determines classroom practices is changeable according to teacher skills, strategies and expertise, school, student characteristics or subject matter. Harfitt (2013) proposes that teacher expertise, what they bring into classroom, to what extent they use and benefit the advantages of smaller class size may lead to improved learning or teaching. Blatford (2011) suggests the importance of researching effective practices which would be identified in different class sizes. However, still, it is proposed in the literature that smaller class size is found to have a positive effect on student learning as increasing student participation and student attention and boosting a more positive classroom environment

(Englehart, 2011). Especially in the beginning years of schooling, according to a project named CSPAR conducted in UK, small classes have benefits on literacy progression during reception year (Pedder, 2006) and the findings of Blatchford and Martin (1998) reveal that according to teachers, better interaction between teacher and child and provision of quality feedback and monitoring is possible in smaller classes more than it could be in larger classes. In another study, Blatchford, Goldstein, Martin and Browne (2002) reveal that in infant years (4-7 years old), smaller class size is advantageous in terms of the provision of more individualized support and time allocation for learning. These advantages may possibly have an effect on children learning or how teachers embrace changes at school.

Secondly, research on school type is mostly concerned with particular private and public school systems in different countries. For this reason, it seems that reaching a clear picture in terms of the differences between these two school types would not be conclusive. Furthermore, as it is stated by O'Brien & Pianta (2008) and based on a comprehensive meta-analysis study by Hanushek (1997), researches do not show consistent private school effects or they do not demonstrate that private schools outperform public schools in terms of student achievement. Still, there are some points being underlined in the studies investigating these issues. The literature mainly proposes that private schools outperform public schools in terms of resources and school climate and conditions they provide (Dronkers & Roberts, 2008) and teachers' job satisfaction (Buka & Bilgiç, 2010) and more support for teacher development and retaining best teachers and providing more supervision and mentoring to them (Ballou & Podgursky, 1998). These advantages may possibly have an effect on how teachers embrace changes or implement new policies at different school setting.

Thirdly, in the literature it is underlined in many studies apart from individual or family characteristics teachers have a large impact on students (Jensen, Sandoval-Hernández, Knoll, & Gonzalez, 2012), and teacher experience is approached from many different angles and mostly dealt with in terms of teaching quality and its effects on students. Studies are varied and broad, but generally it is underlined that teacher experience matters and teachers with some experience are more effective than the ones who are in the beginning years of teaching (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2007; Harris & Sass, 2007; Rice, 2010; Rockoff, 2004). Therefore, it is important to consider teacher experience, and its relation with classroom practices.

Lastly, different age groups are included as one of the backgrounds of this study as it is important to know the distribution of different age groups in class to reach a conclusion

whether different age groups or mixed- age classes have impacts on classroom practices. This issue as outlined below in the following sections.

In summary, there are different factors influencing classroom practices; class life is affected by many factors or composed of different classroom elements; it is mostly chaotic and perplexing. It is not possible to present clearly all of these factors or the relations among those, however in the light of the above- mentioned findings overall, class size, teacher experience, school type along with distribution of different age groups are included as the background variables of this study as they are considered to have a potential contextual relationship with teacher or student practices, which cannot be underestimated.

2.2. Child Development

Child development is one of the particular fields which is evolving and improving quite fast. As a part of developmental psychology research, studies have been conducted since the beginning of the 20th century in order to explore the changes in behavior and mental processes of the children and the reasons behind these. It is very significant to research child development in order to have a better understanding of children's strengths and weaknesses at particular ages and to be aware of what can be expected from them or what cannot be. Subsequently, foundational theories on physical, psychoanalytic, cognitive, social, and moral and emotional development (not confined to only these though) of children have been founded although as Robinson (2008) emphasizes it is not possible to regard development as "a set of separate domains" but clearly it is "an integrated whole" (p. 5). Still, the field is improving and theories are still being developed, and new perspectives and approaches are being proposed. Among all these, there are some core considerations guiding today's ideas or practice worth mentioning to grasp the whole picture of how child development occurs (Berk, 2006; Bukatko & Daehler, 2004; Kail, 2011; Lindon, 2010; Santrock, 2010).

2.2.1. Core Considerations

To begin with, there are four important and widely- agreed points underlined by each foundational theory of child development. It is believed that development is both shaped by biology (genes and hormones) and emotional, social and nutritional experiences of children. In other words, both heredity and environment affect child development always jointly. Theories vary in their explanation of the effect of environment or heredity on development. For instance, learning theories put more emphasis on environment while information-processing theories emphasize biology. Bouchard (as cited in Robinson, 2008) lends a

different view proposing that environment has a more important effect on development until 12 months, and between 1 and 6 years old developmental changes are more subject to heredity.

Secondly, developmental domains are connected to each other. For instance, improvements in cognition also affect moral and social development and language and vice versa. Moreover, emotional, social and moral developments are so interrelated to each other that they are sometimes covered under the term of socio- emotional context.

Thirdly, dominant theories state that development is continuous. Hence, it is not predictable perfectly or confined to stage-like patterns. Fourthly, children are biologically equipped to act upon their social environments actively even though behaviorists differently claim that child is not actively involved in what influences the experiences they encounter.

All in all, these points are important to bear in mind in terms of explaining how children develop. Moreover, they all have an implication proposing that children progress through development at the same order but at different rates. Hence, each child progress through a different pattern and that is why it is not possible to provide clear- cut stages and distinctive ages for each development pattern.

2.2.2. Developmental Domains and Milestones

Development domains are important to grasp the idea of how children develop fully. It is mentioned in most of the articles that each child completes his/her own development at different rate and pace. In this part, important propositions of core domains in child development literature will be briefly explained as proposed by Berk (2006), Bukatko & Daehler (2004), Frost, Wortham, and Reifel (2012); Kail (2011); Lindon (2010); Santrock (2010). Explanation on developmental domains is important to grasp the whole picture of how children develop. Later, the development milestones of pre- school and school- age children will be presented.

Physical development of children is closely linked to improvement in their gross motor abilities (large- muscle activities), locomotion (mastery of mobility) and their fine motor abilities (finely- tuned movements). Until 3 or 4 months old, reflexes guide babies. Then, they start controlling their torso and hands. They begin to explore world as their gross motor skills along with locomotion improve around school- age. Fine motor skills go through using only one hand at a time to both hands for different actions in a manipulative manner. It seems that children show growing independence in using fine motor skills at the age of four; however, its full development is not completed until the age of ten to twelve.

Cognitive development is first explained in a systematic and comprehensive way by Piaget who is often called and known as the father of cognitive development and his theories still lead the field. He believes that children construct their own understanding of the world, and knowledge is based on cognitive structures constructed by children themselves. According to him, children complete their cognitive development over four stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, formal operational stages. These stages start with children's exploration of the world first between birth to 2 years of age through reflexes. Then children start thinking symbolically between 2 to 4 years of age. Later, they acquire intuitive thinking till 7 years of age. Between 7 to 11 years of age, they can start performing and thinking concrete operations while between 11 to 15 years of age they can end up hypothetical- deductive reasoning. However, it can be claimed that explaining cognitive development only through Piaget's theory would be insufficient. It is not only children constructing knowledge, but environment and culture affect and guide it too as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory underlines. In addition, cognitive structures are thought to be developed through adapting better strategies by processing information children are exposed to. Core knowledge theorists claim that it is an innate capability which permits children to acquire different domains of knowledge such as "language, knowledge of objects and understanding of people" (Kail, 2011, p.192), which makes cognitive development to be a biological endeavor.

In terms of emotional development of children (social, emotional and moral development), in infancy, children show primary emotions such as joy, anger and fear. Later on, in early childhood, they experience more self-conscious emotions such as guilt, pride, shame. They can reason the causes of some events to the emotions at these ages. During early, middle and late childhood, their ability to control and manage their emotions steadily increases. It must be noted down that peer and sibling relationships and success at school are significant; however, parents have huge impact on social development of their children. Having a secure attachment relationship with mother during infancy is a predictor of a more successful interaction with peers. Having parents who set limits to some extent and discuss problems with children seem to be helping their children most in improving their self-control abilities along with their self-esteem.

Lastly, how children acquire language is an issue that is still being debated. Neuroscientists believe that biology accounts for it and language functions are lateralized in brain after a child reaches to the first year of age. Learning theorists believe that children learn language through environmental exposition. Linguists support Chomsky's views which

indicate that children are born with the ability to learn a language. Particular language structures are activated right after a child is born and exposed to a certain language. Studies are being done on this issue and approaches are being revised or added to the field. There is evidence advocating or disadvocating each view.

In summary, how children develop in each domain is not explained by clear-cut explanations in research yet. Findings are not yet complete and studies are still ongoing to explore more on the topics. However, there are some generally accepted milestones to be expected from children who are around school-age to reach as this work is concerned. Also, these milestones are provided as a guideline of what basic manners can be expected from children before or after they start school. Although it always needs to be taken into account that children develop at different rate and speed, having a complete understanding of these milestones can be helpful in a sense that close investigation or intervention programs can be needed for the ones who are quite late in reaching these. That is why it must be of high importance for teachers, parents, administrators and others.

These milestones are presented below briefly as discussed by American Academy of Pediatrics, Hauser- Lindstrom and Steinfeld (1998), Kliegman, Behrman, Jenson & Stanton (2011), Grapevine- Colleyville Independent School District (2002), Robinson (2008), Queensland Government (2003).

2.2.2.1. Development Milestones of 4-5 Year Olds

Children by 5 years are quite good at gross motor skills such as climbing, jumping, running well, and walking down steps and so on. They find inactivity very difficult and always search for something to play or active environments. Their fine motor abilities are improving and they can draw, paint, use crayons or cut paper with scissors. They can write some numbers but in a messy way scattered on the paper. They can eat food with spoon and fork. Their cognitive development improves fast. By 5 years of age, they can understand simple cause-and-effect relationships and memorize things. However, their grasp of abstract thinking is not developed fully yet; they can confuse fact and fantasy. By 5, children show their emotions easily. Their understanding of others' thoughts and beliefs increases. They can begin to listen and do another activity at the same time. Their language development allows them to tell long stories and use complex sentences. As for social development, they tend to be involved in peer relationships and can be bossy and aggressive. They enjoy playing with others in groups. They gradually become more independent and free; however they still need adult help and supervision.

2.2.2.2. Development Milestones of 5 Year Olds

Children at 5 year- olds have more controlled gross motor skills. They are highly energetic and want to jump, run and hop. They can dress and undress with minor help and support. Their fine motor abilities are improving quite fast. At this age, children can draw basic geometrical shapes and draw more detailed human or object figures while they may not still copy letters or numbers in a neat manner. Their cognitive development improves fast. At 5, children can understand more abstract concepts such as time, identification of coins and banknotes. They are able to tell the difference between *left* and *right*. They are better at telling what is fact or fantasy. Plus, they can recognize categories and count up to 10 to 20. As for socio- emotional development, children at 5 can play with their peers and behave more cooperatively. They are able to share and take turns. They can usually follow instructions and are better at showing their emotions. Besides, they make few grammatical mistakes and can express themselves better holding long conversations.

2.2.2.3. Development Milestones of 6 Year Olds

Children at 6 years of age have a good sense of balance and increased body coordination. Their fine motor abilities, especially wrist bones, are usually fully developed by this age, which allows better control over handwriting. Till age 7, children reach to a mature grasp of pencils, crayons etc. and they get more skillful using these. In addition, their ability at tying shoelaces improves remarkably. A 6 year-old child's attention span is longer than their 5 year- old counterparts. They can focus on activities longer and are able to take more responsibility for them. They are better at telling opposites and similarities. Their vocabularies increase steadily and once they learn to read, they start learning words rapidly. They can also express more complex ideas and thoughts of themselves. In terms of their social behaviors, they become more self- conscious and more competitive to perform better or do better than their peers. Still attachment to family, peers and teachers is important for them, and they begin to understand what is good or bad from others' points of views; accordingly, they begin to construct a moral sense.

2.3. First Grade Education

Formal schooling begins with getting enrolled in first grade where children are basically expected to learn literacy and numeracy, basics of math and life sciences (The Academy for Educational Development [AED], 2009). First grade education is an important step in human beings' lives. That is why there are so many questions concerning effective design and delivery of first grade such as what age is it appropriate for children to start

school? Then how do children adapt their new environment and how should be this transition organized for them? Or what difficulties do children face during literacy instruction and how can it be facilitated and got better? What behavioral problems do first grade students face and what do teachers do to deal with these? These questions are a selected representative of the questions the literature mainly deals with and also explored in the interest of this thesis work.

In this part, at first, the questions related to school entry age issues are investigated. Whether early school starting age has an effect on academic achievement is questioned. Whether questions regarding increasing or decreasing school age must be an issue for schools and governments are strived to be examined. Studies dealing with short- term or long- term problems related to early school starting are presented. Secondly, transition to first grade issues in the literature is dealt with from three aspects: importance of readiness, components of successful transition and the outcomes of particular programs implemented in some countries or schools are presented. Thirdly, the literature on mixed- age class instruction is reviewed. Only researches examining the long- term and short- term effects of mixed- age classes following a sequential curriculum and uniform teaching are included as this thesis work is concerned with. Fourthly, the importance of play and physical activities are explained since the literature on first grade education mainly deals with its importance in child development and early schooling. Lastly, problem behaviors of children aged around 5- 6 are presented along with the summary of the literature review where there is made a special focus to the overall challenges of first grade education.

2.3.1. School Entry Age

School entry age is the age students are expected to start primary education. This age is determined by policies of countries. According to the data provided by the World Bank (2012), out of 202 countries in the world, in 24 countries school start at age 5. In 135 countries it is at age 6 while in 43 countries it is at age 7. It is clear that most countries expect children to start school at 6. There are different motives behind these choices which can be related to historical practices, governmental tendencies or research findings. Whatever the reason behind, ideal age at which children should start school is the subject of ongoing debates for educators, academics, administrators, parents and policymakers. Many correlational studies between different factors and early school entry age are being studied. It seems that studies will grow and explain further what age is the most appropriate for initial formal schooling and school readiness.

2.3.1.1. Early School Entry Age and Student Performance

There is an ample the literature dealing with the effects of early school entry on students. These studies use different strategies to assess the effects on academic, socio-emotional and motivational outcomes, and even lifetime health and earnings. These outcomes are examined in short terms or long terms. Some studies deal with just young children's outcomes starting school early regardless of the birth date cutoff determined by countries (or states). On the other hand, most of the studies deal with birth date cutoff and compares children in the same grade with different birthdates. According to Stipek (2002) and his comprehensive work on this issue, he concludes that studies mainly use three methods to assess age at school entry. At first, they compare outcomes of redshirted children (who delay entry by one year) with young children who start school as soon as they are eligible. Second method is to compare children with different birth dates in the same grade. Thirdly, studies compare children at the same age but in different grades, and children who are in the same grade but a year apart in age. Table 2.1 below summarizes some of the studies conducted recently.

Table 2.1 below clearly shows us on the one hand age has an effect on children's academic and social achievement. It is seen that older children are reported to outperform their younger peers but this gap disappears by age. On the other hand, early school starting age is reported to have weak or no significant effect at all. In concordance with the findings of these works, Sputnik's work (2002) summarizes and presents 26 studies done between 1980 and 2000 and reveals that most studies generally report older children being academically better than their younger peers in the beginning grades of the school; however, this difference becomes weaker or disappears by upper grades. Furthermore he states "... children who entered school relatively young did not appear to be disadvantaged academically in the long run" (p.9). Consequently, the study he has conducted also does not support increasing the average age for school entry in favor of increasing student performance. It must be considered though that studies Sputnik reviewed only include the ones concerning at most one year age gap between students at same grade. Weininger's study (1974) supports Sputnik from a different angle. His study is a little different from others since he studied the effect of early school starting in mixed age classes. He had five groups of students who stay at home and start school early in same- age classroom and mixed- age classroom. The results comply with Sputnik's that he has found no significant difference in reading readiness.

Table 2.1

Studies Assessing the Effect of School Entry Age

Study	Sample	Focus of the Study	Result
Faust, Kratzmann & Wehner (2012)	children with nine and three months age range before and after school entry in Germany	the effects of age on successful school entry	no sig. difference
Huang, Invernizzi (2012)	children within cohort in USA	early literacy achievement in relation to age	older students outperform younger classmates, but the variation diminished toward the end of the 2 nd grade
Mülenweg, Blomeyer & Laucht (2011)	children within cohort in Germany	the effects of age on the development of non-cognitive skills of children	sig. difference
Dobkin, Ferreira (2010)	children within cohort in USA	long- term effects of age on educational attainment and academic performance	older students perform better than younger, but education attainment of younger students is higher
Cunningham, Carroll (2011)	4-6 years children (first two years of schooling in UK)	the effects of age on phoneme awareness and early literacy	older children outperform their younger classmates
Martin (2009)	children within cohort (12 month age range) and with grade retention and redshirts in Australia	the long- term effects of entry- age on motivation, engagement and performance	no sig. difference in some dimensions of child temperament
Kawaguchi (2009)	children with different birth month (within cohort) in Japan	eventual educational attainment, labor market outcomes and test scores in relation to actual age	older children of both sexes perform better than their younger counterparts
Puhani, Weber (2007)	children who enter at 7 instead of 6 in Germany (redshirts)	the effects of age on educational outcomes	sig. difference by .40 <i>SD</i> in test scores

Table 2.1 (cont'd)

Study	Sample	Focus of the Study	Result
Lawlor, Clark, Ronalds & Leon (2006)	children with different birth month (within cohort) in USA	variation in childhood intelligence and school performance by season of birth	weak variation
Lincove, Painter (2006)	children with one year lag between 5 and 6 years in USA	the long- term effects of school starting age on educational and social outcomes	age in the long run has limited effect on academic and social achievements of children
Datar (2005)	delayed and not delayed children in USA	the effects of delay in school entry on academic achievement	delayed children perform better in the first two years of schooling
Stipek & Pyle (2001)	predominantly African-American and Latino children in USA	the effects of age on academic achievement, social skills, academic engagement, relationship with teachers, and self-ratings of academic skills.	modest advantage for older children which disappeared in their third grade

Findings from two longitudinal and comprehensive studies favor late school starting age. The Terman Life Cycle Study led by Terman (1992) by collecting data from 1528 respondents over 62 years and The Longevity Project conducted by Freidman and Martin (2012) by collecting data from 1500 Americans from their childhood to death have implications for younger school starters to experience often problems during their lifetime.

Kern and Friedman (2008) lend a different perspective in the effect of early school entry with their follow- up data retrieved from the Terman Life Cycle Study. Their research deals with the effect of school entry (average time lag is 5.97) on academic performance, mental adjustment, school progression and age match, overall educational attainment and midlife health by controlling childhood intelligence, childhood personality, SES, pre-school home instruction and age of pubertal development. They conclude that readiness for

schooling is significant for both academic achievement and psychosocial adjustment regardless of a particular age.

As for the research on the potential short- term or long- term studies, it seems that research on this topic is inconclusive although many studies at least support that in the beginning years of schooling older students are academically better than their younger counterparts are.

As a final remark, Dockett and Perry (2007) emphasize that when discussions that just older students outperform their younger peers in the beginning does not give any idea about child learning which is also determined by socio- emotional development of children as much as cognitive development. Furthermore, citing Tymms, they claim that there are many forms of children success, and younger children can demonstrate the success of their peers with their ability of learning rapidly. All in all, they suggest that discussions about what age is best for children to start school are doomed to failure and citing Graue “there is not a magical date by which all children will be ensured success” (p. 27). It still seems that school readiness and maturity issues should be well-considered before making any distinct conclusion about appropriate age for school entry.

2.3.2. Transition

When a child moves into the first grade, no matter from kindergarten or home environment or at what age s/he does, a critical period for his/her development and school achievement begins. In first grade, children are involved in a more academic environment with more seat work and teacher- oriented learning (Bossaert, Doumen, Buyse, & Verschueren, 2011) and then it is full time formal schooling marking a shift towards “more responsibility and autonomy for children” (La Paro, Pianta & Cox, 2000, p. 66). Moreover, due to this important change in their lives, they encounter new requirements and expectations such as appropriate behavior and modes of communication, hard academic work, and strategies to deal with daily needs (Rous, Hallam, McCormick, & Cox, 2010). Ineffective management of these may result in intense separation anxiety or school phobia (Carida, 2011) which may have a long- lasting impact on the lives of children during their time at school (Petrescu, 2011; Seven, 2010).

Smooth successful transition from a safe familiar environment to a new role is highly important, and studies show that there is a link between school transition and future academic success and even formation of personality (Chan, 2012; Entwisle & Alexander, 1998). It is important to facilitate this process for children to strive to create more or less an

equal beginning for all children. In this sense, the literature highly emphasizes school readiness as quite important in order to move from home environment to formal schooling. However there are certain challenges experienced by teachers and students, and these are discussed below.

2.3.2.1. Challenges Faced by Children and Teachers in Transition

Transition brings about new feelings, new situations and new people; it is a phenomenon quite important to study the beginning of formal school from the perspectives of teachers and children. According to a comprehensive study conducted by Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood [CEIEC] (2008), how children and educators experience transition differs. According to children, they (1) find it hard to follow school rules and learn in class (2) their learning is related to positive relationships with teachers and peers, and when this is absent, their transition to school becomes harder, (3) they often prefer free play to formal schooling which also makes transition harder for them, (4) they feel anxious about being lonely at school and have no friends. According to teachers, (1) transition and better adaptation to school settings require specific skills acquired before, (2) lack of parent participation impedes transition and, (3) children who do not attend kindergarten have more difficulties of transition, (4) children coming from disadvantaged environments make harder transitions. Other challenges expressed by children are (1) feeling scared and fear about older children and feeling unsure of how school is going to be (Dockett & Perry, 1999), (2) the lack of play- time and large numbers of rules are concerning children (Corsaro & Molinari, 2000), (3) fear of making mistakes and unknown (Pramling & Willams-Graneld, 1993). Learning environment and lack of fun at school are other challenges expressed by children (Loizou, 2011). As for the findings of Şahin, Sak and Tuncer (2013), obeying rules and adaptation to more strict academic work have been found to be challenging in transition to first grade for children as expressed by teachers. Chan (2009) also propose that in transition, both preschool and primary teachers have difficulties and feel frustrated when there is little or no communication with one another.

In summary, what challenges teachers and children experience in transition is presented briefly in the literature and these challenges are taken in terms of socio- emotional challenges. Most research focuses on what matters in school transition and readiness which cannot be undervalued or disregarded.

2.3.2.2. School Readiness

A common point clearly underlined in most studies is that readiness is whether a child has reached the point where he is expected to start learning (Dockett & Perry, 2009) and it is proposed that children’s readiness for school is closely related to smooth transition to first grade (Şahin, Sak & Tuncer, 2013), adjustment to school (Pears et al, 2013), academic achievement (High, 2008), and child’s academic achievement in beginning years at school can affect their long- term success. Despite its high importance in children’s lives, definitions of readiness are somewhat vague. The concept of readiness is undertaken differently by different research bodies. It is defined in the agendas of some countries/schools as children’s being chronologically eligible for school. Sometimes, it is described as adequate cognitive and socio- emotional development of children while some researchers define it as specific required skills and knowledge children should possess before they start school. According to Arnold, Barlett, Gowani and Merali (2007) and UNICEF, readiness is closely related to transition and vice versa:

For transition to be smooth children need to be ready for school. Equally important and only more recently acknowledged is the fact that schools need to be ready for children. Parental “readiness” to be involved and supportive both before and after children move into school is also recognized as key amongst the supports needed for successful transition. (UNICEF, 2011, p. 6)

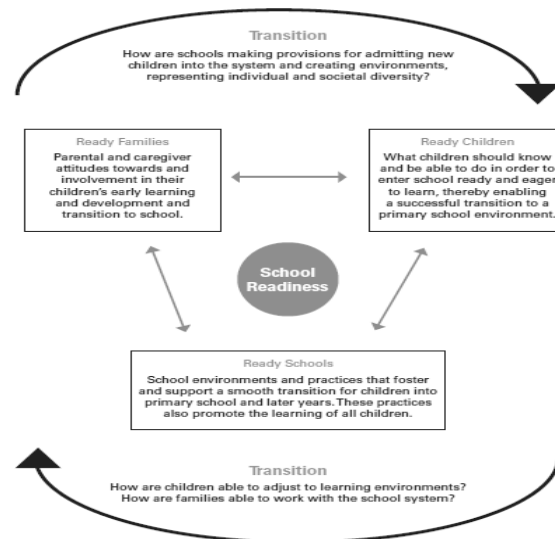


Figure 2.1. Relationship between Transition and Readiness (UNICEF, 2011)

Much of the recent the literature put emphasis on school readiness from a multifaceted perspective as shown in Figure 2.1: (1) children's readiness for school, which focus on physical, socio- emotional, language and cognitive development of children and their approaches to learning, (2) school's readiness for children, which emphasize the role of school in supporting teaching and learning programs, providing programs facilitating transition and providing a collaborative and resourceful environment, (3) family's readiness which is related to parental involvement in student development & learning, and home/ community environment where children's pre- school skills flourish, and nutrition/ health care is provided (Dockett & Perry, 2009; NGO, 2005; Nonoyama-Tarumi & Bredenberg, 2009). These three important aspects of readiness provide a comprehensive definition and indicators of school readiness, and also the ways of how to facilitate it, and studies are being conducted around these points and discuss the role of each in successful school transition.

For instance, Kagan et al. (1995) identify that readiness depends upon five developmental dimensions: (1) physical wellbeing and motor development, (2) social and emotional development, (3) children's approaches to learning, (4) language development, (5) cognition and general knowledge. According to the studies by Bossaert et al. (2011), Çelenk (2008), Gormley Jr., Philips & Gayer (2008), it has been found that kindergarten has impact on school readiness in terms of being ready to learn how to read and write. Study by Entwisle and Alexander (1998) indicates that more kindergarten years, the presence of grandmother at home and moving to first grade from kindergarten at the same setting have positive impacts on readiness and transition. Besides, according to Ahtola et al. (2011), the more collaboration takes place between pre- school teachers and first grade teachers of children and the more varied the supportive activities are implemented accordingly the easier transition occurs for children to get ready for school environment. Erkan (2011) states that mother's education, children having attended kindergarten and socio-economic status have been found to have significant effects on children's readiness. Arnold et al. (2007) put forward that poverty, exclusion and disempowerment, brain development, home environment, care and nurture, language have impacts on readiness in early childhood.

From perspectives of educators and parents, age, adaptability, developed social skills and persistence with tasks (McBryde, Ziviani & Cuskelly, 2004); all developmental domains, family and pre-school experience (Şahin, Sak & Tuncer, 2013); socio- emotionally developed children, families supporting their children's schooling (Noel, 2010) are reported to be the most important factors for readiness and, hence school transition.

As a final remark, to ensure that children are ready for school or not is a multifaceted issue. Readiness assessments are prepared to check whether a child has these necessary skills, and a focus is attributed to remediate deficiencies through intervention programs to prepare children for school, which is expected to facilitate transition. There are mainly schools, districts or organizations initiated readiness assessment tests. As Vernon-Feagans and Blair (2006) believe, "... any attempt to address such an all-encompassing topic as school readiness is selective in what it considers to be most relevant to the topic and what it considers as most pressing in terms of future research questions" (p. 4). Therefore, it is proposed that assessment tests would only cover some topics to some extent; that is why it needs to be a particular endeavor for interested schools and organizations. Besides, it should be noted down that there are as many critics of the readiness assessments as there are its supporters. Critics argue that its construct as assessing the quality of individual children is not right (Ahtola et al., 2011) and as Meisels (1999) articulates, readiness is observed in children over time. Accordingly Dockett and Perry (2007), assessing children's readiness based on a standardized test is problematic as children show their abilities and skills in many ways and forms.

All in all, transition or readiness programs or interventions taking into account above- noted issues fostering readiness are more considered to be important in facilitating school readiness and transition, which is explained in next section.

2.3.2.3. Transition Programs and Its Outcomes

The programs are planned and delivered on the basis of the facilitation of transition process into primary education and their readiness for school. These programs can be realized before kindergarten or in kindergarten or sometimes just at the beginning of first-grade or whole year in first grade. One of these programs is Head Start Program in USA. This program provides health, educational, nutritional and social services to the 3- 5 years-old children of low- income families to foster their development and help them improve to get ready for school. According to the results of this high- budgeted program, it has been found that it has few impacts or not any impact at all on children readiness (Mulholland, Heffernon & Shaw, 1998; National Institute for Early Education Research [NIEER], 2005).

Another high- budgeted program is Maryland State Department of Education (2009) which leads to quite positive outcomes through applying a number of strategies to improve children readiness for school such as (1) increasing the quality of teaching personnel, (2) increasing the quality of early child care and intervention programs, and the quality of

curriculum, (3) increasing the awareness and involvement of families in the education of children. At the end of the program, mathematical reading and language and literacy abilities increased by around 30%. Another high- budgeted program- Innovative Educational Programs- has been started in Europe to implement readiness programs before school starts and it has been found that it has a positive effect on students' academic achievement (Shulting, Malone, & Dodge, 2005). Another comprehensive readiness project, Chicago School Readiness Project provided training (teaching and classroom management skills) and stress reduction workshops to teachers, and consultation to children. It has been found that this program has effect on children's literacy and math skills. In Turkey, starting from 2006-2007 academic year, the Ministry of Education in Turkey has started a one- week transition program before school starts. The effect of this program is analyzed by Bilgili & Yurtal (2009) and it has been found that the program forges the bond among students, parents, teachers and school.

It is reported by La Paro, Pianta and Cox (2000) that several studies point positive outcomes in the use of transition programs. However, researchers claim that they are not investigated systematically on the basis of child outcomes (La Paro et al., 2000) and partially cover the transition practice effects (Ahtola et al., 2011). It is also underlined in the studies done worldwide that transition practices are implemented after school starts or limited in the variety of activities.

In summary, we can claim that transition programs yield to effective results. However, it cannot be concluded that regardless of content and the way of its deliverance, it will end up with positive outcomes. Ongoing evaluations of these programs are recommended in the literature as well.

2.3.3. Teaching to Mixed- Age Classes

It is widely agreed that each child has his own weaknesses and strengths and each child is different from another (Mitchell & Zoffness, 2001). Then teaching a classroom full of children who are different from each other and who have different interests, abilities already seems to be a challenging job for teachers. Thus, deciding whether the students to be gathered in a class should share more or less the same capabilities or various age groups or grades should be gathered together is still a question seeking to be answered by research bodies. The literature extensively deals with this issue under different concepts such as mixed- age, multi- age, mixed ability, multi- ability, heterogeneous classes, classroom composition age or same age, same ability, homogeneous classes, graded school.

Combination class of different ages and abilities is one way of grouping students within one classroom. On the other hand, tracking is grouping students of same age or similar capabilities to be educated in the same grade. The reason behind the choice of these two different class forms is generally linked to the policies of countries or schools. Combination can be implemented for "... pedagogical reasons as teaming, individualized instruction, and continuous progress curriculum" (Mason & Doepner III, 2010, p. 160) and motivating teachers to see each child as an individual (Wolfson, 1967). Or mainly in rural areas, this type of class arrangement can occur due to its cost effective side to overcome the challenge of inadequate student enrolments in a grade (Benveniste & McEwan, 2000; Thomas, 2012). Tracking is mainly preferred for most countries and schools because it seems practical to teach or plan. Which one is better is being researched in terms of students' academic achievement, teacher attitudes and behaviors. Only researches examining the long-term and short-term effects of mixed-age classes following a sequential curriculum and uniform teaching are included in this part to see the effects of teaching and learning in these classes on mixed-aged students in the same grade.

In the literature on teaching heterogeneous groups of students, there is a wide range of studies. Advocates of this group relate their findings to the benefits of interaction of younger students with older children as Vygotskian approach supports it for socio-emotional development of children. As for student achievement and development, the studies (Chase, 1995; Derscheid, 2009; Gherke, 2000; Linchevski & Kutscher, 1998; Mason & Burns, 2006) indicate that children in combination classes are more cooperative. According to Mason and Burns (2006) and Thomas (2012), academic achievement has not been found to be different between combination and single-aged classes while Linchevski and Kutscher (1998) supports that achievement is higher in multi-ability classes especially among lower-achievers. As for teacher behaviors, it is claimed that teachers benefit more from multi-age classes where they use more individualized, student-centered, cooperative instruction (Berrill & Sampson, 2006; Brooks, 2010; McDermott & Martin, 1998; O'Brien, 1992). Some of these studies also report that teachers have a positive attitude toward this sort of student grouping. It is also advocated that this sort of grouping students is fruitful for a child to be with his elders and older peers in an environment which is close to real world. They also advocate that this type of class will decrease transition and readiness tensions. However, it is also extensively highlighted in the literature that class size is an important factor for this type of classes to end up with the positive results as noted above (Blatchford, Goldstein, Martin, & Browne, 2002; Krueger, 1999).

Disadvocates of heterogeneous class forms discuss that it should not be practiced at schools. According to Linchevski and Kutscher (1998), ability- grouped class instruction is hard to cope with due to student diversity. Hallam, Ireson, Lister, Chaudhury, & Davies (1999) claim that teachers view heterogeneous classes as more challenging and more difficult to teach. Mason & Doepner III (2010) reveal that principals do not favor heterogeneous classes since they require different teaching methods and even skills in adapting tasks according to student needs. According to a study conducted by Winsler, Caverly, Willson- Quayle, Carlton, Howell, & Long (2002), social advantages (social interaction) of multiage group of students were found to be disappearing as the school year passes. Moreover, According to Joan (1996), teaching a multiage classroom needs different skills and knowledge than teaching traditionally graded classes, therefore pre- service teachers should be trained to have this expertise in teaching these classes. According to Benveniste & McEwan (2010, p.31), there are potential difficulties in adapting system of these class organization since special training or materials especially for teachers working in rural areas are needed for classes with heterogeneous ages. They think that teaching these students would be confusing for teachers and end up undesirable results. In addition, Wolfson (1967) emphasizes that teacher role changes in multi-ability classes. That is why individualized teaching should be adapted to reach favorable results; however, according to him, a teacher would find teaching multi-age classes frustrating. Also, he states: “they (teachers) should be able to compare and to experiment, to reflect and to make informed choices_ that are always open to change as a result of further explanation” (p. 362). Hence, the outcomes of these classes mostly depend upon teachers. Some schools are asserted to be assigning more experienced teachers to multi- ability classrooms, but still it is discussed that multi- ability groups in a classroom increase teacher and parent concerns, and higher achievers would benefit less due to these classes’ diminished curriculum content and teaching.

As for the situation in Turkey, combination classes are only arranged due to administration reasons. Students in these classes are taught grade- specific curriculum. Especially, in rural areas and with the act of compulsory 8- year primary education, due to inadequate student enrolments in the first two or three grades (sometimes even four or five but limited) these classes are formed. There is not any study regarding the outcomes of mixed- age classroom following the same curriculum.

In conclusion, it seems these researchers’ views and studies are not consistent as also pointed by Thomas (2012). Some researches assert that combination classes have an

important effect on learning and achievement; they mainly emphasize its advantage of prompting socio- emotional development of children while some other researchers claim that children do not benefit from the advantages of mixed- age classes when they are not provided with appropriate teaching and environment and it has a negative effect on learning. According to researchers (Anderson & Pavan, Nye et al., Pratt, Veenman as cited in Kinsey, 2001), this inconsistency may be due to weak controls of extraneous variables in researches and unclear definitions of multi-age grouping.

2.3.4. Importance of Play and Physical Activities

Play was protected by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 up to 18 years of age and this attempt is accepted officially by some countries. It is important for schools, parents and governments to provide an environment where children and young people are involved in play activities. It is highly important to present children plenty of opportunities of play as allowed by their abilities and interests.

Early childhood education is a period when children's cognitive, social and emotional development needs to be flourished. As an important part of this period, play should be encouraged for children's health, ability to learn and creativity along with their development in these domains and wellbeing (Early Childhood Forum [ECF], 2008; Ginsburg, 2007; Milteer, Ginsburg & Mulligan, 2011; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010).

At first, plays, especially outdoor plays, increase physical activities a child does and respectively this improves children's motor skills and physical health, and it prevents obesity in early age. Before school, children spend more time outside. When they start school, their time outside gets limited. Therefore, In class time, thematic plays can be integrated into curriculum. Plays with rules can be organized around learning goals as well and according to Piaget playing with rules is the highest level of social play with their peers (Frost et al., 2012; Milteer et al., 2011).

Play also contributes to brain development and cognition. It is proven in researches that socio- dramatic play increases intellectual ability of children, their ability to retain new information and to reason. Especially when children initiate their own play apart from adult-started or oriented one, their creativity abilities develop. It helps them to explore new environment and make sense of it through testing and reflecting on situations, events surrounding them (ECF, 2008). This part is especially important at the beginning of first grade when the child enter into a new environment with so many things to explore. Free play

can be encouraged during school time still to give children space to create their own plays and play with their peers. According to a study done by Tarman & Tarman (2011), teachers should involve in children's plays only to some extent without taking control of it; otherwise, it affects the effects of play negatively.

Moreover, play has its most advantage on language and social development. Play with language is highly supported in researches (Frost et al., 2012). Children can learn riddles, jokes and role-play stories, which improve language development. They can be encouraged to be mostly involved in group plays and guided by the teacher. This way, their bond with peers and teachers is strengthened, and respectively their school engagement, and self-esteem, self-recognition, pro-social behaviors improve (Frost et al., 2012).

In terms of socio-emotional development, children express their feelings through play as Freud underlines, play help release strong feelings and particularly in socio-dramatic ones where they take different roles; they role-play and imitate real life events and experiences. Meanwhile, they express their feelings and act upon them, in a sense, through resolution. At the ages of 6 or 7, children just start to make a clear distinction between appearance and reality. Hence, it is still important to provide an environment where first-graders are involved in socio-dramatic plays and practicing life events. Furthermore, through communication and cooperation with peers during play, moral development of children would improve.

Naturally, all these mentioned is what seems to be important. However, different variables in children's life also affect how much they are exposed to play and to what extent play helps their development according to researches. Available resources (Ginsburg, 2007) and the number of daughters/ sons (Kochanska, Kim, Boldt, & Nodling, 2013), how much time is allocated for physical activities after school (Sigmund, Sigmundová, & Ansari 2008), the sorts of play materials (Oncu & Unluer, 2010) all affect the intensity of benefit children get from playing.

Teachers are generally aware of the importance of play in Turkey (Pepe, Taçkiran, Pepe, & Çoksevim, 2011), but still how much time they devote to play in class time changes from one class to another. Besides, parents should be also explained that plays and toys are words of children as conversation is to adults. It is not time wasting or amusement; highly important tool for development of their children (Lee, 2013).

2.3.5. Teaching Academic Skills

Academic skills in first grade are constructed around literacy (reading and writing), fundamental skills of maths and sciences. In the literature, many studies mention that early success in these fundamental skills has a big impact on future academic and psychosocial achievement of students (Byrnes & Wasik, 2008; Kern & Freidman, 2008). Despite its huge importance, learning to read or write is not an easy job for a 5 or 6 year old; it is one of the biggest challenges for primary school students indeed. Achieving reading and writing are inextricably related to the fundamental components of them such as phonological awareness, vocabulary, prior knowledge, grammatical awareness, fluency etc. (AED, 2009). Apart from these, there are some manners such as pen grasp, paper/ notebook holding and sitting correctly at desk are said to be important in writing (Duran & Akyol, 2010). The difficulties children experience in each of these components are shaped by in- class experiences and out of it, and the period children spent before starting school. First, in terms of in- class experiences, most studies inquire that low- quality in teaching practices (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2010) and low- quality or rare teacher- student interaction (Cadima, Teresa, & Margaret, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Kragler & Martin, 2012; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2004), big class size (Costello, 1992; Mosteller, 1995; Ecalle, Magnan, & Gibert, 2006), and quality resource scarcity (Johnson & Boyd, 2013) negatively impact literacy achievement of first grade students and difficulties teachers experience in teaching. Secondly, in terms of out-of-school experiences, development of spoken language competence starts before school and depends upon many out-of-school factors. A comprehensive longitudinal study (Dunsmuir & Blatchford, 2004) reveals that mother's educational level, family size, home writing, child characteristics such as season of birth, vocabulary score, pre- reading skills all correlate with the writing proficiency of children when they reach the age of 7. It has been also found that poverty affects children's expressive language abilities and children from high- socioeconomic status families have five times larger vocabulary than low- socioeconomic status homes (Risley, Neuman as cited in Kragler & Martin, 2012). Moreover, according to Byrnes and Wasik (2008, p. 188), children who are familiar with aspects of literacy emergent such as "concepts of print, knowledge of letters, phonemic awareness" both before and after reading instruction are more successful in reaching the literacy goals of first grade. It is also stated by them that successful child readers are involved in more pre- reading or reading opportunities such as book reading, rhyming games and more exposure to print materials and they have the motivation to read more and larger vocabulary. Even most importantly, when a child is exposed to these experiences in kindergarten, that child gets much better at later

reading achievement as well (Al Otaiba et al., 2011; DeCicca, 2007; Morris, Bloodgood, & Perney, 2003). Furthermore students' world knowledge has been found to be effective in helping students achieve reading goals in first grade because it is believed to increase reading comprehension (Byrnes & Wasik, 2008).

As for the fundamental skills of math, addition and subtraction are mostly taught in first grade classroom along with some particular geometrical shapes and basics of measurement such as time or length. Math in first grade just a small step into the world of analytical and abstract thinking. It is also highly important since math achievement is important for students' self- concept as studies revealed (Mägi, Lerkkanen, Poikkeus, Rasku-Puttonen, & Kikas, 2010). As mentioned above for the concerns of literacy, students' experience with math learning is highly predicted by socioeconomic level of family, frequency of exposition to mathematical concepts, pre- existing mathematical skills (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009) and working memory (De Smedt et al., 2009). Plus, math performance is closely related to fundamental skills of literacy as well. It has been found that math achievement is closely correlated with working memory scores of children (Ramirez, Gunderson, Levine, & Beilock, 2010).

In Turkey, the subject areas of contemporary first grade education revolve around teaching how to read, write, basic numerical operations (addition, subtraction etc.) and basic of geometrical shapes and basic measurement topics (time, length etc.) in math, social sciences. The Ministry of Turkish National Education initiated changes in curriculum in 2005. Constructivist approaches have been adapted as the foundation of these subject areas since then. As important parts of these changes, basic reading and writing skills have started to be taught based on phonic- based sentence model, and cursive writing methods have started to be implemented in first grade. Studies (Arslantaş & Cinoğlu, 2010; Bay, 2010; Baydık & Kudret, 2012; Durukan & Alver, 2008; Kayıkçı, 2008; Şahin, Turan & Apak, 2006; Turan, 2010; Tok, Tok & Mazi; Turan & Akpınar, 2008; Uğurlu, 2009) researching teachers' beliefs and experiences about phonic- based sentence model report that teachers are content with the practice of phonic- based instruction, and it is expressed by teachers that phonic- based instruction shortened the period of starting reading. Most studies also emphasize that it increased the reading comprehension abilities of children. As for cursive writing, studies (Arslan, 2012; Arslan & Ilgın, 2010; Coşkun & Coşkun, 2012; Erdoğan, 2012; Şahin, 2012) report that it has not created problems to teachers. Furthermore, some of them have reported that cursive writing helps student achievement in their upper levels and it improves the fluency of students' writing. However, it is also proposed by Kırmızı and

Kasap (2013) that teachers prefer basic vertical letters to teach and Erdoğan (2012) states that students' hand writings do not show improvements in terms of its legibility due to cursive writing style.

In summary, how much successful children become in learning the fundamental skills at first grade has implications for their future success. Factors fostering higher-level reading skills should be priority along with handwriting and math skills.

2.3.6. Classroom Management: Problem Behaviors

The literature on unfavorable child behaviors relates their findings to children's uneasiness with their school environment and, in a sense, their unfit to the requirements of the classroom and school (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1993). Study conducted by McClelland, Morrison & Holmes (2000) highlights that most children starting in kindergarten find it difficult to sit still, follow teachers' instructions and focus on activities. Accordingly, children may show externalizing behaviors (e.g. aggression, disruption etc.), internalizing behaviors (e.g. depression, anxiety), make noise, distract classroom environment. Teachers have observed more externalizing behaviors than internalizing ones at first grade (Molins & Clopton, 2002). As causes and consequences of these problem behaviors, students are not involved or interested in activities and pay less attention to the tasks. It is clearly presented in most studies that early school behavior problems affect short-term and long-term students' academic achievement (Alexander, Entwisle & Dauber, 1993; McClelland et al., 2007; Pianta & Steinberg, 2006). Kellam et al. (2008) have found that children who are more aggressive and disruptive in first grade show more antisocial personality disorders in their young adolescents. De La Barra, Toledo, & Rodriguez (2005) have found that the behavior problems between the first and sixth grade are persistent and problems in first grade predict the outcomes in the 6th grade. Moreover, children with behavioral problems in early grades are more likely to experience illegal drug use, low mental health, school failure and dropout (Block, Block & Keyes, 1988; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Kellam et al., 2008; Shedler & Block, 1991) and higher likelihood of special class placement, poor academic achievement (Darney, Reinke, Herman, Stormont, & Ialongo, 2013) and low reading (Rabiner & Coie, 2000; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998) and math skills, and deficiencies in the acquisition of cognitive skills (Breslau et al., 2000).

Causes of behavioral problems rooted in both in-class factors and factors out of it and are well-reported in the literature. Most researchers put an emphasis on school readiness and adaptation problems as the reasons of negative behaviors children display at first grade

(Alexander, Entwisle & Dauber, 1993; Bulotsky-Shearer & Fantuzzo, 2010; Denham, 2006; Pagani, Fitzpatrick, Archambault, & Janosz, 2010; Rimm- Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000; Wehby, Symons & Shores, 1995). National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) (2002) discusses that quality of instructional and emotional support determines the relationship types of children, and with more instructional and emotional support, children are observed to show higher positive behaviors with their peers and teachers. Teacher- student interaction has been reportedly found to be an important factor in children behaviors. Children experiencing conflict with their teachers are prone to feel unworthy and low self- esteem. They can consequently react to this showing aggressive behavior problems and attacking to their peers (Doumen, Buyse, Colpin, & Verschueren, 2011).

As for out- of- school factors, children's pre-school and family factors seem to be affecting children behaviors. NICHD (2002)'s comprehensive study with first graders also indicate that home environment predicts performance of attention and memory tasks. Parent characteristics have been found to be the reasons. Coercive and ineffective parenting leads to more behavioral problems in children and deviant child behavior (Patterson, Chamberlain & Reid, 1982). Furthermore, Huaqing Qi and Kaiser (2003) have found that behavior problems are related to socio-economic background of children. Children from low socio-economic backgrounds tend to be having more problems. Gender has found to be significant and girls are reported to be more attentive than boys (Samuels & Turnure, 1974). Low achievement in reading scores has been found to be leading to externalizing and internalizing problem behaviors (Morgan, Farkas, Tufis, & Sperling, 2008). Moreover, attention problems and concentration problems are widely- experienced ones among first graders. Attention problems are highly correlated with reading difficulties (Rabiner & Coie, 2000; Schultz, 1993), and word recognition (Turnure & Samuels, 1972). Academic performance and attention are found to be interdependent at early grades (Herman, Lambert, Ialongo & Ostrander, 2007). Normandeau & Guay (1998) have found that teachers' ratings of aggressive, anxious- withdrawn, and pro-social behaviors affect cognitive self- control of children and children self- regulated learning which determine the first grade success.

All problems may seem to be experienced by children; however, it is both teachers and children trying to cope with these problematic situations. Teachers have reported that dealing with problem behaviors in class is the most challenging job for them. In addition, they have proposed that they are not equipped well to cope with these situations; it is all frustrating (Stoiber & Gettinger, 2011). To sum up, it seems that ensuring and nurturing a

classroom environment supporting children psychologically is important for successful school performance of first graders. It is also important for teachers to be supported well if they need skills and knowledge to create a peaceful classroom atmosphere they are wishful for.

2.4. Research on First Grade in New School System in Turkey

Implementation of the new school system has brought about an interest in academic environment in terms of the process it is undergoing. A study conducted by Öztürk and Uysal (2013) has found out that according to teachers there are differences between different age groups in terms of their visual and auditory perceptions in being taught the sounds and letters. 60- 66 month-old students are claimed to be having problems in differentiating between sounds and its corresponding letters. The reasons behind this phenomenon are explained by their relatively younger age and developmental abilities. Also the students who have not attended kindergarten are proposed to be having more difficulties with this age group. Teachers have reported to have used more visual and audio materials and heterogeneous teaching, individually caring for 60- 66 month-old students as the methods of dealing with the problems. Karadeniz (2012) has revealed that most teachers held negative feelings about children aged 66 months starting school at the beginning of this change. According to the study by Külekçi (2013), in terms of mixed- graded classes, this new school system has been reported to have positive effects due to the decline in the range of grades to be educated in a class and teachers have reported that decrease in school starting age and lack of infrastructure and more workload for teachers have negatively affected mixed graded classes.

Başar (2013) revealed that according to teachers 60- 66 month-old students had problems with their adaptation to school and personal care at the beginning of the school year while these problems vanished at the end. This age group was reported to overcome their problems through writing and reading.

In summary, there is limited number of studies in relation to how new school system is being experienced by local agents and how they dealt with the challenges of the changes. The studies presented till now claim that teachers have had problems teaching to first grade in the context of the new school system and more studies are recommended to be done in order to reach a complete picture of the first grade education in the new school system.

2.5. Summary of the Literature Review

Taking all the points above- mentioned, it can be argued that nationwide education policies should be formulated and planned considering the challenging points of implementation on the part of its implementers and how these implementers handle the policies and their challenges. It seems that policy implementation is not just practicing the policy texts or documents as they are. Implementers often experience challenges interpreting the texts and later on adopting the change proposed in policy into their own environments. In their contexts, this adoption may require different knowledge, skills and resources and so on. Approaching the implementation as a whole system requirements and needs tend to be the point behind successful policy formulation, planning and practices.

Policies regarding first grade education should be well considered around the concepts of child development. Since child development takes place in different race and pace for each child, governmental issues such as decreasing the age of school entry or school readiness practices need to be taken into account seriously. Mixed- age class instruction and importantly teaching academic skills and managing these classes are other points to be underlined in the changes requiring this form of instruction.

The literature and studies argue that in implementing policies, there are four important challenges to be considered: (1) changes are not just putting plans into text in a predictable direction since social environments are already in constant change, (2) implementers are interpreting the texts and then they implement the changes therefore implementer discretion and perceptions are key factors in the future of policies, (3) external and internal factors in implementing changes are essential to work in the way policies are implemented, (4) whether the formulated policy really tackle the problem it is aimed at determine the resulted outcomes.

In terms of educational changes, teachers' cognitive, behavior and emotional attitudes towards changes affect the implementation. After a policy is started to be implemented, they can feel role conflicts and emotionally willing or unwilling to embrace the change.

Points regarding first grade education needs to be approached from the aspect of child development. It is highly emphasized in the literature that each child is unique in his/her development experience. It is also important to note down that children at different ages are expected to show different developmental characteristics named as milestones, and when a child lack of any of these age or era- specific milestones in a long time, there may be required intervention or remedial work.

In first grade education, the first question coming to mind is what age is appropriate for a child to start school. There are lots of studies researching the effect of early and late entry to school on students, and it seems that studies do not reach a consistent finding. It is only possible to claim, based on available studies, that upper aged students are more advantageous in the beginning years of school than their younger counterparts, but this advantage diminishes in years. In terms of mixed age class formation, again it is not possible to conclude whether it is better than same- age classes or not. However, one point highly emphasized in studies is the importance of small class sizes and teacher expertise in dealing with such forms of classes in reaching to positive sides of mixed- age class arrangement.

In terms of first grade education it seems that the most important issue tends to be related to the children's readiness for formal schooling. Unless a child is ready for school, there occur problems related to adaptation, academic achievement of children and external and internal behavior problems in class. Additionally, in- and out- of – school factors along with preschool experience all have effects on academic achievement and behaviors of children during beginning years of schooling. Generally, these factors can be summarized as (1) emotional and instructional support in family, (2) socio-economic level of family, (3) family size, (4) children's exposition to different learning environments, (5) the quality and intensity of the time children spent playing with peers or adults, (6) quality of children's interaction with peers and teachers at school, (7) kindergarten experience, (8) developmentally readiness of children for learning, (9) quality of teaching practice, (10) teachers knowledge and skills, (11) school environment and so on.

In terms of research on first grade education in the new school system in Turkey, it can be concluded that teachers have reported to have more problems teaching lower- aged students and students not having attended the kindergarten are reported to have problems at their first grade education. Still, it needs to be underlined that more studies are needed to reach a conclusive picture in relation to how the new school system has been experienced by local agents and how they have dealt with the challenges of the changes.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

In this chapter, research design, sample, data collection instrument, data collection procedure, data analysis procedures, validity, reliability and ethical issues were explained in detail.

3.1. Research Design

This study was carried out through a survey design in which quantitative data were collected to answer research questions presented in detail in data analysis section of this chapter. To answer these questions, a cross sectional survey was utilized to collect quantitative data from the first grade school teachers. Since this study inquiries into the perceptions and experiences of teachers with the new school system and possible relationships existing among/between variables, it well suits to descriptive studies which are concerned with “conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, or trends that are developing” (Best & Kahn, 2006, p.118).

A survey design “provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2002, p.17). Among all research designs, it seems that survey design is one of the most preferred one by the researchers, probably because it is “an efficient way of collecting large amounts of data and is flexible in the sense that a large number of topics can be studied” (Muijs, 2004) and it takes place in real contexts, which makes the results generalizable. Through survey design, it is easier to conduct a research when compared to others, though this does not necessarily mean that it is easy to do it; it also requires deep- down and careful investigation, and careful design and usage of instruments, reasonable reporting of results indeed (Best & Kahn, 2006).

As with other designs, survey design has some disadvantages beside its positive points. First of all, surveys do not explain clear- cut causality or do not answer questions which require researcher to control specific variables. Another point is that respondents’ answers are trusted to some extent since the researcher never makes sure whether the respondents have answered reliably by not exaggerating or understating their opinions. These two points are valid for this work as well.

In terms of the sample of this survey design, primary school teachers having taught first grade in the 2012-2013 academic year in Ankara and Antalya were chosen, and in gathering the data questionnaires were administered to the sample teachers. In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used.

3.2. Population and Sample

The target population of this study includes all teachers teaching first grade in 2012-2013 academic year in Turkey. The accessible population for this study consisted of all teachers teaching first grade in 2012-2013 academic year in Ankara and Antalya provinces.

The sampling procedure involved a multistage sampling to reach a representative sample of teachers in Ankara and Antalya for the quantitative part of the study. First of all, two cities, Antalya and Ankara, among all cities in Turkey were chosen due to their convenience. Then, from each, four regions were chosen according to their socio-economic levels available in the data retrieved from TUIK² to the population as representative as possible. Those regions are depicted in Figure 3.1 below.

Using nonproportional stratified sampling, from those regions, private and public schools situated in different socio-economic areas were chosen.

The sampling procedure is shown in Figure 3.1 below.

²Turkish Statistical Institute

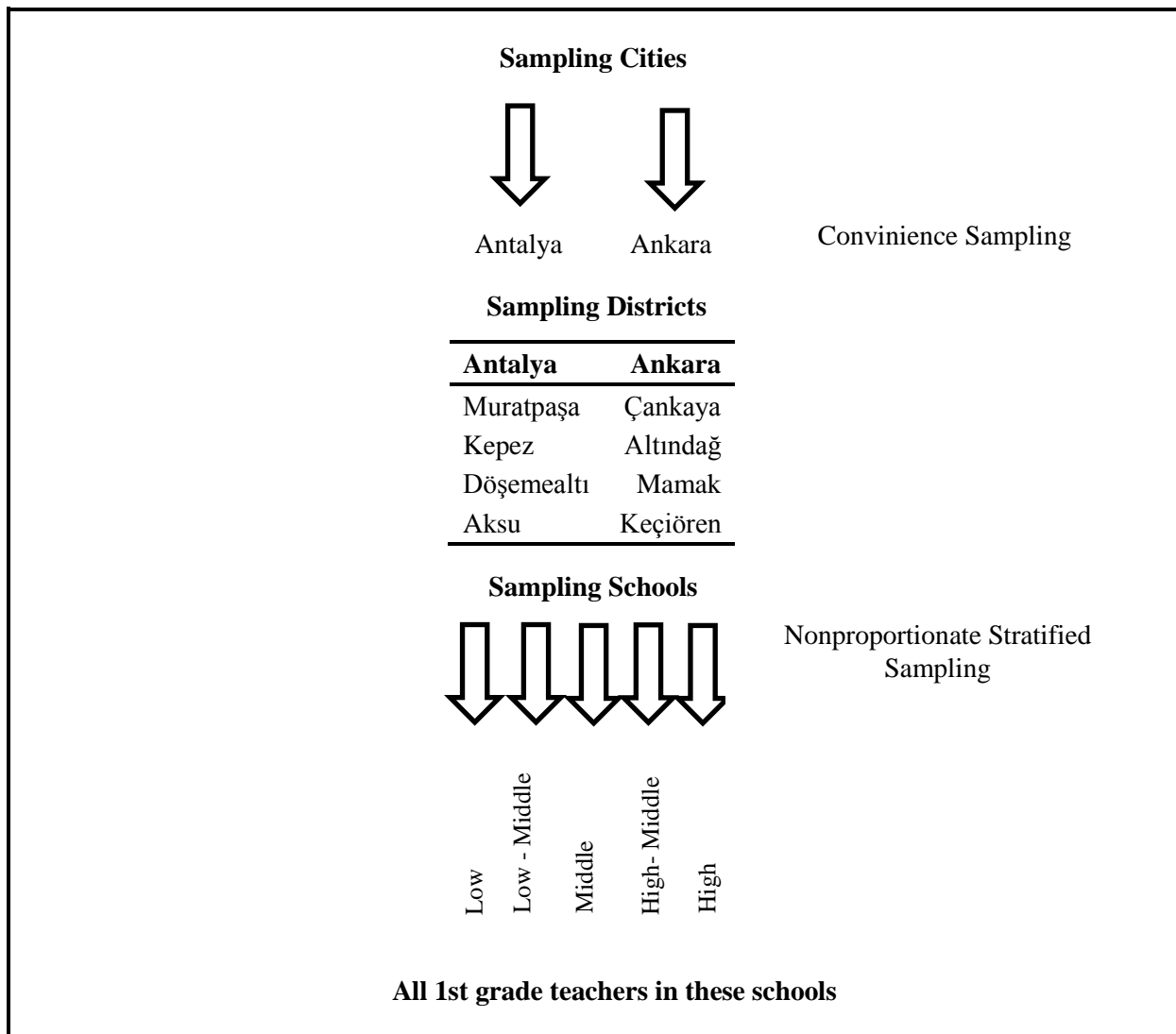


Figure 3.1 Multistage Sampling Procedure

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

A seven- section questionnaire dominantly consisting of close- ended questions (see Appendix A), was used in the study, which was constructed by the author of this work and self- administered. The questionnaire included seven sections to understand the challenges teachers had and the problems they encountered during the implementation of new system. In addition, the questionnaire asked teachers to report what kinds of solutions they found to deal with the problems they experienced. This part consisted of open-ended questions.

In the construction of the questionnaire, in terms of the content of the items, a number of methods were applied. First, first grade teaching and learning programs were

investigated in detail to see what topics and subjects were being studied in this level.

Secondly, a report issued in 2008 by the Ministry of National Education on assessment of primary school curriculum and textbooks (titled in Turkish “*İlköğretim programları ve ders kitaplarının değerlendirilmesi ve değerlendirme sonuçlarının ortaöğretim ile paylaşılması çalıştay çalışması raporu*”) was studied in detail to provide input into the questionnaire. This report makes an evaluation of all programs of all subjects in all levels of primary education in a very detailed way that it provided inspiration to most of the content of items constructed in the questionnaire.

In addition, articles (available on academic databases or search engines such as EBSCOhost, Web of Science, Google Scholar etc.) and books related to primary education the literature were intensely studied to gain ideas and concepts for the questionnaire. Later, accordingly, anecdotal talks and informal interviews were conducted with two first grade teachers. Along with these, the author spent almost a week in a school (not among sample schools) observing two first grade classes and students in these classes. First- grade curriculum was closely investigated along with the books and activities recommended in the first grade education program issued by the MONE. Accordingly, an item pool was constructed, and ongoing evaluation of each item was done. Later, items to be included in the questionnaire was categorized into specific sections (which are presented below) which were directly linked to the changes of the new system and each item was revised and reconstructed according to the opinions of the advisor.

Based on all these investigations, interviews and observations, the questionnaire items were established carefully taking the important points of questionnaire construction underlined by Alridge and Levine (2001), Bieber and Lyberg (2003), DeVellis (2003), Iarossi (2006), Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun (2012), Fowler (1995), Oppenheim (1992), Sarris and Gallhofer (2007).

Below each section in the questionnaire and reasons for inclusion were explained. These sections were named as subscales of the questionnaire in some parts of the study.

Adaptation and Preparation Phase: In 2012-2013 school year, for the first time, adaptation and preparation activities for the first grade students were inserted to the first grade program. Ministry of National Education asked teachers to allocate at least three months in the beginning of the school year just to do preschool activities such as drawing, painting, cutting and sticking papers, singing, playing games etc. before teaching literacy skills. The program was considered to be started due to decreasing school entry age from 72 to 60/66 months.

This section in the questionnaire aims to find out (1) what challenges and difficulties teachers experienced, (2) their ways of dealing with these when they were implementing the new program of preparation and adaptation activities.

Planning: This section in the questionnaire aims to find out (1) what challenges and difficulties teachers faced in teaching main subjects to different age groups and planning the new academic year after the system was changed, and (2) their ways of dealing with these.

Game and Physical Activities: In 2012-2013 school year, for the first time, a lesson named “game and physical activities” was included in the program. The aims and goals of the lesson are closely related to cardiovascular movements, coordination, and endurance and so on. The recommended activities involved in the program issued by the MONE are jumping, catching balls, dancing and so on. This section in the questionnaire aims to find out (1) what challenges and difficulties teachers faced with, (2) their ways of dealing with these while implementing this new lesson.

Basic Skills: This section aims to find out what challenges and difficulties teachers experienced with, and (2) their ways of dealing with these while teaching basic skills to the (a) 60-65 month-old, (b) 66-71 month-old, (3) 72 and over month-old students.

Academic Skills: This section aims to find out (1) what challenges and difficulties teachers experienced with, (2) their ways of dealing with these while teaching academic skills to the (a) 60-65 month-old, (b) 66-71 month-old, (3) 72 and over month-old students.

Classroom Management: This section aims to find out (1) what challenges and difficulties teachers experienced with, (2) their ways of dealing with these while managing classroom with the (a) 60-65 month-old, (b) 66-71 month-old, (3) 72 and over month-old students.

3.3.1. Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with five first grade teachers working in one of the sample schools and respectively necessary editions were made. These editions were mostly related to the planning section of the questionnaire. Other sections were seen to have a specific pattern, which gave the idea that teachers having participated in the pilot study had a common understanding of the items. In the time of validation, the items were checked through getting three first grade teachers’ ideas on each item. Moreover, questionnaire items

were read in different times (with lapses in-between) to see whether the meaning changes each time the author reads it.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

After the questionnaire was constructed, permission from the ethics committee of the university was received and then an official letter (see Appendix B) documenting the permission for the application of the questionnaire at schools was obtained from the MONE after an official document requesting permission was obtained from the university board and presented to the MONE. All in all, it took almost two months to complete the permission process.

First of all, in Ankara, 43 schools were visited and among these, 34 schools accepted to participate in the study. In these 43 schools, there were 259 teachers. Of these teachers, 204 are included in the study in 34 schools; and from those, 169 teachers returned the questionnaires with completed responses. Response rate was 83% for Ankara.

In Antalya, 30 schools were visited and among these, 28 schools accepted to participate in the study. In these 30 schools, there were 160 teachers. Of these teachers, 147 are included in the study in 28 schools; and from those, 132 teachers returned the questionnaires with completed responses. Response rate was 90% for Antalya.

In sum, 73 schools were visited and among these, 62 schools accepted to participate in the study. In these 73 schools, there were 419 teachers. Of these teachers, 351 are included in the study in 62 schools and 301 teachers returned the questionnaires with completed responses. Response rate was 86% in total. Response rates and participants from each district in cities are shown in Tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 below.

Table 3.1

Sample Population and Response Rate for Ankara

	Sum	Çankaya	Altındağ	Mamak	Keçiören	
Ankara	Schools Visited	43	29	3	2	9
	Schools Participated	34	23	3	1	7
	Sample Population	204+55	122+33	17	5+6	60+16
	Response Number	169 (83%)	92	16	5	56

Note. For each district, the number of teachers included in the study and who were working in the schools which did not accept to participate in the study is shown with a + (plus) symbol after the number depicting the teachers reached and given questionnaires.

Table 3.2

Sample Population and Response Rate for Antalya

	Sum	Muratpaşa	Kepez	Döşemealtı	Aksu	
Antalya	Schools Visited	30	16	10	3	1
	Schools Participated	28	15	10	2	1
	Sample Population	147+13	73 + 7	54	10+6	10
	Response Number	132 (90%)	65	49	8	10

Note. For each district, the number of teachers included in the study and working in the schools which did not accept to participate in the study is shown with a + (plus) symbol after the number depicting the teachers reached and given questionnaires.

Table 3.3

Sum of Sample Population and Response Rate

	Sum	
Sum	Schools Visited	73
	Schools Participated	62
	Sample Population	351+68
	Response Number	301 (86%)

Note. For each district, the number of teachers included in the study and working in the schools which did not accept to participate in the study is shown with a + (plus) symbol after the number depicting the teachers reached and given questionnaires.

Before starting data collection, ways of increasing response rate studies were researched. Some of these ways were reflected upon the instrument, and some were applied while collecting data, in other words, distributing and collecting questionnaires.

Data collection started in the 21th of May and ended in the 28th of June. This time was enough to gather enough data for this study. However, still, the researcher accelerated the process through planning a standard plan for each sample school and following the plan accordingly.

First, explanations on the purpose of the study, the importance of it, confidentiality concerns, by whom it was going to be conducted and how the results would be evaluated were written and copied for each sample school. A due date section was also determined for each sample district and written on the paper explanations. This paper was stuck onto an envelope and put inside the envelope were questionnaires along with the permission paper obtained from the MONE. Apart from its practical and fast aspects in gathering data, the reason behind this procedure was to give information to assistant headmasters who may have needed it while explaining the questionnaire to the teachers. Then, at each sample school, assistant headmasters responsible for the first grades were contacted and asked for their collaboration. Almost all of them kindly accepted to participate in the study and the envelope was left to the assistant headmasters and they were informed of the date the researcher would come back to gather the questionnaires. The assistant headmasters gave the questionnaires to the voluntary first grade teachers at their schools and after the teachers filled them in, they handed them to the assistant headmasters back. This way, data collection procedure was smoothly and easily dealt with as shown in Figure 3.2.

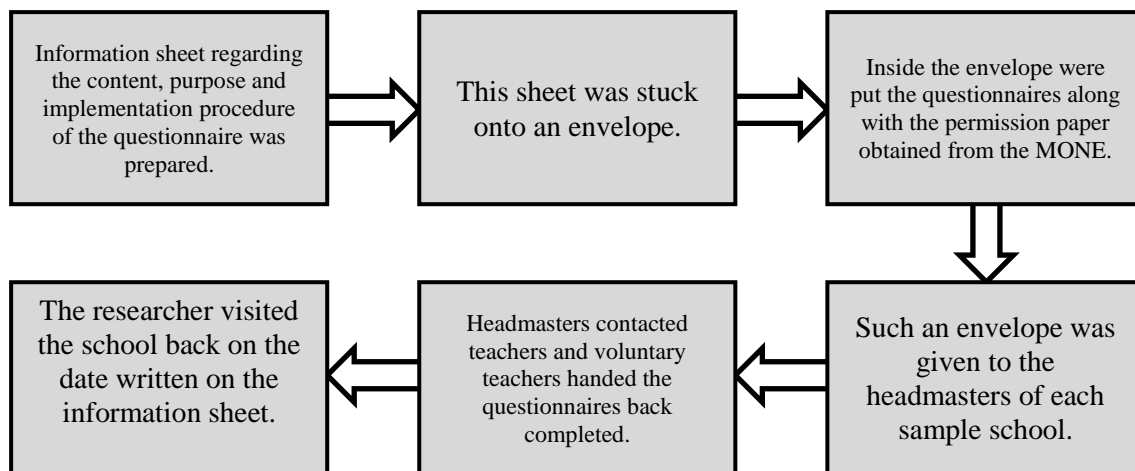


Figure 3.2 Data Collection Procedure for Face-to-face Contacted Schools

Due to difficulty in access to the schools in Aksu, the district national education directorate was contacted via phone. They accepted to collaborate with the researcher and the questionnaires were sent via mail and returned completed to the researcher within a week. Given these, data collection procedure can be summarized as shown in Table 3.4 below:

Table 3.4

Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Method	Ankara	Antalya
Face-to-face	Çankaya	Muratpaşa
	Keçiören	Kepez
	Mamak	Döşemealtı
	Altındağ	
Mail		Aksu

3.5. Data Analysis

Data were prepared for analysis through inserting each quantitative response and coded qualitative open-ended questions to SPSS 20. Each qualitative response was categorized under common headings.

At first, background characteristics of the participants and the number of respondents in each group were provided in terms of their frequencies. These background characteristics were school type teachers were working in, their teaching experiences in years (later transformed into the binned categories in order to facilitate the analysis), class sizes (later transformed into the binned categories in order to facilitate the analysis), the number of 60-65, 66-71 and 72 and over month-old students in their classes (later transformed into the binned categories in order to facilitate the analysis).

In analyzing quantitative data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used and analyzed in SPSS 20.

Since the main concern of this study was to examine the distribution of teachers over potential difficulties, descriptive statistics were used. Teachers' frequencies over their responses to the items of each subscale and means and standard deviations for each item were presented in the quantitative part of the study.

In addition, because the main concern is to examine the distribution and some relations, inferential statistics such as one- way ANOVA and independent samples t- tests were used to examine whether there were statistically significant differences among/between different groups of teachers. However, *these tests are used only for each variable at each time of measurement and for descriptive reasons*. Additionally, to investigate group differences in more detail and to eliminate Type I error potential of the study, post- hoc tests were conducted.

As for the qualitative part of the study, to analyze the responses to open-ended questions, common themes in relation to teachers' ways of handling the difficulties they faced were outlined and explained one by one. Moreover, these themes were coded into SPSS and investigated for their frequencies.

Data analysis method for each research question was provided in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5

Data Analysis Methods according to each Research Question

Research Questions	Methods
1. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience during the adaptation and preparation activities in the new school system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?	Descriptive Statistics One- way ANOVA Independent samples t- tests
2. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in planning the academic year in the new school system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?	Descriptive Statistics One- way ANOVA Independent samples t- tests
3. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in implementing game and physical activities in the new system system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?	Descriptive Statistics One- way ANOVA Independent samples t- tests
4. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in teaching basic skills to (a) 60-65 month-old students, (b) 66-71 month-old students, (c) 72 and over- month-old students in the new system system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?	Descriptive Statistics One- way ANOVA Independent samples t- tests
5. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in teaching academic skills to (a) 60-65 month-old students, (b) 66-71 month-old students, (c) 72 and over- month-old students in the new system system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?	Descriptive Statistics One- way ANOVA Independent samples t- tests
6. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in managing classrooms in terms of different age groups in the new system system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?	Descriptive Statistics One- way ANOVA Independent samples t- tests

Table 3.5 (cont'd)

Research Questions	Methods
7. What difficulties do the first grade teachers experience in teaching to (a) 60-65 month-old students, (b) 66-71 month-old students, (c) 72 and over- month-old students in the new system system? Regarding this theme, are there statistically significant differences among the respondents in terms of (a) school type, (b) class size, (c) teaching experience, (d) number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old and 72 and over month-old children in a class?	One- way ANOVA Independent samples t- tests
8. What are the first grade teachers' strategies in handling the challenges they experience?	Coding Descriptive Statistics

3.6. Validity

Since the instrument is developed and administered for the first time, it is important to assure the validity of the instrument. As claimed by Kimberlin & Winterstein (2008), the quality of an instrument lies at the heart of reliability and validity of the measures.

One key quality indicator needed for the instrument was content- related validity. As explained above, the inclusion of relevant items drawn from reports, literature and field study helped establish a relevant content in the questionnaire.

Finally, because all 301 teachers had no way to be administered at the same time and under the same conditions and standards, there might happen to be some threats to internal validity. These can be listed as following:

- Location threat: Particular locations where the data were collected were different from each other. The researcher left the questionnaires to the headmasters or assistant headmasters and asked them to distribute the questionnaires to the teachers at school. Therefore, the researcher is not sure where the teachers filled the questionnaires in. There was no standardization of the administration in terms of location.
- History threat: Participants may have experiences something unexpected during the course of filling in the questionnaire. However, the researcher of this thesis may never be sure whether unexpected or unanticipated events happened and caused the participants overstate or understate their perceptions. For instance, the teachers may have experienced intense problems with small aged children in the

time of the study which may have affected the answers by overstating the problems.

3.7. Reliability

Reliability is used (1) to test whether the test gives the same results when administered to the same individuals at two different time points or how much agreement there are between two parallel instruments (or more) administered at the same time, and (2) to see whether the items measuring the same construct have an internal consistency among (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008; Miller, 2009; Pallant, 2007). The first aim of the reliability tests is not valid for this study while the second is worth checking. Since the widely used technique to check internal consistency is Cronbach's alpha and its fit to the essence of reliability measure (DeVellis, 2003), Cronbach's (1951) coefficient alpha, α , is used.

The questionnaire involves seven sections; each section is considered to be a subscale measuring a different domain. Additionally, the questionnaire is not constructed on the basis of measuring a single construct (such as life satisfaction or happiness). That is why, for each section, analyses were run to check Cronbach's alpha besides analysis run for the total scale.

Accordingly, the scale has very good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient which is .98. The subscale, preparation and adaptation activities, has good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient which is .82. The subscale, planning, has good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient which is .89. The subscale, game and physical activities, has good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient which is .93. The subscale, teaching basic skills, has very good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient which is .97. The subscale, teaching academic skills, has very good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient which is .98. The subscale, managing classroom, has good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient which is .93

3.8. Assumptions

Assumptions of this study play an important role overall and they are listed as follows:

1. As known, challenges or difficulties a teacher is faced with a system new cannot be just explained with its relevance to objective factors such as class size or teacher experience. Subjective factors such as teachers' willingness to arrange teaching methods according to the system changed or new context play a role in the intensity

of difficulty experienced. For this study, it is assumed that only some objective factors such as class size, teacher experience and school type take a potential role in the extent and frequency of the challenge experienced by the teachers.

2. It is assumed that teachers are sincere and truly reflect their experiences on their answers given to the questionnaire. As postmodernists claim, the author of this thesis believes that we humans are not confined to see the world within the context of pre-specified and decided realities or rules, we are more than this; there is no way to ask teachers to be freed from their own judgments and beliefs; hence each teacher's own specific ideas about the questionnaire items and their answers are counted accordingly.
3. It is assumed that the socio-economic distribution of the areas provided in the data obtained from TUIK is valid and reliable.

3.9. Limitations

In terms of limitations of this study, following points are listed:

1. The questionnaire items in section five and six are not listed in a mixed way which would prevent habituation, in other words it might cause teachers to choose the same answer for all questions in these sections, which may be a potential threat to the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.
2. There is a limitation in open-ended questions that not every participant responded to them.
3. Frequency questions (in section one) such as the number of 60-65 month old students or 66-71 month-old students in class or the times in first grade teaching experience involves recalling questions which may have led to more missing answer.
4. Another limitation is that the districts decided to be the sample of this study are all central ones, hence those schools are exposed to lots of questionnaire assignment during a year. In terms of this, teachers may feel negative about filling in questionnaires- in a way, a threat related to test saturation, which may have affected the answers.

5. Only urban areas are dominantly included in the study due to the fact that they are easily reachable; rural areas are limitedly represented.
6. Finally, as one of the limitations, for this study, only objective questions are included since measuring subjective factors require extensive and comprehensive scale construction and application.
7. The representativeness of the study is only limited to two cities: Ankara and Antalya.
8. In data analysis method, *one-way ANOVA was used for each variable at each time of measurement and for descriptive reasons* as this thesis work is aimed to be more descriptive.
9. The numbers of accessible population in Ankara and Antalya could not be reached.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

At first, participation in questionnaire was voluntary. Any kind of deception or coercion was not an issue at all, and neither was any kind of psychological, financial or social harm. Secondly, it was made clear to the headmasters that participants were under no obligation although their participation would contribute a lot to the research.

In addition, both in the information sheet provided to the headmasters and at the beginning of the questionnaire, it was assured that responses would be kept in confidential. Plus, the researcher does not know who the respondents were since the person contacted was the headmasters.

Besides, permission from the ethics committee of the university was obtained.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the background characteristics of the participants and the findings for each research question of the study. The data regarding first eight quantitative research questions were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics which is also used for descriptive reasons though, and the findings the findings in relation to the last research question were presented as frequencies for each theme explored in responses.

4.1. Background Characteristics of Participants

As Table 4.1 displays, 301 first grade teachers completed questionnaires however only the data from 282 public school teachers and 11 private school teachers were used in the study since the questionnaire data from 8 teachers were unusable due to many missing responses.

Of the participants, 18.1 % had 14 years or less experience in teaching ($n=53$) while 16.4 % of them had 15 to 17 years' experience ($n=48$). 15.4 % of them had 18 to 22 years' experience ($n=45$) while 18.4 % had 23 to 27 years' experience ($n=54$). 16.4 % of the participants had 28 to 33 years' experience in teaching first- grade ($n=48$). 13.7 % of teachers had 34 or more years' experience in teaching ($n=40$).

Of the participants, 19.5% had 20 students or less in their classes ($n=57$) while 11.3% of them had 21 or 22 students in their classes ($n=33$). 11.9 % of them had 23 or 24 students ($n=35$) while 16.7% had 25 or 26 students in their class ($n=49$). 11.9% of the participants had 27 or 28 students in a class ($n=35$). 17.1% of the teachers' class size ranged from 29 students to 32 ($n=50$), and 10.6% of the teachers' class size was 33 students or over ($n=31$). 1% of the teachers did not report their class sizes ($n=3$).

Of the participants, 28.7% did not have any students aged 60 to 65 month olds in their class ($n=84$); 21.8% of the teachers had one or two students of this age group ($n=64$) while 9.9% of them had three students of this age group in their classes ($n=29$). 17.4 % of them had four or five ($n=51$) while 14.7% had six or over 60-65 month-old students in their classes ($n=43$). 7.5% of the teachers did not report the number of the students of this age group.

Of the participants, 22.2% had four or less students aged 66 to 71 month olds in their class ($n=65$); 19.8% of the teachers had five to eight students of this age group ($n=58$) while 14% of them had nine to twelve students of this age group in classes ($n=41$). 18.8 % of them

had 13 to 19 students of this age group ($n=55$) while 18.4% had 20 or over 66-71 month-old students in their classes ($n=54$). 6.8% of the teachers did not report the number ($n=20$).

Of the participants, 19.1% had one or less student aged 72 months or over in their class ($n=56$); 19.8% of the teachers had two to six students of this age group in their class ($n=58$) while 22.5% of them had seven to fifteen students of this age group in classes ($n=66$). 17.1 % of them had 16 to 20 students of this age group ($n=50$) while 15.7% had 21 or over 72 months and over students in their classes ($n=46$). 5.8% of the teachers did not report the number ($n=17$).

Table 4.1

Demographic Information on Participants

Variables		<i>N</i>	%
Type of School	Public	282	96.2
	Private	11	3.8
Teaching experience	14 years and less	53	18.1
	15- 17 years	48	16.4
	18- 22 years	45	15.4
	23- 27 years	54	18.4
	28- 33 years	48	16.4
	34 years and more	40	13.7
	Missing	5	1.7
Class size	20 years and less	57	19.5
	21- 22 years	33	11.3
	23- 24 years	35	11.9
	25- 26 years	49	16.7
	27- 28 years	35	11.9
	29- 32 years	50	17.1
	33 years and more	31	10.6
Number of 60-65 month-old students in a class	Missing	3	1.0
	0 student	84	28.7
	1-2 students	33	21.8
	3 students	35	9.9
	4- 5 students	49	17.4
	6 students and more	35	14.7
	Missing	22	7.5
Number of 66-71 month-old students in a class	4 students and less	65	22.2
	5- 8 students	58	19.8
	9- 12 students	41	14.0
	13- 19 students	55	18.8
	20 students and more	54	18.4
	Missing	20	6.8
Number of 72 month (and more) students in a class	1 student	56	19.1
	2- 6students	58	19.8
	7- 15 students	66	22.5
	16- 20 students	50	17.1
	21 students and more	46	15.7
	Missing	17	5.8

4.2. Difficulties Teachers Experienced in New School System

In this part, the difficulties teachers reported regarding the new school system were presented.

4.2.1. Difficulties Experienced in Implementing Adaptation and Preparation Period

As depicted in Table 4.2, in teaching adaptation and preparation activities, 76.2 % of the teachers had frequent difficulty with 60-65 month-old ($M = 3.2$), and % 35. 5 of the teachers often had difficulty with 66-71 ($M = 2.03$) month-old students; both of age groups seemed to create difficulty for teachers more frequently than 72 month and over students did to them ($M = .85$). They rarely had difficulty in teaching these activities to the students who went to kindergarten ($M = 1.11$) while 55 % of the teachers had frequent difficulty in teaching these to the students who did not go to kindergarten ($M = 2.40$).

Out of 293 teachers, 7 teachers did not have inadequate classroom conditions. As for the ones who had, 46.9 % of the teachers seldom had difficulty in teaching due to inadequate classroom conditions ($M = 1.67$). Out of 293 teachers, 58 teachers reported not to have big class sizes. As for the ones who had, Almost 63 % of the teachers seldom had difficulty in dealing with these activities ($M = 1.19$). Out of 293 teachers, 10 teachers did not experience any lack of materials. As for the ones who did, 41.9 % of the teachers seldom had difficulty in dealing with activities ($M = 1.82$).

Almost 55 % of the teachers seldom experienced difficulty in getting attention of the students who went to kindergarten during adaptation and preparation activities ($M = 1.47$).

A little more than 60 % of the teachers rarely had difficulties in finding classroom activities during adaptation and preparation phase ($M = 1.39$) and planning these annually, weekly and daily ($M = 1.21$).

In summary, in implementing the adaptation and preparation activities, it seems that the difficulties experienced most frequently emerged, as respectively, while having 60-65 month-old students perform the activities, and then with the students who did not go to the kindergarten, and while having 66-71 month old- students do the activities.

Table 4.2

Valid Percentages of Difficulties Experienced in Implementing Adaptation and Preparation Activities

In implementing adaptation and preparation activities, teachers Experienced difficulties in:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
having 60-65 month-old students do the preparation and adaptation activities.	3.02	.96	2.5	5.9	15.3	39.1	37.1
having 66-71 month-old students do the preparation and adaptation activities.	2.03	1.02	6.4	24.2	35.5	27.5	6.4
having 72 and over month-old students do the preparation and adaptation activities.	.85	.87	40.4	38.4	17.3	3.1	0.8
having students who went to kindergarten be skilled with the preparation and adaptation activities.	1.11	.99	29.5	42.8	17.9	7.4	2.5
having students who did not go to kindergarten be skilled with the preparation and adaptation activities.	2.40	1.12	7.6	13.8	23.6	40.9	14.1
having students do the preparation and adaptation activities due to inadequate classroom conditions.	1.67	1.28	24	22.9	23.7	20.8	8.6
having students do the preparation and adaptation activities due to big class sizes.	1.19	1.37	47.2	15.7	17.9	9.6	9.6
having students do the preparation and adaptation activities due to lack of materials.	1.82	1.31	21.5	20.4	24	23.3	10.9
having attention of students who went to kindergarten on the preparation and adaptation activities.	1.47	1.17	25.2	28.4	24.8	17.3	4.3
finding classroom activities for the preparation and adaptation activities.	1.39	1.16	27.8	26.7	28.9	11.4	5.1
planning (annual, weekly, daily) the preparation and adaptation activities.	3.02	.96	35.5	25.9	24.5	10.6	3.5

Note. In reporting these findings, according to the accumulation of the responses, “often” and “always” were recoded as “frequently” while “never” and “rarely” were recoded as “seldom”.

4.2.2. Difficulties Teachers in Planning School Year in New School System

As shown in Table 4.3, it seems that 65.6 % of the teachers who taught different age groups in their classes had many difficulties in teaching Turkish in the new school system. Besides, 71.5 % of teachers who taught different age groups in their classes had many difficulties in teaching mathematics. In teaching social studies, 72.3 % of the teachers did not experience as many difficulties as they did while teaching other main subjects. Among these subjects, it seems that teachers had more problems with teaching mathematics ($M = 1.96$) than teaching Turkish ($M = 1.87$). Among these, the least problematic for the teachers seems to be teaching social studies ($M = 1.57$). 30.3 % of the teachers experienced problems to a middle extent in determining the time they would start teaching literacy skills ($M = 1.49$) while 54.8 % of teachers experienced few problems planning the time after they were finished with implementing adaptation and preparation activities ($M = 1.36$). In summary, in planning the new school system, it appears that teaching mathematics and Turkish created many difficulties for the teachers.

Table 4.3

Valid Percentages of Difficulties Experienced in Planning Academic Year after System Change

In planning, teachers experienced difficulties in:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot
teaching Turkish lesson to different age groups.	1.87	.94	8.5	25.9	35.6	30
teaching Mathematics lesson to different age groups.	1.96	.90	7	21.5	39.6	31.9
teaching Social Studies lesson to different age groups.	1.57	.89	11.6	35.4	36.9	16
determining the time I would start teaching literacy skills.	1.49	1.08	24.1	24.1	30.3	21.4
planning the time of teaching/ learning literacy skills after the end of the preparation and adaptation activities process.	1.36	1.08	27.6	27.2	26.6	18.6

Note. In reporting these findings, according to the accumulation of the responses, “a lot” and “to a middle extent” were recoded as “many” while “not any” and “a few” responses were recoded as “few”.

4.2.3. Difficulties Experienced in Implementing Game and Physical Activities

As shown in Table 4.4, Teachers did not have many problems arranging weekly time allocation for game and physical activities lesson ($M = 1.16$), and with finding activities in the implementation of the lesson little more than rarely ($M = 1.32$). As for the problems with finding materials for the activities of this lesson ($M = 1.59$), which seems to be the most difficulty in creating area for this part, 35.2 % of the teachers had difficulties to a middle extent. Then, for this part, it seems that the most difficulty in creating areas were to arrange class ($M = 1.52$) and school conditions ($M = 1.57$) for game and physical activities. In summary, finding activities for this lesson and arranging class and school conditions to implement it created problems for the teachers.

Table 4.4

Valid Percentages of Difficulties Experienced in Implementing Game and Physical Activities Lesson

In Implementing game and physical activities lesson, teachers experienced difficulties in:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot
allocating and effectively implementing five hours for the game and physical activities lesson weekly.	1.16	1.00	33.7	25.8	30.9	9.6
finding materials in the implementation of game and physical activities lesson.	1.59	1.01	18.1	25.9	35.2	20.8
arranging class conditions in the implementation of game and physical activities lesson.	1.52	1.04	20.7	26.6	32.4	20.3
arranging school conditions in the implementation of game and physical activities lesson.	1.57	1.05	19.8	25.9	31.7	22.5
finding activities in the implementation of game and physical activities lesson.	1.32	.99	24.9	31.1	31.1	13

Note. In reporting these findings, according to the accumulation of the responses, “a lot” and “to a middle extent” were recoded as “many” while “not any” and “a few” responses were recoded as “few”.

4.2.4. Difficulties Experienced in Teaching Basic Skills

Table 4.5 presents that mean values of how much teachers experienced problems teaching to 60-65 month-old students are all more than 2.00 while the ones related to teaching to 66-71 month-olds are all more than 1.50. It seems that teachers experienced only few problems in teaching to 72 and over month-old students.

As for teaching basic skills to 60-65 month-old children, it appears that 89.2 % of the teachers experienced many difficulties in relation to proper books and notebooks usage ($M = 2.47$). Then, almost 90 % of the teachers had many difficulties in having students give attention to their instructions ($M = 2.43$) and understand them ($M = 2.45$) and perform them ($M = 2.41$). Moreover, teaching oral expression ($M = 2.36$) and proper toilet manners ($M = 2.38$) seem to have been quite problematic among all.

A little more than 80 % of the teachers had many difficulties in teaching this age group skills which require using motor skills such as pencil grasp ($M = 2.27$), drawing ($M = 2.37$), using class instruments ($M = 2.35$).

A little more than 80 % of the teachers experienced many problems in relation to students' eating manners ($M = 2.20$), and sitting at the desk ($M = 2.25$). A little more than 70% of the teachers experience many problems with students' using eraser ($M = 2.01$) and painting behavior ($M = 2.03$).

Secondly, in teaching to 66-71 month-old students, it appears that ranking the skills from the most problematic behaviors to the least gives us more or less the same ranking as the one of 60-65 month-old students' but different scores for sure.

71.8 % of the teachers experienced a few problems or to a middle extent teaching how to use books and notebooks properly ($M = 1.68$). After this, almost 45% of the teachers had the most difficulties (almost to a middle extent) in having this group of students give attention to their instructions ($M = 1.67$) and understand them ($M = 1.67$) and perform them ($M = 1.68$).

41 % of the teachers had difficulty in teaching oral expression to a middle extent ($M = 1.58$). Almost 40 % of the teachers had quite difficulties in relation to the motor skills such as pencil grasp ($M = 1.53$), drawing ($M = 1.46$), using class instruments ($M = 1.56$), and students' eating manners.

A little more than 35 % of the teachers had quite difficulty with students' sitting at the desk ($M = 1.48$), and way of using eraser ($M = 1.26$) and painting ($M = 1.29$).

Thirdly, with 72 and over month-old students, it seems that almost 90 % of the teachers experienced few problems teaching how to use books and notebooks properly ($M = .76$), having this age group give attention to their instructions ($M = .67$) and understand them ($M = .72$) and perform them ($M = .73$).

Other areas which all seem to have created few problems are listed as following: sitting at the desk ($M = .68$), teaching oral expression ($M = .67$), drawing ($M = .67$), motor skills such as pencil grasp ($M = .62$), how to use class instrument ($M = .61$), using class instruments ($M = .61$), teaching eating manners ($M = .58$), and the last ones how to use eraser ($M = .49$) and painting ($M = .50$).

In summary, teaching basic skills to 60-65 month-old students seems to be the most problematic to teachers. Especially their usage of books/ notebooks and comprehending their instructions, give attention to them and perform them seem to have created many problems for almost all of the teachers. Additionally, it can be claimed that while teaching basic skills to 66-71 month-old students created problems to a middle extent, teaching them to 72 and over month-old students challenged teachers creating just a few or not any problems.

Table 4.5

Valid Percentages of Difficulties Experienced in Teaching Basic Skills

Teachers had difficulties in teaching:	to 60- 65 month-old students					to 66- 71 month-old students					to 72 and over month-old students							
	M	SD	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot	M	SD	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot	M	SD	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot
pencil grasp	2.27	.90	5.3	14.6	28.2	51.9	1.53	.82	9.2	40.1	39.3	11.5	.62	.70	48.2	43	7.2	1.6
how to use eraser	2.01	.97	9.7	17.5	35	37.9	1.26	.90	21.8	38.9	30.5	8.8	.49	.67	60.2	32.3	6.4	1.2
painting	2.03	1.01	10.7	17.5	30.1	41.7	1.29	.89	20.5	39	32	8.5	.50	.67	58.2	35.5	4.8	1.6
drawing	2.37	.80	3.9	8.8	34.1	53.2	1.46	.88	13.8	37.9	36.4	11.9	.67	.74	46.2	44.2	6.4	3.2
how to sit at the desk	2.25	.91	4.8	11.2	32.2	49.8	1.48	.91	15	35	36.5	13.5	.68	.76	47.6	39.6	10.4	2.4
how to use books properly	2.47	.72	1.5	9.3	30.2	59	1.68	.89	8.8	34.4	37.4	19.5	.76	.76	41	44.2	12.4	2.4
how to use class instruments	2.35	.84	3.4	13.6	27.2	55.8	1.56	.89	11.8	34.7	38.5	14.9	.61	.68	48.6	43.8	6	1.6
proper toilet manners	2.38	.84	3.9	11.2	28.3	56.6	1.55	.90	13.4	32.4	40.1	14.1	.62	.73	50	40	7.2	2
eating manners	2.20	.91	6.8	12.7	33.7	46.8	1.43	.89	16.5	34.5	38.3	10.7	.58	.71	53.6	37.6	7.2	2
attention to instructions	2.43	.81	3.4	9.8	27.3	59.5	1.67	.87	9.6	30.7	42.9	16.9	.67	.72	45.8	43.8	8.4	2
understanding instructions	2.45	.78	2.9	8.8	28.3	60	1.67	.87	9.2	31.7	42	17.2	.72	.78	45.4	40.6	10.8	3.2
performing instructions	2.41	.80	2.9	10.7	28.3	58	1.68	.85	8.8	31.3	43.5	16.4	.73	.75	43.6	42	12.4	2
oral expression	2.36	.82	3.4	11.8	29.9	54.9	1.58	.86	10.7	34.5	41	13.8	.67	.74	46.6	42.2	8.8	2.4

Note. In reporting these findings, according to the accumulation of the responses, “a lot” and “to a middle extent” were recorded as “many” while “not any” and “a few” responses were recorded as “few”.

Table 4.6

Valid Percentages of Difficulties Experienced in Teaching Academic Skills

Teachers had difficulties in teaching:	to 60- 65 month-old students					to 66- 71 month-old students					to 72 and over month-old students							
	M	SD	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot	M	SD	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot	M	SD	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot
the distinction between sounds and letters	2.27	.90	5.9	12.9	29.7	51.5	1.44	.83	13.9	36.5	41.7	7.9	.56	.62	50.8	43.3	5.6	4
handwriting	2.49	.79	3	9.9	22.8	64.4	1.64	.85	9	32.7	43.2	15	.74	.75	41.5	46.2	9.1	3.2
reading sounds/ letters	2.27	.88	5.4	12.4	32.2	50	1.39	.87	18.8	30.8	43.2	7.1	.56	.65	51.8	41	6.4	0.8
writing sounds/ letters	2.39	.88	5.9	8.9	25.7	59.4	1.55	.87	12.8	31.3	43.8	12.1	.63	.69	47	44.2	7.2	1.6
how to read words	2.28	.87	5.4	10.9	34.2	49.5	1.44	.81	11.7	41	38.7	8.6	.58	.63	49.6	43.7	6.3	0.4
how to write words	2.37	.86	5	10	28.4	56.7	1.55	.82	10.2	35.1	43.8	10.9	.62	.65	46	46.8	6	1.2
how to read texts	2.32	.88	5.9	9.9	30.7	53.5	1.51	.84	11.7	36.1	41.7	10.5	.58	.62	48.4	45.2	6	0.4
how to write text	2.46	.80	4	7	27.5	61.5	1.66	.85	9.1	31.4	44.3	15.2	.69	.71	42.8	47.6	7.2	2.4
how to write numbers	2.15	.90	6.4	14.4	36.6	42.6	1.35	.85	17.4	37.4	38.1	7.2	.52	.64	55	39	5.2	0.8
addition	2.23	.88	6.4	10.4	36.6	46.5	1.36	.85	15.5	41.9	34	8.7	.53	.61	52.6	42.2	4.8	0.4
extraction	2.29	.88	6.5	9	33.3	51.2	1.42	.86	15.2	37.5	37.5	9.8	.58	.62	48.2	46.2	4.8	0.8
drawing geometrical shapes	2.19	.88	5.5	14.4	35.8	44.3	1.37	.87	16.7	39	35.2	9.1	.57	.65	50.8	42.1	6.3	0.8
measurement	2.26	.88	5.9	10.9	34.2	49	1.45	.86	14	37.1	38.6	10.2	.63	.68	46.8	44	7.9	1.2

Note. In reporting these findings, according to the accumulation of the responses, “a lot” and “to a middle extent” were recoded as “many” while “not any” and “a few” responses were recoded as “few”.

4.2.4. Difficulties Experienced in Teaching Academic Skills

Table 4.6 displays that mean values of how much teachers experienced problems teaching academic skills to 60-65 month-olds are more than 2.00 while the ones related to teaching to 66-71 month-olds are around 1.50. It seems that teachers experienced only few problems in teaching to 72 and over month-old students.

In teaching to 60-65 month-old students, it is clearly observed that almost 90 % of the teachers experienced many problems teaching hand writing ($M = 2.49$). Then, again more than 85 % of the teachers had many difficulties in teaching how to write texts ($M = 2.46$) and how to write sounds and letters ($M = 2.39$) and how to write words ($M = 2.37$). It seems that teaching writing to this age group created many problems to the teachers. In addition, 85 % of the teachers had many difficulties in teaching how to read texts ($M = 2.32$) and teaching extraction in mathematics ($M = 2.29$). Around 80 % of the teachers had many problems teaching how to read words ($M = 2.28$) and read sounds and letters ($M = 2.27$) and the distinction between particular sounds and letters ($M = 2.27$) and measurement ($M = 2.26$) addition in mathematics ($M = 2.23$). Around 70% of the teachers had many difficulties with geometrical shapes ($M = 2.19$) and how to write numbers ($M = 2.15$).

Secondly, in teaching to 66-71 month-old students, 75.7 % of the teachers experienced a few difficulties or to a middle extent in teaching how to write texts ($M = 1.66$). Then, 75.9 of the teachers had a few difficulties or to a middle extent in teaching hand writing ($M = 1.64$) and how to write sounds and letters ($M = 1.55$) and how to write words ($M = 1.55$). It seems that among all the most difficult point occurred in teaching writing to this age group as well.

Furthermore, around 75 % of teachers had a few difficulties or to a middle extent in teaching how to read texts ($M = 1.51$) and measurement ($M = 1.45$), the distinction between particular sounds and letters ($M = 1.44$), in teaching how to read sounds and letters ($M = 1.39$) and geometry ($M = 1.37$) and addition in mathematics ($M = 1.36$), teaching how to write numbers ($M = 1.44$).

Thirdly, teaching to 72 and over month-old students, it seems that more than 90 % of the teachers experienced few problems with teaching academic skills.

In summary, teaching academic skills to 60-65 month-old students seems to be the most problematic. Especially teaching writing skills and handwriting seem to have created many problems almost for all of the teachers. As it was in teaching basic skills, while teaching academic skills to 66-71 month-old students created problems to a middle extent,

teaching them to 72 and over month-old students challenged teachers creating just few or not any problems.

4.2.5. Difficulties Experienced in Managing Classroom

Table 4.7 displays that in dealing with the students aged 60-65 month olds, 80.6 % of the teachers had many difficulties in having students participate in class activities ($M = 2.25$). Almost 80 % of the teachers had many difficulties in having students follow class/ school rules ($M = 2.26$), preventing students' interrupting each other ($M = 2.27$). Almost 75 % of the teachers had many difficulties in having students get focused on the lesson ($M = 2.44$) and communicating effectively with the students ($M = 2.10$).

In dealing with the students aged 66-71 month olds, around 75 % of the teachers had a few problems or to a middle extent in having students participate in class activities ($M = 1.45$), having students follow class/ school rules ($M = 1.61$), preventing students' interrupting each other ($M = 1.68$), having students get focused on the lesson ($M = 1.69$) and communicating effectively with them ($M = 1.50$). In dealing with the students aged 72 and over month olds, almost 90 % of the teachers had only few problems.

In summary, classroom management issue became most problematic with 60-65 month-old children. Especially, having this age group participate in class activities and get focused on the lesson created frequent problems for way more than half of the teachers. While dealing with 66-71 month-old students created problems to a middle extent for teachers, 72 and over month-old students challenged teachers creating just few or not any problems.

Table 4.7
Valid Percentages of Difficulties Experienced in Managing Classroom

Teachers had difficulties in:	to 60- 65 month-old students					to 66- 71 month-old students					to 72 and over month-old students							
	M	SD	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot	M	SD	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot	M	SD	Not any	A few	To a middle extent	A lot
preventing students' interrupting each other	2.27	.91	4.9	17.1	24.4	53.7	1.68	.83	7.7	32.3	44.6	15.4	.94	.77	29.5	50.4	16.8	3.3
having students follow class/school rules	2.26	.93	5.9	16.1	23.9	54.1	1.61	.85	9.3	34.7	41.3	14.7	.82	.75	35.1	51.2	10.3	3.3
having students get focused on the lesson	2.44	.88	5.8	8.7	20.9	53.4	1.69	.86	9.3	29	45.2	16.6	.83	.74	34.6	50.6	11.9	2.9
communicating effectively with the students	2.10	.99	9.3	16.1	29.8	44.9	1.50	.86	13.9	32.2	42.1	10.8	.64	.69	46.1	45.3	7	1.6
having students participate in class activities	2.25	.97	9.2	10.2	27.2	53.4	1.45	.86	15.4	33.1	42.3	9.2	.66	.71	45.9	44.2	7.9	2.1

Note. In reporting these findings, according to the accumulation of the responses, "a lot" and "to a middle extent" were recorded as "many" while "not any" and "a few" responses were recorded as "few".

4.3. Relations between Background Variables and Difficulties Experienced

In this part, a series of *one- way ANOVA* and *independent samples t- tests* were run to explore the relations between background variables and the difficulties teachers experienced in implementing preparation and adaptation activities, planning the school year in the new school system, implementing game and physical activities, teaching basic skills, teaching academic skills, managing classroom, teaching to 60-65 month-old, 66-71 month-old, 72 and over month-old students in a class.

A series of one- way ANOVA were run on five background variables (class size, teaching experience, the number of 60-65 month-old students, the number of 66-71 month-old students, the number of 72 and over month-old students) and independent t- tests were run on two variables (teacher experience, type of school). Only the ones resulting in significant values were reported.

Before running the tests, assumptions to run independent t- tests and one- way ANOVAs were checked. First of all, it was assured that observations were all independent of one another. Hence, measurements were collected in settings where they were not possible to be influenced by each other. Secondly, since the scores of the difficulties teachers faced obtained from the subscales of the questionnaire should be distributed normally at each level of the background variables, normality tests, which were skewness and kurtosis, histograms, stem-and-leaf plots, were run to examine the validity of normality assumption. Later, Q-Q plots of the dependent variable at each level of independent variable were explored.

The results of skewness and kurtosis for each group indicated that scores were between (+3,-3), which means normality. However, all the significance values of the tests, Kolmogorov- Smirnov and Shapiro- Wilk, suggested the violation of the assumption of normality ($p < .05$) except the mean of the scores of the adaptation and preparation activities, but these findings with a reasonably large sample size ($N=294$) can be accepted as an evidence of normality (Pallant, 2007).

The actual shape of each distribution was inspected in the histograms. In these, scores appeared to be reasonably normally distributed. This also supported the normality of the distribution. The point that there was not great deviation was also supported by the visual inspection of the normal probability plots, stem-and-leaf plots, and Q-Q plots.

As for homogeneity of variance, Levene's test for equality was run for each analysis of the t- tests and one way ANOVAs. For all analyses, homogeneity of variance assumption was satisfied ($p > .05$) except one of them, variances of the mean scores of the difficulties faced in planning the school year were not equal among the binned numbers of 66-71 month-

old students in a class. As for t- tests, variances of the mean scores of the difficulties experienced in the preparation and adaptation activities were not equal between teachers working in private and public schools. As for these reasons, significance level was set at .01.

4.3.1. Difficulties Experienced in Adaptation and Preparation by Background Variables

To answer the second question of the first research question, one- way ANOVAs were performed along with independent samples t- tests. Below only the background variables having a significant effect on the difficulties teachers face in implementing adaptation and preparation activities were presented as depicted in Table 4.8 for the results of one- way ANOVA and Table 4.9 for independent samples t- test.

First, a one way ANOVA was conducted to explore the relation between the difficulties teachers experienced in implementing the preparation and adaptation activities and class size. Class sizes were categorized into seven (20 students and less = Group 1, 21- 22 students = Group 2, 23- 24 students = Group 3, 25- 26 students = Group 4, 27- 28 students = Group 5, 29- 32 students = Group 6, 33 students and more = Group 7). At the $p < .001$, there was a statistical significance in difficulties teachers experienced by class sizes: $F(6, 283) = 3.778, p = 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.07$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference between groups was small ($\eta^2 = .07$). Only 7% of variance in difficulties teachers experienced in adaptation and preparation activities was accounted for by different class sizes. Post- hoc comparisons using the Sheffé test indicated that the mean scores of the groups of class sizes were not statistically different from one another.

Secondly, another one- way between groups analysis of variance was done to explore the relation between the difficulties teachers experienced in implementing the preparation and adaptation activities and the numbers of 60-65 month-old students in a class. The numbers of the students of this age group were categorized into seven (0 = Group 1, 1-2 = Group 2, 3 = Group 3, 4- 5 = Group 4, 6+ = Group 5). At the $p < .01$ level, there was a statistical significance in the difficulties teachers experienced by the numbers of 60-65 month-old students: $F(4, 265) = 3.778, p = 0.00, \eta^2 = 0.07$. However, the actual difference between groups was small ($\eta^2 = .1$). Only 10 % of variance in difficulties teachers experienced in adaptation and preparation activities was accounted for by the number of 60-65 month-old students in a class.

Post- hoc comparisons using the Sheffé test indicated that the mean score for the Group 1 (teachers who do not have 60-65 month-old students) was significantly different ($M = 1.25$) from Group 2 (teachers who had one or two students of this age group in their

classes) ($M = 1.74$) and from Group 4 (teachers who had four or five students of this age group in their classes) ($M = 1.94$). Other mean scores of the groups of numbers were not statistically different from one another.

Thirdly, another one- way between groups analysis of variance was run to explore the relation between the difficulties teachers experienced in implementing the preparation and adaptation activities and the numbers of 66-71 month-old students in a class. The numbers of students of this age group were categorized into seven (4 students and less = Group 1, 5- 8 students = Group 2, 9- 12 students = Group 3, 13- 19 students = Group 4, 20 students and more = Group 5). At the $p < .01$ level, there was a statistical significance in difficulties teachers experienced by the numbers of 66-71 month-old students: $F(4, 267) = 5.427$, $p = 0.00$, $\eta^2 = 0.08$. However, the actual difference between groups was small ($\eta^2 = .08$). Only 8% of variance in difficulties teachers experienced in adaptation and preparation activities was accounted for by the numbers of 66-71 month-old students in a class. Post- hoc comparisons using the Sheffé test indicated that the mean score for the Group 1 (teachers who had four or less 66-71 month-old students in their classes) ($M = 1.34$) was significantly different from Group 3 (teachers who had nine to twelve 66-71 month-old students in their classes) ($M = 2.02$). Other mean scores of the groups of numbers were not statistically different from one another.

Finally, as shown in Table 4.9, an independent samples t- test was run to compare the mean scores of teachers working in public and private school and revealed that two groups significantly differ in their difficulties experienced during adaptation and preparation activities, $t(286) = 4.32$, $p < .01$, two-tailed. Teachers working in public schools experienced more difficulties ($M = 1.64$) than teachers in private schools ($M = .35$) in implementing preparation and adaptation activities. The magnitude of the differences in the means was moderate (eta squared = .06)

4.3.2. Difficulties Experienced in Planning School Year by Background Variables

To answer the second question of the second research question, the one- way ANOVAs were performed along with independent samples t- tests. Below only the background variables having a significant effect on the difficulties teachers experience in planning the school year in the new school system were presented as depicted in Table 4.8 for the results of one- way ANOVA and Table 4.9 independent samples t- test.

First of all, to explore the relation between planning difficulties teachers experienced and the number of 60-65 month-old students in a class on, a one way between groups

analysis of variance was run. At the $p < .01$ level, there was a statistical significance in difficulties teachers experienced by the numbers of 66-71 month-old students: $F(6, 282) = 8.852, p = 0.00, \eta^2 = 0.12$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference between groups was small ($\eta^2 = .12$). Only 12 % of variance in difficulties teachers experienced in adaptation and preparation activities was accounted for by different numbers of 60-65 month-old students in their classes. Post- hoc comparisons using the Sheffé test indicated that the mean score for the Group 1 (teachers who did not have 60-65 month-old students in their classes) ($M = 1.21, SD = .92$) was significantly different from Group 3 (teachers who had three 60-65 month-old students in their classes) ($M = 2.02$) and Group 4 (teachers who had 4 or five 60-65 month-old students in their classes) ($M = 1.85$) and Group 5 (teachers who had six and more 60-65 month-old students) ($M = 1.80$). Group 2 was not statistically different from other groups.

Secondly, another one way analysis of variances showed that at the $p < .01$ level, there was a statistical significance in difficulties teachers experienced in adaptation and preparation activities by the numbers of 66-71 month-old students: $F(4, 267) = 4.926, p = 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.07$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference between groups was quite small ($\eta^2 = .07$). Only 7 % of variance in difficulties teachers experienced in adaptation and preparation activities was accounted for by different numbers of 66-71 month-old students in their classes. Post- hoc comparisons using the Sheffé test indicated that the mean scores of each group were not statistically different from one another.

Thirdly, as shown in Table 4.9, an independent samples t- test was performed to compare the mean scores of teachers working in public and private school and revealed that two groups significantly differ in their difficulties experienced in planning the school year in the new school system, $t(286) = 4.316, p < .01$, two-tailed. Teachers working in public schools faced more difficulties ($M = 1.64$) than teachers in private schools ($M = .35$) in planning the school year in the new school system. The magnitude of the differences in the means was almost moderate (eta squared = .04).

4.3.3. Difficulties Experienced in Game and Physical Activities by Background Variables

To answer the second question of the third research question, the one- way ANOVA was performed along with independent samples t- tests. Below only the background variables having a significant effect on the difficulties teachers face in implementing game and physical activities were presented as depicted in Table 4.8.

A one- way between groups analysis of variance was run to explore the relation between the difficulties teachers experienced in implementing game and physical activities and class size. At the $p < .01$, there was a statistical significance in difficulties teachers faced by class sizes: $F(6, 283) = 3.778$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.07$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference between groups was small ($\eta^2 = .07$). Only 7 % of variance in difficulties teachers faced in adaptation and preparation activities was accounted for by different class sizes. Post- hoc comparisons using the Sheffé test indicated that the mean score of the groups of class sizes were not statistically different from one another.

4.3.4. Difficulties Experienced in Teaching Basic Skills by Background Variables

To answer the second question of the fourth research question, the one- way ANOVA were performed along with independent samples t- tests. Below only the background variables having a significant effect on the difficulties teachers experience in teaching basic skills to different age groups were presented as depicted in Table 4.8 for the results of one- way ANOVA and Table 4.9 independent samples t- test.

Firstly, a one- way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the relation between class size and the difficulties teaching basic skills to 66-71 month-old students. At the $p < .01$, there was a statistical significance in difficulties teachers faced by class sizes: $F(6, 259) = 3.618$, $p = 0.002$, $\eta^2 = 0.08$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference between groups was small ($\eta^2 = .08$). Only 8 % of variance in difficulties teachers experienced in teaching basic skills to 66-71 month-old students was accounted for by class sizes. Post- hoc comparisons using the Sheffé test indicated that Group 1 (≤ 20) ($M = 1.83$) was statistically different from Group 4 (25- 26) ($M = 1.39$). The mean scores of other groups of class sizes were not statistically different from one another.

4.3.5. Difficulties Experienced in Teaching Academic Skills by Background Variables

To answer the second question of the fifth research question, the one- way ANOVAs were performed along with independent samples t- tests. Below only the background variables having a significant effect on the difficulties teachers faced in teaching academic skills to different age groups were presented as depicted in Table 4.8.

First, one- way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the relation between the number of 66-71 month-old students and the difficulties of teaching academic skills to 66-71 month-old students. At the $p < 0.01$, there was a statistical significance in difficulties teachers faced teaching academic skills to this age group by the

number of 66-71 month-old students: $F(4, 245) = 3.618, p = 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.08$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference between groups was small ($\eta^2 = .08$). Only 8 % of variance in difficulties teachers faced in teaching academic skills to 66-71 month-old students was accounted for by the number of 66-71 month-old students. Post-hoc comparisons using the Sheffé test indicated Group 2 (teachers who had 5- 8 students) ($M = 1.78$) significantly differs from Group 5 (teachers who had more than 20 students) ($M = 1.17$). The mean scores of other groups of the numbers of 66-71 month-old students were not statistically different from one another.

4.3.6. Difficulties Experienced in Teaching Different Age Groups by Background Variables

To answer the second question of the seventh research question, the one-way ANOVAs were performed along with independent t- tests. Beforehand, mean scores of each age group according to the sum of teaching basic skills, academic skills and managing classroom subscales of the questionnaire were calculated. Below only the background variables having a significant effect on the difficulties teachers experience in teaching to different age groups were presented as depicted in Table 4.8.

First, another one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the relation between class size and the difficulties of teaching to 66-71 month-old students. At the $p < .001$, there was a statistical significance in difficulties teachers experienced by class sizes: $F(6, 268) = 3.397, p = 0.003, \eta^2 = 0.07$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference between groups was small ($\eta^2 = .07$). Only 7 % of variance in difficulties teachers experienced in teaching to 66-71 month-old students was accounted for by class sizes. Post-hoc comparisons using the Sheffé test indicated that groups did not differ from one another.

Secondly, another one-way analysis of variances showed that at the $p < .01$ level, there was a statistical significance in difficulties teachers experienced in teaching to 66-71 month-old students by the numbers of 66-71 month-old students: $F(4, 251) = 4.665, p = 0.003, \eta^2 = 0.07$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference between groups was quite small ($\eta^2 = .07$). Only 7 % of variance in difficulties teachers experienced in teaching to 66-71 month-old students was accounted for by different numbers of this age group in their classes. Post-hoc comparisons using the Sheffé test indicated that the mean scores of each group were not statistically different from one another.

Table 4.8

One-Way ANOVA Summary for Difficulties Experienced by Teachers by Background Variables

Difficulties in	Variables	Categories	M	SD	N
Adaptation and Preparation Activities	Class Size $F(6, 283) = 3.778^*$	20 students or less	1.71	.89	57
		21- 22 students	1.47	.79	32
		23- 24 students	1.16	.81	33
		25- 26 students	1.45	.75	48
		27- 28 students	1.73	.83	35
		29- 32 students	1.68	.70	49
		33 students and more	1.99	.76	31
	Number of 60-65 Month-old Students in Class $F(4, 265) = 3.778^*$	none	1.25	.87	82
		1- 2 students	1.74	.77	64
		3 students	1.70	.67	29
		4-5 students	1.94	.72	49
		6 students and more	1.53	.76	42
		Number of 66-71 Month-old Students in Class $F(4, 267) = 5.427^*$	4 students or less	1.34	.76
	5- 8 students		1.68	.74	58
	9- 12 students		2.02	.91	40
13- 19 students	1.67		.80	53	
20 students and more	1.45		.73	53	
Planning the School Year	Number of 60-65 Month-old Students in Class $F(6, 282) = 8.852$	none	1.21	.92	83
		1- 2 students	1.65	.70	64
		3 students	2.04	.77	29
		4-5 students	1.85	.71	51
		6 students and more	1.80	.87	43
	Number of 66-71 Month-old Students in Class $F(4, 267) = 4.926^*$	4 students or less	1.32	.89	64
		5- 8 students	1.82	.74	58
		9- 12 students	1.81	.83	41
		13- 19 students	1.77	.72	55
		20 students and more	1.39	.95	54
Implementing Game and Physical Activities	Class Size $F(6, 283) = 3.778^*$	20 students or less	1.51	.99	57
		21- 22 students	1.36	.80	33
		23- 24 students	1.09	.84	35
		25- 26 students	1.17	.92	49
		27- 28 students	1.78	.75	35
		29- 32 students	1.63	.91	50
		33 students and more	1.45	.90	31

Table 4.8 (cont'd)

Difficulties in	Variables	Categories	M	SD	N
Teaching Basic Skills to 66-71 Month-old Students	Class Size $F(6, 259) = 3.618^*$	20 students or less	1.83	.74	51
		21- 22 students	1.57	.57	28
		23- 24 students	1.39	.65	27
		25- 26 students	1.21	.79	46
		27- 28 students	1.56	.75	33
		29- 32 students	1.43	.67	46
Teaching Academic Skills to 66-71 Month-old Students	Number of 66-71 Month-old Students in Class $F(4, 245) = 5.174^*$	33 students and more	1.66	.71	29
		4 students or less	1.45	.74	45
		5- 8 students	1.71	.72	56
		9- 12 students	1.65	.73	40
		13- 19 students	1.30	.68	54
Teaching to 60-65 Month-old Students	Number of 60-65 Month-old Students in Class $F(4, 188) = 3.443^*$	20 students and more	1.17	.71	51
		none	1.16	1.15	5
		1- 2 students	2.29	.65	61
		3 students	2.40	.56	29
		4-5 students	2.32	.76	51
Teaching to 66-71 Month-old Students	Class Size $F(6, 268) = 3.397^*$	6 students and more	2.16	.84	43
		20 students or less	1.87	.67	52
		21- 22 students	1.47	.59	30
		23- 24 students	1.41	.64	30
		25- 26 students	1.25	.77	47
	Number of 66-71 Month-old Students in Class $F(4, 251) = 4.665^*$	27- 28 students	1.50	.67	33
		29- 32 students	1.41	.65	47
		33 students and more	1.60	.64	30
		4 students or less	1.45	.67	45
		5- 8 students	1.75	.63	57
		9- 12 students	1.64	.72	41
		13- 19 students	1.34	.66	55
		20 students and more	1.28	.69	54

Note. $*p < .01$

Table 4.9

Summary of Independent Samples t- tests for Difficulties Experienced by Teachers by Background Variables

Difficulties Experienced by Teachers in	Variables	Categories	M	SD	N
Adaptation and Preparation Activities	Type of School $t(286) = 4.32^*$	Public	1.64	.80	281
		Private	.35	.35	11
Planning the School Year	Type of School $t(286) = 4.316^*$	Public	1.65	.83	281
		Private	.75	.895	11

Note. $*p < .01$, two- tailed

4.4. Open-ended Questions

Of the participants, 119 teachers responded to the optional open-ended questions. Even though questions were to reveal teachers' ways/ methods of handling the difficulties with the new school system, a few of them also stated more other difficulties they faced. Some of them were worth mentioning in this part. Later, their ways of handling overall problems were read and coded as themes. Then their frequencies were presented.

4.4.1. Other Difficulties in Relation to New School System

In this part, other difficulties were explained by 24 teachers out of all 301. These difficulties reported apart from the ones included in the closed questions were presented along with the frequencies.

As seen in Table 4.10, teachers mostly stated that especially lower aged student group created problems in terms of their difficulties in adapting school such as crying, wetting or fake tummy aches etc. Then books for adaptation and preparation activities were reported to be sent one month later after the school started ($n= 7$). Besides, lower aged students were reported to get bored and tired easily ($n= 6$) while upper aged students were reported to get bored in doing adaptation and preparation activities ($n= 3$). Finally, teachers ($n= 4$) condemned about long texts in Turkish textbooks, and students complaining about fake aches in class time.

Table 4.10

Other Difficulties

Reported Difficulties	<i>f</i>
Lower aged student group had problems in adaptation to school.	10
Books for adaptation and preparation activities did not arrive on time.	7
Lower aged student group easily got tired.	6
Lower aged student group easily get bored.	6
Texts in Turkish reading books were long and boring.	4
Upper aged student group get bored in adaptation and preparation activities.	3
Fake aches	3

During adaptation and preparation activities, teachers ($n= 3$) stated that the students having attended kindergarten and upper- aged student group were early- finishers and consequently they got bored. As it was emphasized by a teacher having only 72 and over month-old students in her class:

Uyum süresi 72 ay üstü çocuklar için çok uzun geldi. Süreci kısa tuttum.	The students over 72 months old found the adaptation process too long. I kept it short.
--	---

A teacher having eight 60-65 month-old, eleven 66-71 month-old, and fifteen 72 and over month-old students emphasized this point as following:

Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarında 72 ay ve üstü çocuklarda ve anaokuluna gitmemişlerde yaşadığım tek sorun faaliyeti çok çabuk bitirmeleri...	During adaptation and preparation processes, the only difficulty I had with 72- and over 72 month-old students and those who had not attended kindergarten was that they finish activities too early...
---	---

Another teacher added to this point saying the ones who were finished with the activities early made noise and she always had to give them more activities to prevent it.

Stated as another problem by a number of teachers was the texts in Turkish books which were very long and boring for the students.

... bu yavrularımız okumaya geçtikten sonra şu anda kullandığımız Türkçe kitaplarımız tüm çocuklarımızın sıkılmasına ve bizlerin de çalışma zorluğuna sebep oldu... Yeni okumaya geçen öğrenciye 6- 7 sayfa süren öyküler olmaz diye düşünüyorum.	... once our students acquired literacy skills, the texts in Turkish textbooks made them to boredom and in turn, caused us difficulties in working with them... I believe that 6 – 7- page- long stories are not appropriate for the ones who have just mastered reading.
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Problems with lower aged group of students were not just confined to teaching basic/ academic skills or managing classroom, it was also others stated by three of the teachers as follows:

Uyuma, sık sık karın ağrısı, çişini yapma, ağlama, yazamama vb.

Falling asleep, frequent stomachache, wetting, crying, difficulty in writing etc.

71 ve altındaki (71 aylık) öğrenciler genel olarak daha fazla hastalık şikayetinde bulundular. Asılsız karın ağrıları. Velilerle daha çok çatışma yaşadılar. Okulda karşı bıkkınlık oluştu. Bu öğrenciler dersten çok kopuyorlar. Sınıfta farklı dünyalardalar. Kendilerine bakamıyorlar. Tenefüslerde oyun alanında daha zor yer buluyorlar. Şikayetleri daha çok oluyor. Tuvalette çok kalıyorlar. Çabuk sıkılıyorlar.

Generally, students 71 months old and under 71 months old complained more from sickness. They complained of fake tummy aches. They had more conflicts with their parents. They experienced fatigue from school has occurred. These students are switched off in class. They cannot look after themselves. They have more difficulty in finding space in the playground. They complain more and they spend more time in toilets. They get bored faster.

One of the teachers who had only one 60-65 month-old students claimed that that student could not adapt to school even though she tried hard. Another teacher who had only one 66-71 month-old student put forward:

Okumayı, yazmayı, diğer dersleri arkadaşları gibi öğrendi. Fakat çok zorlandı. Zaman zaman yetişemediğinde ağladı.

S/he learned how to read and write and other lessons the way his/ her peers did. However, it was difficult for him/her. From time to time, when s/he did not catch up, s/he would cry.

Another teacher had problems with teaching in terms of arranging the time:

Okuma- yazma çalışmaları Aralık ayında başladı. Ancak uygulamamız gereken plan, dersler, kitaplar geçen yılın Eylül ayında okuma- yazma öğretimi için hazırlanmış. Zaman az, işleyecek konu fazla. Sıkıştırarak, az zamanda fazla ders işleyerek planı tamamladık.

Literacy instruction started in December. However, the lesson plans, lessons and books to be used had been prepared for the previous September. Too many topics to cover, so little time. But we caught up by covering more topics in a shorter time.

Lastly, even though it seems that while teachers ($n= 10$) who filled in the open-ended questions mentioned lower aged students' difficulties in learning, two of the teachers were not thinking the same as mentioned by one who had thirteen 66-71 month-old and twelve 72 and over month-old students:

Genellikle sorunlar yaşa bağlı değil. Aile kontrolü ve ilgisi ya da çocuğun kişilik özellikleriyle alakalı. Bu gibi sorunlar için bireysel önlemler alındı.

Generally problems are not related to the ages of the students but to family control and interest in the children or to the students' personality. For these kinds of problems, individual steps were taken.

Another teacher having four 60-65 month-old students and four 66-71 month olds thought the same apparently:

Sınıfımda 60-65 aylık çocuklarda fazla sıkıntı yaşamadım aileleri çok ilgili oldukları için. Genelde anasınıfına gitmeyen ve aile ilgisi olmayan çocuklarda sıkıntı çektim.

In my class, I did not have difficulty with 60-65 month-old students because their parents cared much for them. Generally, I did with those who had not attended kindergarten or with those whose parents did not care much for them.

Still, it seems that the number of teachers who had problems with lower age groups was far more than the number of teachers who thought that problems were not related to the age of the students.

4.4.2. Strategies Used in Dealing with Problems in Relation to New School System at First Grade Level

Common methods of problem handling were shown in Table 4.11 below. As depicted in this table, it is clear that in dealing with the problems they encountered, mostly, 52 of teachers having answered open-ended questions asked for more support and collaboration from families. Then, they reported that they ($n= 50$) frequently used games, songs, stories and rhymes and they ($n= 50$) cared for each student individually. 35 of teachers stated that they frequently explained the rules, and 33 of them having answered the open-ended question section reported that they benefitted from internet and other materials. Extra care and focus were made on improving psycho- motor abilities of children by 31 teachers. While 30 teachers applied heterogeneous teaching in their class, only 4 teachers reported practices of homogeneous teaching. Techniques to increase motivation ($n= 20$) and counselling ($n= 7$) were emphasized to be benefitted in coping with problems. In addition, 17 of teachers claimed that they did frequent revision of topics. They asked for help from kindergarten teachers ($n= 10$) and other first grade teachers ($n= 10$) and upper aged students in class ($n= 4$) and school employee ($n= 2$). Drama ($n= 8$), visual materials ($n= 8$) were reported to be used in classes to handle problems. Lastly, less work was reported to be assigned to lower aged student group ($n= 4$) and reading texts in Turkish textbooks were shortened ($n= 5$) to deal with the problems teachers encountered.

Table 4.11

Strategies Used in Dealing with Problems in Relation to New School System at First Grade Level

Methods	<i>f</i>
More support and collaboration from families was called for.	52
Frequently games, songs, rhymes and stories were used.	50
Students having difficulties were individually cared.	50
Frequent explanation of rules was made.	35
It was benefitted from other materials (including internet).	33
Extra focus was made to improve the psycho- motor abilities.	31
Heterogeneous teaching was applied.	30
Techniques to increase motivation were applied.	20
Frequent repetition and revision of topics were made.	17
Help was asked for from other 1 st grade teachers.	10
Help was asked for from kindergarten teachers.	10
Drama was used.	8
Visual materials were frequently used.	8
Students were counseled.	7
Help was taken from upper aged students.	7
Reading passages were kept short.	5
Less work was assigned to lower aged student group.	4
Homogenous teaching and planning was applied.	4
Help was asked for from school employee.	2

At first, it was clear that most of the teachers called for *parent support and collaboration* to deal with the problems ($n= 52$). Especially parents of 60-65 month-old students and of the ones who did not attend kindergarten were asked for their support and collaboration in improving their children's adaptation to the school and literacy skills. First of all, most teachers mentioned that they contacted parents so often either face-to-face/by phone or through frequently organized meetings to facilitate learning of the lower age students. Some teachers stated that they were in contact with parents every day to talk about their children's learning and progress. One of the most striking points was obtained from a teacher working in a public school; he stated that he organized meetings with the parents and

talked to them (/gave them trainings) about child development to urge children's learning at home. In addition, a teacher having problems with lower age students' getting bored easily and going to the toilet so often in class time organized meetings with parents just to solve this issue and she stated that it could only be solved at the end of the first academic term through parent help. Secondly, parents were included in learning and teaching process. A teacher emphasized that she gave homework both to the students and to the parents to do collectively at home to accelerate the acquisition of literacy skills. Another teacher working in a public school reported that she asked for help from the parents to diversify the materials. Lastly, parents were included in solving lower age students' problems of self-care. One of the teachers invited parents to the school in lunch time to help their children meet their needs in eating and going to the toilet. Plus, parent help was stated to be asked to get students follow class and school rules.

As another method applied by most of the participants, *games and songs, rhymes and stories* were frequently used ($n= 50$) along with drama in teaching ($n= 10$) and in mostly managing the classroom. In order to handle the problems, to keep students' attention up high and focused on the lesson, many of the participants stated that they benefitted from attention games during class time. Also, most of the teachers pointed out that they played games and told stories when students got bored, especially lower- aged students who were mentioned to get bored and tired easily in a number of times in the responses. Again most of the teachers stated that drama was used to create awareness of the class and school rules and managing the classroom. Songs were also used by teachers to have students follow class and school rules. Three or four teachers claimed that even though they dramatized the lessons, it did not always work with lower age group of students as articulated the following way by one of the teacher having ten 60-65 month-old and ten 66-71 month-old students:

Öğrencilerin dikkati çok kısa süreli.
Genelde dersi oyunlaştırmaya çalışsam
da sınıfta tutup okuma yazma
öğretmek çok zor oldu. Çok kısa
sürede yoruldukları için özellikle
yazmada çok sıkıldılar.

Students' attention span is very short. Even though I generally tried to dramatize the lessons, it was very difficult to teach literacy keeping students in class. Because they got tired very fast, they got bored especially with writing.

Another method was that teachers *individually cared for lower- aged group of students* when they had difficulties learning ($n= 50$). In this sense, certain points requiring more explanation or teaching in relation to basic skills or school/ class rules, were stated to be explained and shown individually to the students. With students, especially younger ones and the ones having more problems with learning, it was pointed out that more time was

spent individually with them and their progress was observed more. To them, more class activities were assigned individually. Some teachers emphasized that they talked to the students, especially to younger students or the ones having more difficulties, and listened to them and tried to understand them more often than they did with other age groups. In explaining instructions or activities, younger students were explained individually according to the solution of a teacher. Another teacher emphasized that she repeated or taught problematic subjects individually to the students in the lessons requiring independent study such as painting or free activities lessons. Another teacher stated that she had children sit at the back and she cared for them individually in class time. Some teachers claimed that they did the activities together with each student having difficulties with psycho- motor abilities, and each student was given materials according to their specific level.

In relation to the problems arisen especially in managing the classroom, *frequent explanation and repetition of rules* were stated to be applied by the teachers ($n= 35$). Teachers generally made explanations more on why students should follow the rules and some teachers emphasized that they provided them with some examples of good behaviors from the heroes in stories. Some teachers used drama technique with this method as well to remind the students of the rules as explained above. It was also stated by one of the teachers that almost every- day repetition was taken place and sometimes it was emphasized by another teacher this was practiced with the rules hung over the walls and reminded often. A teacher working in a private school stated that she prepared PPT presentation of rules and they were explained whenever needed through this presentation. Finally, encouraging empathy type of activities to make students be aware of the rules was applied by some.

Another method applied by the teachers was to *get benefit from other materials* they found on internet or in other books to deal with the problems arisen ($n= 33$). Especially in dealing with the problems with the books of the preparation and adaptation activities which arrived 1 month after the schools opened, different books were utilized by making copies of them to use in class. Also, to increase children's attention on activities, some teachers stated to have used interesting and fun materials. One of the teachers especially claimed that she found different activities on internet to improve the motor abilities of children and used them in class, and students enjoyed those a lot especially 3D drawing exercises. Another method and intensely mentioned in the questionnaires was to find other materials instead of the texts available in Turkish textbooks (as explained above, teachers complained a lot from the texts in Turkish books, which were reported to be long and not appropriate for the level of the lower-aged students who could only read towards the end of the term.). As shown in Table

4.11 above, to deal with long Turkish texts, other short reading materials were used or reading passages in textbooks were shortened ($n= 5$).

All in all, while some teachers used cost benefit techniques of benefitting from other materials such as PPT or overhead projectors, some teachers needed school resources for sure. Among these teachers, one of them stated a striking point which was:

Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları süresinde öğrencilerde kitap olmadığı için renkli fotokopi çektirildi. Bu da maddi olarak bizi etkiledi.	During adaptation and preparation activities, because students did not have books, we copied documents in color. And this affected us financially.
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Also, other two teachers highly emphasized that it was not always possible to depend upon the school resources to do activities. Besides, teachers stated that they frequently used visual materials ($n= 8$) in their classes to get attention of lower age groups and while teaching basic/ academic skills.

Another method was to make *extra focus on psycho- motor abilities of lower age student group and the students who did not go to the kindergarten*($n= 33$) by assigning more time and more activities to improve the motor abilities, and especially by giving more line drawing activities to this age group ($n= 5$). Then activities such as painting or playing with play dough and so on were mostly stated to be applied in the classroom to improve children's fine motor control, hand muscles and single finger movements in other words pre- writing skills. Some teachers pointed out that they made extra focus on the students who did not go to kindergarten by showing them individually how to cut or stick paper or use scissors. Additionally, teachers stated that they showed how to use class instruments and how to write by holding students' fingers, hands and wrists.

Heterogeneous teaching was stated to be a method used to teach to different age groups to deal with the problems of teaching to different age groups in the same classroom. Most of the teachers emphasized that in their classes there were three or even four different level groups and they had to make three- four different plans and get prepared accordingly for each lesson. Most of them applied teaching differently and giving different homework to each level in the class. Some of these teachers claimed that they arranged different skill- level groups and worked with each of these groups individually.

Another method was *motivating students* ($n= 24$), among which awarding good behavior was intensely used ($n= 19$). Almost all of these teachers, in handling with the difficulties of classroom management, stated that they awarded good behaviors to condition them mostly through external rewards (such as chocolate, candies, playing games, stickers etc.). Moreover, some of them ($n= 5$) emphasized that they showed their love and affection

to the children and how much they cared for them, hence this way by increasing intrinsic motivation they claimed that students adapted to the school and loved it and problems were tried to be minimized. A few teachers, on the other hand, emphasized that even though they encouraged good behavior through external rewards, they did not work in dealing with problems arisen in managing the classroom.

Help from other 1st grade teachers ($n= 10$), kindergarten teachers ($n=10$) and upper-age students ($n= 5$) and school personnel ($n= 2$) was asked for. Help from 1st grade teachers was stated to be asked for the collaboration in planning the new school system and decision was taken together with other teachers. Besides, help was asked for when teachers were faced with teaching to lower age students. In terms of materials and ideas on teaching techniques, mostly in adaptation and preparation activities, help from kindergarten teachers was asked for. In addition, in teaching basic skills, upper aged students' help was called for as two of the teachers explained in detail:

Çalışmalarda büyük yaş grubunu yardımcı gibi kullanarak, yönergeleri anlamaları için büyük yaş grubunu ilk etkinliklerde kullanarak, anlamalarını sağladıktan sonra onları grup lideri yaparak (önledim).

(I took steps) by getting upper- age group engaged in class activities as assistants to teachers and in getting them engaged in the first activities and afterwards by making them group leaders.

Küçük çocuklar çabuk yoruldu. Eksik çalışmalarını arkadaşları okudu, onlar yazdı.

Lower age students got tired fast. Their friends read and they wrote their incomplete work.

Another methods of dealing with the problems were frequent repetition and revision of the subjects ($n= 17$), especially for lower age group of students. Sometimes this frequent repetition was said to be assigned to the families and they were asked to do revision at home through homework given by the teachers. They were also claimed to be counseled when they had problems in class ($n= 7$).

Children were claimed to be counseled when they had problems in class ($n= 7$). Plus, even though by most of the teachers more activities were given to lower age group, some teachers ($n= 4$) gave less work to them. Finally, again even though most of the teachers explained that they applied heterogeneous teaching, some pointed out that they utilized homogeneous teaching and planning ($n= 4$).

Finally, there were a few teachers who were thinking that there was no method or way to deal with the problems with lower age students:

Öğrenme yaşı gelmeyen çocuklara alınabilecek bir önlem yok. Zamanı gelen öğrenciye şekil verilebilir, zamanı gelmeyen öğrenciyle uğraşmak ise öğretmenlikten bıktırır, bezdirir.

There is no step to take for the students who do not reach to the age to start learning. Students who do can be shaped; teaching the ones who do not only tires and sickens the teacher.

Another teacher having four 60-65 month-old and 9 66-71 month-old students claimed that she had neither enough experience nor knowledge in terms of the psychological and physical development of this age group as following:

... okul öncesi ve bu yaş grubunu gerek psikolojik gerekse anatomic gelişimleri konusunda yeterli deneyim ve bilgiye sahip olmadığımı, "bir daha aynı yaş grubunu okutur musunuz?" sorusuna kesinlikle HAYIR derdim...

...I do not have neither experience nor knowledge in terms of the psychological and physical development of this age group and pre- school children; I would say NO to the question "Would you teach the same age group again?"

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this part, conclusions of the study and implications for practice and further research are presented.

5.1. Discussion of the Results

Education policies are dynamic and multidimensional (Trowler, 2003), and even though they are decided at the upper levels of the educational system mostly, the success of implementation is to a great degree determined by local agents and in educational settings these agents are principals, teachers and other professionals. With *the amendments in primary education law* issued in 2012, changes regarding curriculum and structure of Turkish education system were started to be implemented. One part of these changes was in first grade education. According to the change in education, school starting age was decreased from 72 to 60 months and compulsory school entry age to 66 months, and a three-month period of adaptation and preparation activities was added to the curriculum along with changes in content and name of game and physical activities lesson. Before 2013- 2014 academic year starts, MONE made some changes in regulations and accordingly compulsory school starting age became 66 months unless parents of children aged up to 69 months claim with a petition that their children are not ready for school or the ones of children aged between 68- 72 months documenting it with a medical report. Therefore the discussion made in this section is about the difficulties encountered by first grade teachers in 2012-2013 academic year.

In the study, almost half of the teachers had one to five 60-65 month - old students in their class while 28.7 % had none. More than half of the teachers had none to twelve 66-71 month - old students in their class. Almost 20% of the teachers had one or none 72 (and more) month - old students while most of the teachers had two to twelve students of this age group. It seemed that the number of different age groups changed, and the proportion of 60-65 month-old students in a class was mostly less than other age groups' as can be explained by the fact that just before school started in 2012, the MONE increased compulsory school starting age from 60 months to 66 months, and the decision of whether 60- 66 month-old students would start school or not was left to the parents. Hence, those 60-65 month-old students did not start school since it was compulsory, but started school based on their parents' decision/ permission.

5.1.1. Discussion of Difficulties Teachers Experiencedd in New School System

Results of this study revealed certain insights into what difficulties teachers faced in teaching first grade during 2012-2013 academic year in the new school system. These are presented below and later implications for each are offered.

In teaching adaptation and preparation activities, teachers reported that most difficulties emerged during teaching to 60-65 and 66-71 month-old students and the ones who did not attend kindergarten education. It seemed that younger children in class had more difficulties in doing the activities of adaptation and preparation period. The ones who did not go to kindergarten had difficulties in doing them as well, which might be due to the fact that the adaptation and preparation activities were related to preschool activities. According to the literature, children who are not ready for first grade had problems in adaptation to school; better adaptation is linked to the specific skills acquired beforehand. *It seems that in this study both younger children in class and the ones who did not attend kindergarten had problems since they were not ready for school environment and they did not start schooling with the specific skills essential in easy transition.* Moreover, in open-ended questions, some teachers reported that lower- aged students had difficulties in adaptation to school, and they got easily tired or bored with the activities of this period. At the same time, 72 months and older students and the ones who attended kindergarten were claimed to get bored as well in this period, which is because this group of students did the activities much earlier than their peers or they might have already done such kinds of activities in kindergarten. In addition, some teachers mentioned that books for this period arrived late at schools that they had difficulties in arranging activities. The related literature underlines that for a facilitated transition to school, there are three essential components which are children readiness for learning, school's readiness for children and community/ parental readiness. In this study, to what extent parents were involved in children's learning or they provided adequate environment for the improvement of pre- school skills was not the concern; however, *it is clearly seen that neither younger students and the ones who had not gone to kindergarten nor the school in terms of the provision of the resources required (in fact, the MONE which provides the books to the schools) were ready for children's smooth transition to school and learning.*

In planning the school year in the new school system, teachers reported that they had most difficulties in planning and teaching math and Turkish literacy to different age groups- in other words, heterogeneous classes- which is underlined in the related literature that teachers find it hard and challenging to teach these particular forms of classes without

essential skills and knowledge. In the related literature some researchers favor heterogeneous classes since they think that this class form creates an environment where zone of proximal development (as Vygotsky proposes) is maximized. However, it is also highly present in the literature that the benefits of these forms of classes require different teaching methods, class arrangement and size, specifically- trained teachers who are experts on individualized teaching and so on. It seems that *the reason why teachers had difficulties in teaching to heterogeneous class might be their lack in essential skills to teach heterogeneous classes and the MONE's unpreparedness in the provision of in- service training in these skills or pre-service education to teachers so that they could easily adapt themselves in teaching to different forms of classes.*

In addition, some teachers who responded to the open-ended questions claimed that reading passages in Turkish textbooks were so long that students got difficulties in reading and bored or teachers had difficulties in having these texts read. This seems to be an issue related to the MONE's unreadiness in the provision of the appropriate books to the schools as a requirement of the new system.

In implementing game and physical activities, teachers reported to have difficulties in finding activities for the implementation of game and physical activities. Plus, they proposed that they had difficulties in arranging class and school conditions to assist the implementation of this lesson. Overall, resources available to the teachers seem to be problematic to them in this issue. As the related literature proposes, play is dramatically important for cognitive, social, language and physical development of children. It is important to arrange the environment and resources for game or physical activities to help children benefit from the advantages of play at most (Ginsburg, 2007). The findings of this study also support this point quite well. Both the school facilities and teachers' repertoire of physical activities could not allow students to benefit the course at most. Most of the goals and objectives of this lesson as issued by the MONE require a hall both indoors and outdoors. It may be concluded that *the fact that the teachers had difficulties in arranging class and school conditions could be due to the absence of these halls and their unfit to the required skills and knowledge to create activities for the course. Books could be provided by the MONE or trainings could be provided beforehand to deal with these problems.* Potentially, these all may have diminished the effect of play on development of children in terms of the quality of time children spent playing.

In teaching basic skills, 60-65 month-old students seemed to have created challenges for teachers. Problems teaching how to use books and notebooks and getting

students understand, follow and perform their instructions with this age group were reported to create problems for teachers almost always. *These problems seem to be mostly related to readiness for learning; it may be concluded again that this age group tend to have difficulties since they have not developed the basic manners for school, or their cognitive and language development does not allow them to understand and perform the instructions.* The result of this study is consistent with what the related literature also underlines that at this age children can usually follow instructions, but they still need time to get better at following instructions. Difficulties encountered in the usage of books and notebooks can be related to children's unfamiliarity with this manner and readiness in terms of these skills, and inadequate physical development. At the age of 5, as the related literature proposes, children have more controlled gross motor skills; however, in terms of fine motor skills they may not still copy letters or numbers in a neat way. That may be the reason behind children's difficulties in using books or notebooks properly.

Teachers thought that teaching basic skills was problematic to a middle extent as for 66-71 month-olds. Teacher seldom had problems with 72 month and older students teaching these skills, which suggests that difficulties with 60- 71 month-old students can be linked to children's development since most basic skills such as sitting appropriately at desks, pencil grasp or using scissors are closely related to motor skills as the literature underlines; and at the age 6 or more, children are expected to use their wrist bones and it is fully developed by this age (Robinson, 2008).

In teaching academic skills, teachers had problems with 60-65 month-old students almost always; they had problems with 66- 72 month-old students to a middle extent while with 72 months and older students they seldom had problems.

The extent teachers had problems with different age groups in teaching basic skills was more or less same with the extent in teaching academic skills. Especially, teachers reported to have problems with having 60- 71 month-old students write letters, numbers, words and sentences along with drawing geometrical shapes and handwriting. As proposed by Berninger et al. (1992), factors such as "rapid, automatic production of alphabet letters, rapid coding of orthographic information, and speed of sequential finger movement" (p.257) are all predictors of handwriting, and subsequently componential skills of writing are determined by fine motor skills and cognitive development of children. *Development in fine motor skills and cognition can be claimed to be one of the factors in challenges encountered in teaching writing.* Moreover, Dunsmuir & Blatchford (2004) propose home writing and season of birth, pre- reading skills as important factors behind writing proficiency of

children. *Season of birth seems to be an issue for this study as well since younger students had more difficulties in writing and by 6 or 7 children fully develop their wrist bones to write numbers or letters in a neat way; parent readiness for children's schooling can be a reason behind children's home reading skills along with home writing may be linked to children readiness and specific skills required to be ready for learning.*

In managing classroom, 60-65 month-old students frequently created externalizing behavior problems for teachers in terms of having this age group participate in and get focused on class activities and follow school and class rules, prevent this age group interrupt peers and communicate effectively with teachers. Teachers had problems with 66-71 month-old students to a middle extent, again especially having students participate in class activities and get focused on lesson seemed to be problematic while teaching academic skills seldom created problems with 72 month and older students. The related literature indicates that behavior problems in class are proposed to be the causes and consequence of school readiness and adaptation difficulties. It is proposed by CEIEC (2008) that children already experience difficulties in obeying and following school and class rules when they do not experience a smooth transition. *It may be concluded that the problems experienced by teachers with 60- 71 month-old students may be related to readiness issue again. In addition, teachers' facing difficulties in having 60- 71 month-old students get focused on lesson can be explained by attention problems observed in children as the literature explains that this may be caused by low achievement in reading.* Besides, children have shorter attention span which is at most up to 20 minutes, and by age or even month it increases. Their problem behaviors in attention to the lesson may have been also caused by the activities/ tasks or teaching/ learning which required longer attention span. Problem behaviors might also be due to children's socio- emotional development since it plays an important role too as the literature suggests that at 6 years children begin to construct a moral sense.

In summary, teachers had difficulties in teaching to 60-65 month-old students more than they did to 66-71 and 72 to over aged students. Difficulties experienced with 66-71 month-old students occurred to a middle extent and cannot be overlooked though. It seemed that difficulties teachers experienced in the new school system tend to be age- related as indicated by the responses of some in open-ended questions, and developmental milestones for each age group also underline that children's development increases with age and at particular ages children show particular improvements in their developmental abilities; however as research on the effect of age on students is inconclusive and suggest that mostly school readiness play an important role in school life, it may be also concluded that child

readiness can be accountable for the difficulties experienced. However, this does not necessarily mean that age needs to be taken for granted because child readiness is also an issue linked to age and children' being ready for school in terms of their physical, cognitive, emotional, socio- emotional, language development. In addition, it is highly important to underline that child readiness alone cannot be proposed as the determinant of the difficulties experienced with this new system; it must be considered that teacher readiness along with school readiness play an important role. To what extent teachers were prepared in teaching younger age groups and heterogeneous classes and the school was in terms of providing the environment for this particular case can be questioned since these two can be accountable for the difficulties experienced as teachers also face challenges alone whatever the change is when they are imposed to a change or new educational policies. It can therefore be assumed that *child readiness, teacher and school readiness can be the reasons behind the difficulties experienced*. These findings are consistent with the findings underlined in the readiness and transition literature.

5.1.2. Discussion of Relations between Difficulties and Background Variables

To begin with, **in implementing adaptation and preparation activities**, class size was found to have an effect on difficulties teachers faced in the new school system in this study. Very large number of data can be found in the related literature on the question of the relationship between class size and teacher and student practices. However, there was not enough study on how teachers experience difficulties teaching to a mixed-ability and 60 to 72 and over month-old students in class in relation to class. Even though research does not propose a conclusive result in terms of large or small class sizes, in kindergarten classes or beginning years of schooling studies show that less students in class create less problems for teachers and result in more achievement. However, data in this study must be interpreted with caution that just based on this study, it seems that the ones who had less than 20 students or more than 27 students had more difficulties in teaching these activities compared to others. Therefore it is not possible to reach a conclusion about whether larger or smaller class size has a relationship with the difficulties experienced.

Teaching to 60-65 and 66-71 month-old students was already rated as creating difficulties to teachers; the number of these age groups in class was found to have a significant effect on difficulties in teaching adaptation and preparation activities. Especially teachers who did not have any 60-65 month-old students had fewer problems than the ones having one to two or four or five students of this age group. Besides, teachers having four or less students of 66-71 month-old had fewer difficulties than the ones who had nine to twelve

students in their class. It seems that younger students created problems for teachers, and more of them created more problems. This finding is new in research, and *it may have any association with early school starting age literature and teachers' readiness or competencies for teaching to this younger age group*. Accordingly, it is underlined that studies show different results in terms of the effect of starting school early; however this result of this study is consistent with the ones who showed that early entry age and students who went to school unready for learning would not bring about expected results. Therefore, early starters created more problems to teachers in adaptation and preparation period and teachers might be unprepared to teach younger students.

Type of school also had a significant effect on teachers' difficulties in adaptation and preparation activities, and *this difference might be due to the resources. This finding agrees with the literature which underlines that private schools are more successful in the provision of materials* and the fact that books for adaptation and preparation activities were reported to have arrived at schools late (one month after school started) since finding resources were also reported to be creating difficulty by teachers working in public schools.

In planning the school year in the new school system, the number of 60-65 month-old students, 66-71 month-old students in class and type of school teachers were working in were found to have significant effects on the difficulties teachers faced. Teachers who did not have any 60-65 month-old students had reportedly quite fewer difficulties than the teachers who had; teachers who did not have any student of this age group encountered fewer difficulties than the ones having three and more 60-65 month-old students in their class. In addition, there were significant differences among the numbers of 66-71 month-old students in class in relation to the difficulties experienced. It seems that planning the school year and teaching to different age groups were found to have significantly affected by the number of students of different age groups (60- 71 months) available in class. *Again this might be due to the fact that early starters were not ready for school and they demonstrated low performance and created more problems for teachers*. This finding also supports the related literature that teachers find teaching heterogeneous

In addition, teachers working in public and private schools differed in the intense of the difficulties they experienced in planning the school year in the new school system. Teachers working in public schools had difficulties much more frequently than their counterparts working in private schools.

In implementing game and physical activities, class size was found to have an effect on difficulties teachers experienced. Since the program of this lesson required teachers

to make arrangement in school and class conditions and in this study, teachers reported that they had difficulties in making these arrangements, class size was found to be seemingly having a relation with these in this sense.

In teaching basic skills, when it comes to teaching these skills to 66-71 month-old students, class size was found to have a significant effect on the difficulties faced. Teachers who had five to eight students of this age group reported to have more problems than the ones who had twenty and more students in class. *Class homogeneity in age and season of birth might be a factor behind this finding, which is consistent with the findings on mixed-aged classes.* Without essential skills and knowledge, teachers encounter challenges in teaching mixed-ability classes. Additionally, it seems that as one of the most important finding of this study, *younger students compared to older ones had much more difficulties that they were required to be taught in teaching methods tailored according to their needs.*

In teaching academic skills, the number of students aged 66-71 months in class was found to have a significant effect on difficulties experienced by teachers and it was found that teachers having five to eight students of this age group had more difficulties than ones having twenty or more students. Class homogeneity in age and season of birth could be factors behind this situation as well and teaching in this context should have been tailored according to their needs.

Overall teaching to 60-65 month-old students was found to be affected by the number of this age group available in class. Overall teaching to 66-71 month-old students was found to be affected by the number of this age group in class and class size. These are expected results since the challenge faced in teaching a particular age group is related to the number of particular age group and their availability in class.

In summary, it seems that in the new school system, class size had significant effects of difficulties encountered in implementing adaptation and preparation difficulties, game and physical activities, and teaching basic skills to 66-71 month-old students and teaching to 66-71 month-old students overall; number of 60-65 month-old students had significant effects on difficulties with adaptation and preparation activities and teaching students aged 60-65 months overall; the number of 66-71 month-old students had significant effects on difficulties in adaptation and preparation activities, planning the academic year and teaching to 66-71 month-old students overall; type of school had a significant effect on adaptation and preparation activities, planning the academic year.

It seems that among differences among and between variables, class size is leading more differences than other variables.

In summary, striking points in terms of difficulties teachers faced and the differences among different variables can be summarized as following:

- In adaptation and preparation activities, teachers had frequent difficulties in teaching to 60-65 month-old students and students who did not go to kindergarten. It was found that having 60-65 month-old students and the type of schools teachers were working were important factors in the difficulties faced. This shows that these students did not come to school with the specific skills to make a smooth transition to school and start schooling, in other words, they were not ready to start school even in doing type of kindergarten activities they had difficulties which might be due to their inadequate cognitive, psychomotor and language development.
- Teaching Turkish and math to different age groups seemed to create the most difficulty for teachers in terms of planning the school year and this was significantly affected by the number 60-65 and 66-71 month-old students along with type of school teachers were working. This point seems to be in accordance with the arguments which state that teaching mixed-ability classes require different knowledge and skills; if teachers are not trained or educated to teach these classes, it is so expected that they would face challenges. Neither students nor teachers were ready to be in this kind of class arrangement.
- Teachers had difficulties in implementing game and physical activities in terms of arranging class and school conditions and finding activities, and class size was found to be an important factor behind this. It seems that MONE and schools were not ready for this lesson and teachers' repertoire of activities were not adequate.
- Teachers had frequent difficulties teaching basic and academic skills to 60-65 month-old students. This is one of the most important result of this study since teachers' lack of skills and knowledge in teaching this age group along with students' being unprepared for schooling might be two reasons and could have been dealt with before this new system was started to be implemented. However, it seems that the cautions taken at this point were not adequate.
- Overall the number of 60-65 and 66-71 month-old students available in class was an important factor in teaching to each group on its own.

5.1.3. Teacher Strategies in Dealing with Problems in Relation to New School System

The difficulties or problems mentioned above were reported by teachers as the ones creating challenges for them in teaching first grade in the new school system. According to the open-ended questions which asked how teachers dealt with these challenges, it was seen that most of teachers who responded to the questions stated that they asked for support and collaboration from families, which is also proposed by the literature as an effective method in children's readiness and transition to school (Dockett & Perry, 2009; NGO, 2005; Nonoyama-Tarumi & Bredenberg, 2009).

Another method applied was frequent use of games, songs, stories and rhymes in class by 50 respondents to the open-ended questions. Use of these kinds thematic plays is also supported in the related literature as helping children develop their cognition, language and social abilities and wellbeing (ECF, 2008; Ginsburg, 2007; Milteer et al., 2011; Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010). Teachers mostly stated that they get benefit from these games and plays when children, especially younger ones, got bored and in order to get their attention back on class activities. Also for this reason, teacher claimed to use visual materials as also pointed out by Öztürk and Uysal (2013).

In addition, individualized teaching and care was used as a method by 50 respondents and heterogeneous teaching was applied by 20 teachers as pointed out by Öztürk and Uysal (2013). Individualized teaching is quite important especially in heterogeneous classes as underlined by Wolfson (1967), teachers are expected to change roles in heterogeneous classes and should apply individualized teaching which is open to change and adaptations in class tasks. It must be noted that this type of teaching requires specific skills and knowledge to reach the favorable results.

35 respondents to open-ended questions also stated that they frequently reminded students of class and school rules to deal with problem behaviors in their class. The understanding rules and behaving accordingly at the part of children is also related to children's moral and socio- emotional development as underlined in developmental milestones which in a sense supports the point of teachers reporting that they had most difficulties in dealing with problem behaviors of younger children.

33 teachers stated that they used other materials including internet while teaching their class. This is especially in accordance with the teachers stating that they had to find other materials to comply with the late arrival of adaptation and preparation books.

Another method used was extra focus made to improve psycho- motor abilities of children through assigning more activities and line drawing tasks. This point is important as teachers stated that they had most problems with teaching writing to children. Activities urging pre- writing skills were also reported to be applied especially to the students who did not go to kindergarten. Also, in the literature, emphasis is frequently made upon children's development of fine motor skills at different pace and rate, and practice in physical abilities of children accelerates development. Then it seems that this method was important for both improvement in pre- writing skills and development of psychomotor abilities.

24 of the respondents claimed that they used techniques to motivate children and awarded their good behavior and showed their affection and love to them in order to deal with problem behavior in class. These motivational techniques are also important to build strong relationship with children, which in turn increases their motivation and their academic achievement as the related literature highlights. Moreover, increasing teacher- student interaction is approached as one of the most important factors in children readiness and achievement and success.

Teachers claimed that they sought for help from other first grade teachers, kindergarten teachers, older students in class along with school personnel. It seems that this method constituted collaboration among teachers and peers and this is supported in the literature as for its advantages of forging the bond among school employees and among peers.

Other methods benefited and stated by teachers were frequent repetition and revision of topics, counseling (especially younger children), giving less work to younger children, homogenous planning and teaching. Some teachers claimed that they kept reading texts short since they reported that they were long and not appropriate for the age groups in class.

In summary, teachers used a number of methods to deal with problems and difficulties they experienced in the new school system. It seems that methods were mostly applied for younger children in order to facilitate their adaptation to school and their learning, and also to accelerate their development and readiness for literacy education. Also, it seems that methods used were to facilitate teaching in mixed- age class form.

5.2. Implications

With the new school system, it was found in this study that teachers had frequent difficulties related to children readiness for school and school and community readiness for children starting school at the age of 60 to 65 months. This study also revealed that mixed- age children getting educated in the same class created problems for teachers in teaching

Turkish and math mostly. However with changes before 2013- 2014 academic year starts, 60-65 month-old students were started not to be accepted to school, even though this study still proposes results regarding the difficulties faced in adaptation and preparation activities, game and physical lesson and teaching to 66-71 month-old students and children of different ages getting educated in the same class and curriculum path. Therefore, following implications for practice, MONE and further research are investigated taking these points besides the ones concerning the 2012-2013 school year.

5.2.1. Implications for Practice and MONE

Based on the discussion above- mentioned, difficulties, methods of handling these difficulties mainly center around teaching smaller aged students and mixed- age class. As previously pointed out, the related literature is not conclusive in terms of the effect of early school entry age and it cannot be claimed that only age is accountable for challenges presented, the following implications and recommendations for practice (teachers, principals and parents) and MONE are done under the umbrella of two themes: readiness for school and teaching mixed- age classes and facilitation of difficulties encountered overall as the literature suggests.

First of all, in terms of getting children ready for learning is not an easy job. It requires a comprehensive program at the beginning of first grade and pre- school education, especially for the ones who are already behind their peers in terms of their development stance. In this study, it is clearly seen that most difficulties were arisen in teaching to 60-65 months- old students or difficulties regarding adaptation and preparation activities occurred with the ones who did not attend kindergarten. It can be concluded that these students were not ready for learning or school, and besides most of the children in this age group might be presumably the ones who could not have had time to attend kindergarten and pre- school education due to the fact concerned mandated change was issued just towards the end of the previous school year. Only based on the findings of this study, it cannot be claimed that adaptation and preparation period was not effective or effective though. However still, it can be stated that comprehensive transition and readiness programs are found to have a positive effect on children transition to school in the literature, hence it seems that planning and implementing these kinds programs is highly important by including elements of school and parents readiness for the children who would start first grade. It is worth mentioning that in the literature it is also highly underlined that preparing children for school through planning and running comprehensive, intensive and long- term adaptation and preparation programs

are mostly recommended instead of readiness assessment instruments (which are mostly focusing on developmental milestone).

It is undeniable that readiness is related to developmental dimensions such as children's physical wellbeing and motor development, socio- emotional development their approaches to learning and general knowledge. It is important for teachers and parents to provide tasks in school and out of it regarding these dimensions since practice accelerates development. Most problems arisen in teaching basic manners and academic skills were claimed to be linked to children's development in fine motor skills and development of wrist bones since these children are not expected to show fully developed control over writing based on their age. Whenever required (as put into practice by one of the teachers who responded to open-ended questions) informing parents of these developmental domains and ways of practices to improve developmental abilities can be a concern for teachers and principals while providing in- service education to teachers in relation to child development and its recent underpinnings can be a concern for the MONE. Besides, as highly recommended and explained in terms of its ample advantages in the related literature, encouraging and spreading kindergarten education among children (preschool education) can be claimed to be of one of the most important issues both MONE and teachers and parents should consider in the education of young children.

Secondly, even though teaching heterogeneous classes are approached as both an advantage and disadvantage in the literature, disadvantages of it are related to teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching to heterogeneous classes and individualized teaching (Joan, 1996; Wolfson, 1967). This clearly requires extensive and careful planning and adaptation of tasks according to the needs of each child and teachers to be educated in their pre-service education and trained in concordance with the demands of this form of classes. Providing in-service training on how to make plans and adaptation according to the needs of heterogeneous classes, and resources and accordingly curriculum programs can be a concern for MONE.

Thirdly, parent participation in children's learning is highly important as the literature suggests. Lack of it is claimed to impede adaptation to school. Although participants of this study mostly applied parent support and collaboration in dealing with difficulties, it can also be encouraged by both teachers and principals, even assigning tasks to parents, to guide them in children's learning at home environment might be a concern.

Another point is applying and encouraging practices to improve componential skills of literacy can be a concern for teachers. Manners such as sitting correctly at desk,

appropriate pencil grasp are claimed to foster writing ability and participants of the study already applied methods such as assigning more line drawing to the children having difficulties with writing or individually caring for them or assigning tasks regarding fine-motor skills were already applied by teachers to deal with writing difficulties. Apart from these practices, parent involvement can be boosted through assignments of home writing with parents and including more exposure to print materials at home.

Another point is that big class size is proposed in the literature as affecting negatively academic learning of children and in this study it was found as a significant factor in preparation and adaptation difficulties, games and physical activities and teaching to 66-71 month-old students. Class size can be a concern for school organization for principals and MONE. Moreover, class size may be a factor in teaching to 66-71 month-old students in 2013- 2014 academic year due to their inclusion in first year education, however still researching its effect and whether big or small class size is really an issue is highly recommended before making a conclusion on the point.

Resource- scarcity is also proposed in the literature as affecting negatively academic learning and plays are proposed to be highly important in children cognitive, socio-emotional and physical development. Teachers in this study stated that they had difficulties teaching adaptation and preparation activities due to material scarcity and teaching games and physical activities due to lack of adequate school and class arrangements and appropriate activities (materials). This point can be an urgent concern for MONE and schools.

Lastly, attention problems are found to be affected and correlated by low achievement in reading scores and reading difficulties along with low word recognition. Behavior problems regarding attention of children on class activities were found to be experienced by teachers, especially frequently with 60-65 month-old students and to a middle extent with 66-71 month-old students. Again, in and out of reading experiences can be exposed to children by teachers and parents, and literature underlines that children with more emotional and instructional support show less behavior problems. Therefore, children can be provided with ample opportunities and support for their emotional and academic development. Moreover, teachers' difficulties with long reading texts Turkish books and claims that children get bored or distracted in reading these texts can be a concern for MONE.

Getting these children ready for first grade and providing them an effective learning environment in first grade is not only important for just for success in first grade education.

A successful and healthy school entry matters for individuals whole- school time period in a direct or indirect manner.

5.3.2. Implications for Further Research

This study provided a picture into the challenges teachers experienced with changes in first grade education in the new school system at the local level and how those were dealt with by them. However, still more research on all levels of this nationwide change is highly recommended along with more in- depth research on the concern of this study, and based on discussion and implications, following points (listed from broad to specific) can be considered in further research.

At first, as known widely, challenges or difficulties a teacher face in a new system cannot be just explained with its relevance to objective factors such as socio-economic level of the school areas or gender. Subjective factors such as teachers' willingness to arrange teaching methods according to the system changed or new context play a role in the intensity of difficulty experienced. In this study, only objective factors are included to see the factors behind difficulties experienced. Subjective factors such as teachers' values and ideology or emotional reactions (frustration, ambiguity etc.) toward the new school system and difficulties they experienced and their teaching can be investigated.

Secondly, education policy literature extensively focuses on policy discretion; in other words, how policies are interpreted by teachers and how they are enacted accordingly. In this study, teachers' interpretation of the change and how they perceived it was not included in the study. Hence, how this policy is interpreted by primary school teachers and the relationship between their interpretation and their practices can be studied.

Thirdly, challenges experienced in first grade education in the new school system were just studies at the part of teachers; how changes are experienced by principals and parents can be studied as well.

Fourthly, what challenges teachers and children experience in the second grade and problems regarding the themes of this study can be investigated to see whether the same problems persist.

Fifthly, just the problems experienced by teachers regarding the adaptation and preparation activities were investigated in this study, however effects of it and to what extent it prepared children for literacy education can be studied in more depth.

Finally, the effect of teachers' handling methods reported in this study can be researched in terms of its effect on student behavior or its success.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Questionnaire of the Study in Turkish

ÖĞRETMEN ANKETİ

Sevgili Öğretmenler,

Bu araştırma, eğitim sistemimizde 2012-2013 öğretim yılından itibaren uygulanmaya başlanan yeni 1. sınıf eğitim öğretim etkinliklerini değerlendirmek amacıyla yapılmaktadır. Bu araştırma sonunda elde edilen veriler yüksek lisans tezime temel oluşturacak ve aynı zamanda MEB dahil ilgili kurum ve kuruluşlarla paylaşılacaktır.

Bu ankette **kimlik bilginiz sorulmamaktadır** ve vermiş olduğunuz yanıtlar **tamamen araştırma amacıyla** kullanılacaktır. Bu yüzden lütfen görüşlerinizi samimi ve gerçekçi bir biçimde ifade etmekten çekinmeyiniz.

Tuğba Boz
ODTÜ Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim Anabilim Dalı

I. Demografik Bilgiler

Sizin için en uygun olan kutucuğu işaretleyiniz veya cevabını yazınız.

1. Çalıştığınız okul türü: Devlet okulu Özel okul

2. Bu yıl dahil kaç yıldır sınıf öğretmenliği yapıyorsunuz?: _____ yıl

3. Şu an okuttuğunuz sınıfın mevcudu: _____ öğrenci

4. Şu an okuttuğunuz sınıfta aşağıda sıralanmış olan okula kayıt yaş aralıklarında kaç öğrenci bulunmaktadır?

60-65 aylık: _____ öğrenci

66-71 aylık: _____ öğrenci

72 aylık ve üstü _____ öğrenci

II. Uyum ve Hazırlık Çalışmaları

Lütfen aşağıda yer alan **uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları** ile ilgili soruları, tecrübelerinize göre en uygun olan kutucuğu işaretleyerek belirtiniz. **“Geçerli değil”** seçeneğini ilgili durum sizin sınıfınız için geçerli değil ise (örneğin 7. soruda sınıf mevcudunuzun fazla olmadığını düşünüyorsanız) işaretleyiniz.

Olası Sorunlar	Geçerli değil	Hiçbir zaman	Nadiren	Bazen	Sıklıkla	Her zaman
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarını OKY (okula kayıt yaşı) 60-65 aylık olan öğrencilere yaptırırken sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarını OKY 66-71 aylık olan öğrencilere yaptırırken sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarını OKY 72 aylık ve üstü olan öğrencilere yaptırırken sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları becerilerini kazandırırken anaokulu/ anasınıfı okumuş öğrencilere yaptırırken sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları becerilerini kazandırırken anaokulu/ anasınıfı okumamış öğrencilere yaptırırken sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarını etkinlikleri yürütürken sınıfın fiziksel koşullarının elverişli olmamasından dolayı sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarını yürütürken sınıf mevcudunun fazla olmasından dolayı sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarını yürütürken materyal eksikliğinden dolayı sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anasınıfına gitmiş öğrencilerin ilgisini uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları etkinliklerine yoğunlaştırmada sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları için etkinlik bulmada sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarını planlamada (yıllık, haftalık, günlük vb.) sorun yaşadım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Yukarıda verilen ve sizin sorun yaşadığımız maddelerle ilgili **ne tür önlemler** aldığımızı aşağıda verilen boşluğa yazınız.

III. Planlama

Lütfen aşağıda verilen planlama ile ilgili soruları tecrübelerinize göre en uygun olan kutucuğu işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

	Hiç sorun yaşamadım	Az sorun yaşadım	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım	Çok sorun yaşadım
Türkçe dersini farklı yaş gruplarından gelen öğrencilerin seviyesine uygun işlemekte	0	1	2	3
Matematik dersini farklı yaş gruplarından gelen öğrencilerin seviyesine uygun işlemekte	0	1	2	3
Hayat bilgisi dersini farklı yaş gruplarından gelen öğrencilerin seviyesine uygun işlemekte	0	1	2	3
Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları süreci sonunda öğrencilerime ilk okuma- yazmayı öğretmeye ne zaman başlayacağımı belirlemede	0	1	2	3
Yıllık planımda, uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları bitiminden bu eğitim- öğretim yılı sonuna kadar olan sürenin planını yapmada	0	1	2	3

Yukarıda verilen ve sizin sorun yaşadığımız maddelerle ilgili **ne tür önlemler** aldığınızı aşağıda verilen boşluğa yazınız.

IV. Oyun ve Fiziki Etkinlikler

Lütfen aşağıda verilen oyun ve fiziki etkinliklerle ilgili soruları **tecrübelerinize göre en uygun olan kutucuğu** işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

Olası Sorunlar	Hiç sorun yaşamadım	Az sorun yaşadım	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım	Çok sorun yaşadım
Haftalık programımda oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersi için ayrılması gereken beş ders saatini verimli kullanmada	0	1	2	3
Oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersini uygularken materyal bulmada	0	1	2	3
Oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersini işlemek için sınıf koşullarını ayarlama	0	1	2	3
Oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersini işlemek için okul koşullarını ayarlama	0	1	2	3
Oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersi için etkinlik bulmada	0	1	2	3

V. Temel Beceriler

Lütfen aşağıda sıralanan davranışları kazandırırken yaşadığınız deneyimlere göre soruları sizin için en uygun olan seçeneği işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

Davranışlar	Okula kayıt yaşı 60-65 aylık öğrencilere kazandırırken Bu öğrenci grubu sınıfınızda mevcut değil ise lütfen işaretleyiniz: 0				Okula kayıt yaşı 66-71 aylık öğrencilere kazandırırken Bu öğrenci grubu sınıfınızda mevcut değil ise lütfen işaretleyiniz: 0				Okula kayıt yaşı 72 aylık ve üstü öğrencilere kazandırırken Bu öğrenci grubu sınıfınızda mevcut değil ise lütfen işaretleyiniz: 0			
	Hiç sorun yaşamadım	Az sorun yaşadım	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım	Çok sorun yaşadım	Hiç sorun yaşamadım	Az sorun yaşadım	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım	Çok sorun yaşadım	Hiç sorun yaşamadım	Az sorun yaşadım	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım	Çok sorun yaşadım
Kalem tutma	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Silgi kullanma	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Boyama	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Çizgi çizme	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Sırada doğru oturma	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Kitabı/ defteri düzgün kullanma	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Araç gereç (makas, tutkal vb.) kullanma	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Tuvalet gereksinimini düzenli karşılama	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Beslenme gereksinimini düzgün karşılama	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Yönergeleri dinleme	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Yönergeleri anlama	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Yönergeleri yerine getirme	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Kendini sözlü ifade etme	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3

Yukarıda verilen ve sizin sorun yaşadığınız maddelerle ilgili **ne tür önlemler** aldığınızı aşağıda verilen boşluğa yazınız.

VI. Öğrenme Alanları

Lütfen aşağıda sıralanan öğrenme alanları/ davranışları kazandırırken yaşadığınız deneyimlere göre soruları sizin için en uygun olan seçeneği işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

	Henüz İşlenmedi	Okula kayıt yaşı <u>60-65</u> aylık öğrencilere kazandırırken Bu öğrenci grubu sınıfınızda yok ise lütfen işaretleyiniz: O				Okula kayıt yaşı <u>66-71</u> aylık öğrencilere kazandırırken Bu öğrenci grubu sınıfınızda yok ise lütfen işaretleyiniz: O				Okula kayıt yaşı <u>72</u> aylık ve üstü öğrencilere kazandırırken Bu öğrenci grubu sınıfınızda yok ise lütfen işaretleyiniz: O			
		Hiç sorun yaşamadım.	Az sorun yaşadım.	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım.	Çok sorun yaşadım.	Hiç sorun yaşamadım.	Az sorun yaşadım.	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım.	Çok sorun yaşadım.	Hiç sorun yaşamadım.	Az sorun yaşadım.	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım.	Çok sorun yaşadım.
Sesleri/ harfleri ayırt etme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Bitişik eğik yazı	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Sesleri/ harfleri okuma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Sesleri/ harfleri yazma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Kelime okuma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Kelime yazma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Metin okuma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Metin oluşturma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Rakamları yazma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Doğal sayılarla toplama	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Doğal sayılarla çıkarma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Geometrik şekillerden yapılar oluşturma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Ölçme (uzunluk, zaman, para vb.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

VII. Sınıf Yönetimi

Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları sizin için en uygun seçeneği işaretleyerek belirtiniz.

Olası Sorunlar	<u>Okula kayıt yaşı 60-65 aylık öğrenciler için cevaplayınız. Bu öğrenci grubu sınıfınızda mevcut değil ise lütfen işaretleyiniz: 0</u>				<u>Okula kayıt yaşı 66-71 aylık öğrenciler için cevaplayınız. Bu öğrenci grubu sınıfınızda mevcut değil ise lütfen işaretleyiniz: 0</u>				<u>Okula kayıt yaşı 72 aylık ve üstü öğrenciler için cevaplayınız. Bu öğrenci grubu sınıfınızda mevcut değil ise lütfen işaretleyiniz: 0</u>			
	Hiç sorun yaşamadım	Az sorun yaşadım	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım	Çok sorun yaşadım	Hiç sorun yaşamadım	Az sorun yaşadım	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım	Çok sorun yaşadım	Hiç sorun yaşamadım	Az sorun yaşadım	Orta derecede sorun yaşadım	Çok sorun yaşadım
Öğrencilerin söz kesmeden dinlemesini sağlamada	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Öğrencilerin sınıf ve okul kurallarına uymasını sağlamada	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Öğrencilerin dikkatini derse yoğunlaştırmasını sağlamada	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Öğrencilerle etkili iletişim kurmada	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Öğrencilerin ders etkinliklerine katılmasını sağlamada	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3

Yukarıda verilen sorun yaşadığınız maddeler ile ilgili **ne tür önlemler** aldığınızı aşağıda verilen boşluğa yazınız.

Appendix B. Questionnaire of the Study in English

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Teachers,

This study is conducted to examine the implementation of new system at first grade level which was started to be implemented in 2012-2013 academic year.

At the end of this study, data obtained through this questionnaire will constitute the database of my thesis, and the results will be shared with interested institutions including the MONE. In this study, your personal identity information will not be asked and your responses will be used only for the research. Please do not hesitate to express your views in a sincere and realistic manner.

Tuğba Boz
METU Educational Sciences

I. Personal Information

Please mark the box which best suits you or write your response for each question below.

1. Type of This School: Public School Private School

2. How many years have you been working as an elementary school teacher?: ____years

3. Your Class Size: _____ students

4. How many students are there in each one of the following school entry age group in your class this year?

60-65 month-old: _____ students

66-71 month-old: _____ students

72 months and older: _____ students

II. Adaptation and Preparation Activities

Please mark the box which best suits your teaching experience for each question below. If the question does not apply to you and your class (for example, if you think that you do not have an overcrowded class), please mark the “*Not Applicable (NA)*” box.

Potential Problems	NA	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I had difficulties in having 60-65 month-old students do the adaptation and preparation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had difficulties in 66-71 month-old students do the adaptation and preparation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had difficulties in having 72 and over month-old students do the adaptation and preparation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had difficulties in having students who went to kindergarten be skilled with the adaptation and preparation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had difficulties in having students who did not go to kindergarten be skilled with the adaptation and preparation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had difficulties in having students do the adaptation and preparation activities due to inadequate classroom conditions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had difficulties in having students do the adaptation and preparation activities due to big class sizes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had difficulties in having students do the adaptation and preparation activities due to lack of materials.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had difficulties in having attention of students who went to kindergarten on the adaptation and preparation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had difficulties in finding classroom activities for the adaptation and preparation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had difficulties in planning (annual, weekly, daily) the adaptation and preparation activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate the strategies you use in dealing with the difficulties you experience in implementing adaptation and preparation activities in the space provided below.

III. Planning

Please mark the box which best suits your teaching experience for each question below.

	I did not face any difficulties	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.
teaching Turkish lesson to different age groups.	0	1	2	3
teaching Mathematics lesson to different age groups.	0	1	2	3
teaching Social Studies lesson to different age groups.	0	1	2	3
determining the time I would start teaching literacy skills.	0	1	2	3
planning the time of teaching/ learning literacy skills after the end of the preparation and adaptation activities process.	0	1	2	3

Please indicate the strategies you use in dealing with the difficulties you experience in planning the new school system in the space provided below.

IV. Game and Physical Activities

Please mark the box which best suits your teaching experience for each question below.

Potential Problems	I did not face any difficulties.	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.
allocating and effectively implementing five hours for the game and physical activities lesson weekly.	0	1	2	3
finding materials in the implementation of game and physical activities lesson.	0	1	2	3
arranging class conditions in the implementation of game and physical activities lesson.	0	1	2	3
arranging school conditions in the implementation of game and physical activities lesson.	0	1	2	3
finding activities in the implementation of game and physical activities lesson	0	1	2	3

V. Basic Skills

Please mark the box which best suits your teaching experience for each question below.

	<u>While teaching to the students of 60-65 month-old school entry age:</u> If this age group is not available in your class, please mark: 0				<u>While teaching to the students of 66-71 month-old school entry age:</u> If this age group is not available in your class, please mark: 0				<u>While teaching to the students of 72 months and older school entry age:</u> If this age group is not available in your class, please mark: 0			
	I did not face any difficulties.	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.	I did not face any difficulties.	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.	I did not face any difficulties.	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.
Behaviours												
pencil grasp	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
how to use eraser	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
painting	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
drawing	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
how to sit at the desk	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
how to use books properly	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
how to use class instruments	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
proper toilet manners	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
eating manners	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
attention to instructions	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
understanding instructions	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
performing instructions	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
oral expression	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3

Please indicate the strategies you use in dealing with the difficulties you experience in teaching basic skills in the space provided below.

VI. Academic Skills

Please mark the box which best suits your teaching experience for each question below.

	Not taught yet.	<u>While teaching to the students of 60-65 month-old school entry age:</u> If this age group is not available in your class, please mark: <input type="radio"/>				<u>While teaching to the students of 66-71 month-old school entry age:</u> If this age group is not available in your class, please mark: <input type="radio"/>				<u>While teaching to the students of 72 months and older school entry age:</u> If this age group is not available in your class, please mark: <input type="radio"/>			
		I did not face any difficulties.	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.	I did not face any difficulties.	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.	I did not face any difficulties.	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.
the distinction between particular sounds and letters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
hand writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
reading sounds and letters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
writing sounds and letters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
how to read particular words	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
how write particular words	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
how to read texts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
how to write a text	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
how to write numbers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
addition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
extraction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
drawing geometrical shapes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
measurement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3

VII. Classroom Management

Please mark the box which best suits your teaching experience for each question below.

	<u>While teaching to the students of 60-65 month-old school entry age:</u> If this age group is not available in your class, please mark: <input type="radio"/>				<u>While teaching to the students of 66-71 month-old school entry age:</u> If this age group is not available in your class, please mark: <input type="radio"/>				<u>While teaching to the students of 72 months and older school entry age:</u> If this age group is not available in your class, please mark: <input type="radio"/>			
Potential Problems	I did not face any difficulties.	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.	I did not face any difficulties.	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.	I did not face any difficulties.	I faced few difficulties.	I faced difficulties to a middle extent.	I faced a lot of difficulties.
preventing students' interrupting each other	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
having students follow class/ school rules	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
having students get focused on the lesson	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
communicating effectively with the students	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
having students participate in class activities	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3

Please indicate the strategies you use in dealing with the difficulties you experience in managing the problem behaviors in your class in the space provided below.

Appendix C. Permission Letter obtained from the MONE



T.C.
MİLLÎ EĞİTİM BAKANLIĞI
Yenilik ve Eğitim Teknolojileri Genel Müdürlüğü

Sayı : 81576613/605/1032734
Konu: Anket Uygulama İzni

20/05/2013

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİNE

İlgi: 20.05.2013 tarih ve 54850036-300-2294 sayılı yazı.

İlgi yazı ile Bakanlığımıza göndermiş olduğunuz Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Eğitim Programları ve Öğretim Ana Bilim Dalı yüksek lisans öğrencisi Tuğba BOZ'un "I. Sınıf Eğitim-Öğretim Uygulamaları ile İlgili Öğretmen Algıları" konulu araştırmasında kullanılmak üzere oluşturduğu veri toplama araçlarına yönelik izin talebi, Genel Müdürlüğümüz tarafından incelenmiştir.

Onaylı bir örneği Bakanlığımızda muhafaza edilen, uygulama sırasında da mühürlü ve imzalı örnekten çoğaltılan 6 sayfadan oluşan veri toplama araçlarının, gönüllülük esas olmak kaydıyla, örneklem seçilen okullarda uygulanmasında bir sakınca görülmemektedir.

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

Mustafa KOÇ
Bakan a.
Genel Müdür

EK: Veri toplama aracı (6 Sayfa)
Ankete Gönüllü Katılım Formu (1 Sayfa)
Ankete Gönüllü Katılım Formu (1 Sayfa)
Öğretmen Görüşme Formu (1 Sayfa)
Okul Listesi (5 Sayfa)

Güvenli Elektronik İmza
Aslı ile Aynıdır
20.05.2013

Bu belge, 5070 sayılı Elektronik İmza Kanununun 5 inci maddesi gereğince güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır. Evrak teyidi <http://evraksorgu.meb.gov.tr> adresinden 7830-4d15-399a-a63a-6048 kodu ile yapılabilir.

Atatürk Blv. 06648 Kızılay/ANKARA
Elektronik Ağ: www.meb.gov.tr
e-posta: adsoyad@meb.gov.tr

Ayrıntılı bilgi için: Ad SOYAD Ünvan
Tel: (0 312) XXX XX XX
Faks: (0312) XXX XX XX

Appendix D. Türkçe Özet (Summary in Turkish)

Giriş

Araştırmanın Amacı ve Önemi

Bu araştırma, 2012- 2013 yılından itibaren yürürlüğe giren 1. sınıf düzeyindeki eğitim- öğretim programının uygulanmasıyla ilgili öğretmenlerin karşılaştıkları zorlukları ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla yapılmaktadır. Kamuoyunda 4+4+4 olarak bilinen ilköğretim kurumları yönetmeliğinde değişiklik yapılmasını öngören kanunun getirdiği değişiklikler genel hatlarıyla zorunlu eğitimin 8 yıldan 12 yıla çıkarılması, eğitim yapısının üç basamaklı dört yıl süreyle ilkokul, ortaokul ve lise olarak değiştirilmesi, lise düzeyindeki öğrencilerin seçebileceği derslerin saatinin artırılması ve bu derslerin çeşitlendirilmesi ve son olarak birinci zorunlu sınıfa başlama yaşının 72 aylıktan önce 66 aylığa düşürülmesi ve veli iznine ve rızasına bağlı olarak da 60 aylık çocukların da okula kabul edilebilmesi. Bu çalışmayı ilgilendiren en önemli konu en sonda belirtilen değişikliktir. Okula başlama yaşının düşürülmesi ile birlikte okulun açıldığı günden itibaren başlayan ve üç ay süren uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları dönemi de programa ilave edilmiştir. Aynı zamanda, yaşın düşürülmesi ile birlikte haftalık 5 saat olacak şekilde oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersi de beden eğitimi ve spor dersinin yerine getirilmiştir. Tüm bu değişiklikler ilk bakışta sadece okul yapısını ilgilendiriyor gibi görünse de, zaten halihazırda uygulanmakta olan eğitim-öğretim programının ve kitapların değişmemesi ama bu program için ayrılan sürenin kısaltılması (uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları dönemi sebebiyle) olası birçok probleme sebebiyet vereceği düşünülmüştür. Aynı zamanda okula başlama yaşının düşürülmesi ile sınıfta 5, 5.5 ve 6 yaşını bitirmiş çocukların aynı programda eğitime tabi tutulması da öğretmenlerin karşılaşılabileceği sorunlara yol açabileceği öngörülmüştür. Bu sebeple, uygulamanın sınıf bazında ne gibi problemlere yol açtığını ortaya çıkarmak bu çalışmanın ana amacıdır.

Son elli yıldır dünyada, bilim ve teknoloji, kültürel, ekonomik, eğitim, ve pek çok alanda gerek bireylerin istek ve ihtiyaçları gerekse küresel eğilimler doğrultusunda hızla değişen ve sürekli yenilenen sistemlerin oluştuğunu görmekteyiz. Bu değişim ve gelişimler, bazen toplumun her kesimini bazen ise bir grubu ilgilendiren boyutlarda olabilmektedir. Eğitimdeki değişimler, eğitim olgusunun başlı başına toplum üzerindeki etkisinin ve kapsamının büyüklüğünden dolayı, bu konuda araştırma yapan ve üzerinde düşünen herkesi derinden ilgilendirmektedir. Fakat bu yapılan araştırmalar ve söylemler çoğunlukla uygulamaların planlama aşamasına odaklanmaktadır. Oysa ki, bilindiği üzere eğitimde yeni uygulamaların başarılı olması önemli ölçüde bu uygulamaların uygulama aşamasında

değerlendirilmesine ve elde edilen bilgiler ışığında gerekli düzeltme çalışmalarının yapılmasına bağlıdır.

Pressman & Wildavsky; Bardach; Berman & McLaughlin; Elmore; Van Meter & Van Horn (aktaran McLaughlin, 1987), eğitimde değişimin sonuçlarını belirleyen en önemli faktörlerden birinin uygulama süreci olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Datnow, Hubbord & Mehan (2002) ise reformların kağıt üzerinde yeterince ayrıntılı olmadığını ve önemli detaylarının yorumunun öğretmenlere ve müdürlere bırakıldığını düşünmektedir. Bu durumda, herbir okul, farklı şekilde yorumladığı değişimi farklı girişimlerde bulunarak gerçekleştirecek, bu da uygulamada farklılıklara yol açacaktır. Fullan (2007) da aynı şekilde düşünmekte ve değişimlerin başarısız olmasının sebebini işte bu yorum farkına bağlamaktadır.

Bu sebeplerden, bu araştırma bu yıldan itibaren 1. sınıf düzeyinde hayata geçirilen uygulamaların öğretmenlere ne gibi zorluklar veya problemler yarattığını değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Burada amaç hem uygulamaya dair bilgi almak hem de öğretmenler arasında varolan olası uygulama farklılıklarını ortaya çıkarmaktır.

Araştırma Soruları

1. Birinci sınıf düzeyinde uygulanan “uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarında” öğretmenler ne gibi zorluklarla karşılaştılar ve bu zorluklar sıralanan farklı değişkenlere bağlı olarak farklılık göstermekte midir: (a)okulun türü, (b) öğretmenin öğretmenlik tecrübesi, (c) sınıf mevcudu, (d) yaş gruplarının sınıfta dağılımı?
2. Birinci sınıf düzeyindeki eğitim öğretim programının “palanlama” sürecinde öğretmenler ne gibi zorluklarla karşılaştılar ve bu zorluklar sıralanan farklı değişkenlere bağlı olarak farklılık göstermekte midir: (a)okulun türü, (b) öğretmenin öğretmenlik tecrübesi, (c) sınıf mevcudu, (d) yaş gruplarının sınıfta dağılımı?
3. Birinci sınıf düzeyindeki eğitim öğretim programında “oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersini işlemede” öğretmenler ne gibi zorluklarla karşılaştılar ve bu zorluklar sıralanan farklı değişkenlere bağlı olarak farklılık göstermekte midir: (a)okulun türü, (b) öğretmenin öğretmenlik tecrübesi, (c) sınıf mevcudu, (d) yaş gruplarının sınıfta dağılımı?
4. Birinci sınıf düzeyindeki eğitim öğretim programında “temel becerileri öğretimde” öğretmenler ne gibi zorluklarla karşılaştılar ve bu zorluklar sıralanan farklı değişkenlere bağlı olarak farklılık göstermekte midir: (a)okulun türü, (b) öğretmenin öğretmenlik tecrübesi, (c) sınıf mevcudu, (d) yaş gruplarının sınıfta dağılımı?

5. Birinci sınıf düzeyindeki eğitim öğretim programında “öğrenim alanlarını kazandırmada” öğretmenler ne gibi zorluklarla karşılaştılar ve bu zorluklar sıralanan farklı değişkenlere bağlı olarak farklılık göstermekte midir: (a)okulun türü, (b) öğretmenin öğretmenlik tecrübesi, (c) sınıf mevcudu, (d) yaş gruplarının sınıfta dağılımı?

6. Birinci sınıf düzeyindeki eğitim öğretim programında “sınıf yönetiminde” öğretmenler ne gibi zorluklarla karşılaştılar ve bu zorluklar sıralanan farklı değişkenlere bağlı olarak farklılık göstermekte midir: (a)okulun türü, (b) öğretmenin öğretmenlik tecrübesi, (c) sınıf mevcudu, (d) yaş gruplarının sınıfta dağılımı?

7. Birinci sınıf düzeyindeki eğitim öğretim programında farklı yaş gruplarını eğitirken öğretmenlerin yaşadığı zorluklar sıralanan farklı değişkenlere bağlı olarak farklılık göstermekte midir: (a)okulun türü, (b) öğretmenin öğretmenlik tecrübesi, (c) sınıf mevcudu, (d) yaş gruplarının sınıfta dağılımı?

8. Öğretmenler eğitim- öğretim yılı içerisinde yaşadıkları sıkıntı, zorluk ve ya sorunun üstesinden gelmek için ne tür önlemler alıyorlar?

Literatür Taraması

Öğretmenler eğitim politikalarının cephedeki bürokratlarıdır ve yönetimin kamudaki yüzüdür. Literatüre göre öğretmenler eğitim politikalarını uygularken bir takım zorluklarla karşılaşır. Eğitim politikalarının uygulanmasında öğretmenlerin politikalara karşı davranışsal, bilişsel ve duyuşsal tepkiler oluşturduğu literatürde geniş yer bulmaktadır. Bu tepkilerin yoğunluğu, birçok faktörden etkilenmektedir. Çoğunlukla öğretmenlerin aldığı eğitime veya öğretmenlik becerileri ile değişimi nasıl algıladıklarına göre değişebilir. Aynı zamanda okulun türü, değişimi karşılarken varolan altyapısı, sınıfların mevcudu (özellikle yapılan çalışmalar sınıf mevcudunun ilk yıllarda öğrencilerin okuma yazma becerilerinin gelişme sürecinde etkili olduğu yönündedir) ve karma sınıflarda öğrencilerin yaş dağılımı gibi faktörler de öğretmenleri etkileyen değişkenler arasındadır. Bu aşamada literatürün özellikle üzerinde durduğu nokta politikalara karar verme aşamasında öğretmenlerin sürece ne kadar dahil edildiği ve ne kadar hazır olduğudur, çünkü bu duruma göre öğretmenlerin değişimi ve bu değişimin getirdiği rolleri benimseme algısı değişmektedir. Bu da doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak politikaların sonuçlarını etkilemektedir. Aynı zamanda eğitim-öğretimi etkileyen ve literatürde geniş yer alan bazı faktörler araştırma değişkenleri olarak eklenmiştir.

Eđitim politikaları iin nem arz eden unsurlardan biri de ieriđidir. zellikle bu deđiřimlerin hedef aldıđı dzey, sınıf veya yař grubundaki đrencilerin geliřimsel olarak politikayı nasıl karřılayacađı, sonuları ve uygulama sreciyle ilgili ngrde bulunmayı sađlayabilir. Bu alıřmanın dzeyi ilkokul 1. sınıf olduđu iin, yapılan alıřmanın nemli sorularından biri de 60- 72 aylık ve st ocuklarının biliřsel, fiziksel, psikomotor, duyuřsal, sosyal ve dil geliřiminin nasıl bir seyir izlediđidir. Literatrn neride bulunduđu en nemli nokta ocukların geliřimlerini farklı periyotlarla ve zamanlarda tamamladıkları zerinedir.

Bu tez alıřmasını ilgilendiren konuların literatrde nasıl yer aldıđı ile ilgili yapılan tarama sonucunda denilebilir ki ilkokula bařlama yařı ile ilgili yapılan arařtırma ve alıřmalar okula erken veya ge bařlamanın etkisi ile ilgili net bir sonu sunmamaktadır. Diđer bir deyiřle, btnsel anlamda literatr sonuları incelendiđinde okula erken bařlayan ocukların ge bařlayanlara gre daha avantajlı ya da dezavantajlı olduđuna dair bir sonuca ulařmak mmkn deđildir. Bu ařamada zerinde daha ok anlařılan ve fikir birliđi sađlanan konu okula hazırbulunuřluktur. Arařtırmalar birinci sınıf eđitimine geliřimsel ve psikolojik dzeyde hazır bulunan đrencilerin daha kolay bir okula uyum sreci geirdiđini ve daha bařarılı olduđunu savunmaktadır. Okula hazır bulunuřluluk đretmenin, okulun ve ailenin hazırbulunuřluluđunu da iermektedir. zellikle temel ve akademik becerileri kazandırmada ailenin okul ncesi dnemde ocuđuyla geirdiđi zaman nemli rol oynamaktadır. Aynı zamanda, okulda ocukların geliřimlerini hızlandıracak oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler gibi dersler iin okulun altyapısı byk nem teřkil etmektedir. Bu durumda, kısaca, đrencinin okula bařlama yařının đrencinin birinci sınıf bařarısı ve dolayısı ile yařayacađı sıkıntı veya zorlukları zerine etkisinin olduđu yadsınamaz, fakat okulun ve ailenin hazırbulunuřluđu ile ocuđun geliřiminin ocuđun birinci sınıf eđitim đretim yařamı ile dođrudan veya dolaylı varolan ilgisi arařtırmalarda gzlemlenmiřtir.

Yntem

Desen

Bu arařtırmada kesitsel tarama arařtırma modeli uygulanacaktır. Bu arařtırma modeli, arařtırmanın asıl amacına uygun olarak 301 đretmenden sađlanan verilerle 1. sınıf dzeyindeki eđitim đretim programının uygulanmasında đretmenlerin yařadıđı zorluklarla ilgili algılarını betimlemeye en uygun modeldir.

rnekleme

Bu arařtırma iin hedef evren Ankara ve Antalya'da grev yapan tm đretmenlerdir. Bu đretmenlerden ulařılabilir evren olacak řekilde rnekleme seimini

yapılmıştır. Örneklem seçimi için iki aşamalı orantısız tabakalı örnekleme yürütülmüştür. Öncelikle Ankara ve Antalya' daki ilçeler TÜİK'den alınan veriler ışığında (cadde bazında olsa da geneline bakılarak bir kanıya varılmış, bu konuda uzman görüşü de alınmıştır) sosyoekonomik gelişmişlik açısından üç bölgeye ayrılmıştır: Gelişmiş, orta gelişmiş, az gelişmiş. Gelişmiş ilçe olarak Çankaya/ANK ve Muratpaşa/ ANT, orta derecede gelişmiş ilçe olarak Kepez, Döşemealtı/ANT ve Keçiören/ANK, az gelişmiş ilçe olarak da Akseki, Gündoğmuş/ ANT ve Altındağ, Mamak/ ANK seçilmiştir.

İkinci aşamada, Antalya için, ulaşım bakımından araştırmacıya veriyi toplama kolaylığı sağlayacak ve sosyoekonomik verilere göre dört ilçeden toplamda 30 resmi devlet okulu ve özel okul seçilmiştir. Ankara için okul seçimi, bucakların sosyoekonomik verilerine göre yapılmıştır. Ankara'dan Antalya'ya kıyasen daha çok özel okul ağırlıklı toplamda 43 resmi devlet okulu ve özel okul seçilmiştir. Bu okullarda bulunan hem özel hem de devlet okullardaki tüm 1. sınıf öğretmenleri araştırmanın örneklemini oluşturmaktadır.

Veri Toplama Araçları

Tarama modeline uygun olarak araştırmanın sorularına cevap verecek nitelikte anket hazırlanmıştır (EK A).

Tüm veri toplama araçları 1. sınıf programlarıyla ilgili yazılan makale ve çalıştay raporlarının derin incelenmesi sonucu araştırmacı tarafından tez danışmanın görüş ve önerileri doğrultusunda hazırlanmıştır.

Ankette yedi ayrı bölüm vardır ve hem kapalı uçlu hem açık uçlu sorular mevcuttur. İlk bölümde öğretmenlerin demografik özelliklerini betimlemeye yönelik olgusal sorular yer almaktadır. Bu soruların sorulma amacı farklı değişkenlere göre öğretmen algılarının değişip değişmediğini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Ayrıca araştırmanın yürütüldüğü topluluğun çok iyi tanımlanması gerekmektedir.

İkinci bölümde bu yıldan itibaren geçerli olan uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları ile ilgili sorular yer almaktadır. Bu sorular öğretmenlerin bu süreçle ilgili tecrübelerini keşfetmek için oluşturulmuştur. Soruların bir kısmı, uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarını yürütürken hangi sebeplerden dolayı (sınıf mevcudunun fazlalığı, fiziksel ortamın elverişsizliği vb.) öğretmenlerin sıkıntı çektiği bilgisini bize sağlayacaktır. Bu sayede bu sıkıntı çekilen alanlarla ilgili yetkili kurumlara da yapıcı geridönüt sağlanabilir ve programın revize edilmesi durumunda bu araştırmanın bulgularına da danışılabilir.

Üçüncü bölüm, yürürlüğe konulan bu programla ilgili öğretmenin planlama yaparken ne tür zorluklar yaşadığını ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu sayede bu soru

yoluyla elde edilecek veriler ışığında öğretmenlerin hangi alanlarda yardıma ihtiyacı olduğuna dair geridönüt sağlanmış olunacaktır.

Dördüncü bölüm, geçen yıllarda haftalık 2 saat olarak işlenen beden eğitimi dersi yerine gelen ve haftalık 5 saat olarak düzenlenen oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersi üzerine soruları kapsamaktadır. Öncelikle bu bölüm yeni uygulamaya konulan bu dersle ilgili öğretmenlerin tecrübelerini ve algılarını saptamayı hedeflemektedir. Aynı zamanda bu kısımdan elde edilecek veriler ışığında yetkili kurum ve kuruluşlara, pratikte öğretmenlerin bu dersle ilgili hangi alanlarda yardıma ihtiyacının olduğu bilgisi sağlanabilir. Aynı zamanda dersin içeriği ile ilgili iyileştirme adımları atılırsa yapıcı geridönüt işlevi de görebilir.

Beşinci ve altıncı bölüm, öğretmenlerin farklı yaş gruplarıyla olan temel becerilerini ve öğrenme alanları davranışlarını kazandırmaya yönelik tecrübeleri üzerinedir. Bu bölümde farklı yaş gruplarını öğretmenler kıyaslayıp soruları cevaplayabilirler. Bu durum araştırmanın başka bir sınırlamasıdır. Fakat bu kısımda beklenen öğretmenlerin her yaş grubuyla olan algısını keşfetmek ve daha fazla sıkıntı yaşadığı yaş grubuyla ilgili hangi konularda veya ders konularında yardıma ihtiyacı olduğunu saptamaktır. Bu bölümden elde edilecek bulgular, sorun yaşanan becerilerin veya davranışların kazanımıyla ilgili olası iyileştirme çalışmalarında geridönüt işlevi görebilir.

Son olarak yedinci kısımda öğretmenlerin sınıf yönetiminde farklı yaş gruplarıyla yaşadığı tecrübeler üzerinde durulmuştur. Özellikle bu kısım, dersin akışına mani olabilecek unsurları ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflediği için ankette ayrı bir öneme sahiptir. Farklı yaş gruplarının sosyal olarak da farklılık gösterdiği alanlarla ilgili öğretmenlerin algılarını öğrenmek, ilkökul ders programlarında iyileştirme adımları atılırsa yapıcı geridönüt işlevi görmüş olur.

Ankette bazı bölümlerde açık uçlu sorular da sorulmaktadır. Bu sorular bu yeni programla ilgili tecrübelerine göre öğretmenlerin aldığı önlemler üzerinedir. Bu da bize sınıf bazında uygulamada farklılık olup olmadığı bilgisini sağlayacaktır.

Anket araştırmacı tarafından tasarlandığı için uzman görüşü alınmıştır. Ön uygulama anketin uygulanması için izin çıkar çıkmaz bir grup alt örnekleme yapılmış ve elde edilen sonuç dahilinde ankete son şekli verilmiştir.

Veri Toplama Süresi

Veri toplama süreci öncelikle üniversite etik kurulundan ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'ndan izin yazısının alınmasından sonra başlatılmıştır. Veri toplama süresi, her iki ilde toplamda 73 okula anketler tek tek dağıtıldığı için yaklaşık iki ay sürmüştür. Ayrıca

anketler okullara dağıtılmadan önce öncelikle herbir okulda bulunan müdür yardımcılara yapılan araştırmanın önemi ve amacı hakkında bilgilendirme yapılmıştır. Müdür yardımcılardan okulda bulunan birinci sınıf öğretmenlerine gönüllülük esasına bağlı kalınarak anketi vermeleri ve araştırmanın amacı ve hedefi ile ilgili bilginin de onlarla paylaşılması istenilmiştir. Toplamda 73 okuldan 63ü araştırmaya katılmış ve bu okullarda bulunan 351 öğretmenden 301i anketi yanıtlamıştır.

Veri Analizi

Veriler hem betimsel hem de çıkarımsal yöntemlerle analiz edilmiştir. Katılımcıların kişisel özellikleri ile uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarının uygulanmasında, birinci sınıf eğitim-öğretim programının planlama sürecinde, oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersini uygulamada, temel ve akademik becerileri kazandırmada ve sınıf yönetiminde karşılaştıkları sıkıntı, zorluk veya sorunlar frekans, yüzde ve aritmetik ortalamalarıyla sunulmuştur. Aynı zamanda, katılımcıların kişisel özelliklerinin bu sıkıntı, zorluk ve sorunlar üzerindeki etkisini incelemek amacıyla bir dizi tek yönlü varyans analizi ve bağımsız örneklem t- testi teknikleri kullanılmıştır. Kullanılan çıkarımsal yöntemler betimsel amaçlar dahilinde incelenmiştir.

Araştırmanın Sınırlılıkları

Öncelikle araştırmada birinci sorudaki uygulama düzeyindeki farklılıkları değerlendirmek için olan sorular sadece nesnel değişkenleri içermektedir. Bilinen bir gerçek ki bir öğretmenin mesleğini sevme oranı yaşadığı zorlukla ilgili algısını etkileyebilir. Fakat çalışmanın bir sınırlaması olarak öznel değişkenler farklı farklı ölçekler gerektirdiği için dahil edilmemiştir. Aynı zamanda, öğretmenlerin algısını etkileyebilecek birçok değişken (sınıfın ve okulun fiziksel koşulları, ailelerin kültürel/ ekonomik/ sosyal birikimleri vb.) mevcuttur; fakat araştırmanın kapasitesinin üstüne çıkacağından bu boyutlar da dahil edilmemiştir. Bir diğer sınırlama, velilerin ve müdürlerin programa dair tecrübeleri çalışmaya katılmamıştır. Çalışmada 2012-2013 yılından itibaren gelen programın değerlendirilmesinin yapılması amaçlanmıştır; bu sebeple anketteki sorular bu yıl uygulanan programa odaklanmıştır. Diğer birçok boyut (öğretim tekniği, kitaplar, öğrencilerin detaylı psikolojik algıları vb.) bu çalışmada yer almamaktadır. Farklı araştırmalarda bu boyutlarla ilgili algılar, tutumlar veya inançlar çalışılabilir. Diğer bir sınırlılık veri toplama araçlarıyla ilgilidir. Bulunan sonuçlar anket sonuçlarına bağlı olarak oluşturulacak ve bu teknikler ile sınırlı kalacaktır. Aynı zamanda, araştırmada kullanılan çıkarımsal veri analiz teknikleri betimsel amaçlar dahilinde kullanılmış ve herbir boyu ayrı ayrı ele alınarak sonuçlar

tartışılmıştır. Bunun yanında, araştırma sonuçlarının genellenilebilirliği sadece Antalya ve Ankara illerindeki okullarla kısıtlıdır.

Araştırmanın sayılısı ise anketlerde verilen cevapların doğru ve samimi olduğu ve ayrıca TUIK'ten alınan verilerin geçerli olduğudur.

Araştırmanın Etikliğinin Güvencesi

Araştırmacı, tüm araştırma boyunca hakkaniyet ilkesine bağlı kalarak; her türlü kararında tutarlı, tarafsız ve gerçeklere dayalı bir tutum sergilediğini özellikle vurgulamak istemektedir. Ayrıca, kişilerin veya kurumların varlığına ve bütünlüğüne aykırı davranışlarda bulunulmadığının ve bilimsel araştırmaların gerektirdiği tüm ahlaki ve bilimsel etik kurallarını gözetildiğinin güvencesini vermektedir. Nesnel, tarafsız ve dürüst bir şekilde araştırmanın yapıldığına dair hiçbir kuşkuya yer verilmemektedir. Bilindiği üzere bilimsel araştırmalar herkes için en iyi sonucu verecek bulguları saptamak için yapılır; bu durumda tüm grup, kurum ve kişilerin ortak çıkarları gözetilmiştir.

Bulgular

Uygulanan anket, aşağıda sıralı halde sunulan bulguları ortaya çıkarmıştır:

- Öğretmenler, uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarında okula kayıt yaşı 60-65 aylık olan öğrenciler ile anaokuluna gitmemiş öğrencilerle sık sık problem yaşadıklarını belirttiler. Aynı zamanda 66-71 aylık öğrencilerde de ara sıra zorluklarla karşılaşıldığı ifade edildi.
- Planlama sürecinde öğretmenler farklı yaş gruplarına Türkçe ve matematik öğretirken sorun yaşadı.
- Oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersinde karşılaşılan problemler genelde okul ve sınıf koşullarını ayarlama üzerineydi. Aynı zamanda öğretmenler bu ders için materyal bulmada ara sıra sorun yaşadıklarını ifade ettiler.
- Temel becerileri kazandırırken en çok problem yaşanan yaş grubu okula kayıt yaşı 60-65 aylık olan öğrenciler oldu. En çok problem yaşanan alan ise bu öğrencilere kitabı/ defteri düzgün kullanma, yönergeleri dinleme, anlama, yerine getirme gibi becerileri kazandırırken yaşandı. Okula kayıt yaşı 66-71 aylık öğrencilerle orta düzeyde problemler yaşanırken okula kayıt yaşı 72 aylık ve üstü öğrencilerle neredeyse hiç problem yaşanmadı. Temel beceriler içinde 66-71 aylık olan öğrencilerle de 60-65 aylık öğrencilerde en çok problem yaratan durumlar daha çok soruna sebebiyet verdi.

- Öğrenme alanlarını kazandırırken öğretmenler en çok zorluğu temel becerileri öğretmede olduğu gibi 60- 65 aylık öğrencilere yazma becerilerini kazandırırken (harf, kelime, cümle ve sayı) ve el yazısını öğretmede yaşadı. Aynı zamanda, okula kayıt yaşı 66- 71 aylık olan öğrencilerle de orta düzeyde sorun yaşanılırken 72 aylık ve üstü çocuklarda neredeyse hiç problemle karşılaşmadı.
- Okulun türünün, uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarında karşılaşılan sorunlar ile yeni sistemde planlamada ortaya çıkan sorunlarla ilişkili olduğu saptanmıştır.
- Sınıf mevcudunun, uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarında karşılaşılan sorunların yanında oyun ve fiziki aktiviteler dersini uygularken ve temel becerileri 66-71 aylık öğrencilere kazandırmada ve genel anlamda 66-71 aylık öğrencilere öğretmede ortaya çıkan problemlerle ilişkili olduğu saptanmıştır.
- 60-65 aylık öğrencilerin sınıf dağılımının uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları ve planlama sırasında ortaya çıkan sorunlarla ilişkili olduğu saptanmıştır.
- 66- 71 aylık öğrencilerin sınıf dağılımının, uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları, planlama ve akademik becerilerin 66-71 aylık öğrencilere kazandırmada ve bu yaş grubuna öğretmede yaşanan sorunlar ile ilişkili olduğu saptanmıştır.
- Açık uçlu sorularda öğretmenlerin belirttiği ve sorun yaratan diğer konuların çoğu uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları ile ilgili. Küçük öğrencilerin okula uyumda daha fazla sorunla karşılaştığı ve daha çok hastalık şikayetinde buldukları ve uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları kitaplarının geç geldiği için bu dönemde materyal bulmada sorunların yaşandığı belirtilmiştir. Aynı zamanda uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları sırasında anaokuluna gitmeyen öğrenciler ile küçük öğrencilerin aktiviteleri yaparken yoruldukları belirtilmiştir. 72 aylık ve üstü öğrencilerin ise uyum ve hazırlık döneminde yaptıkları çalışmaları zaten anaokulunda yaptıkları ve bu yüzden çabuk sıkıldıkları belirtilmiştir.
- Açık uçlu sorularda sorulan öğretmenlerin karşılaştıkları problemlerle başa çıkma yöntemleri arasında ise en çok başvurulan yöntemin aile desteği ve yardımını alma olduğu belirtilmiştir. Aynı zamanda, öğretmenler daha çok şarkı, fıkra ve oyun gibi aktivitelerle ders sırasında yer verdiklerini, çeşitli materyalden yararlandıklarını, öğrencilerin motivasyonunu artırıcı yöntemleri uyguladıklarını, daha çok tekrar yaptıklarını, küçük öğrencilerle daha bireysel çalışma yürüttüklerini, psikomotor becerilerin gelişmesi için geride kalan öğrencilere daha çok aktivite/ ödev verdiklerini, sık sık kuralları tekrar ettiklerini ve diğer öğretmenlerden ve okul personelinden yardım aldıklarını belirtmişlerdir.

Sonuç ve Öneriler

Yeni eğitim sisteminde uygulamanın ilk yılında birinci sınıf düzeyinde öğretmenlerin karşılaştığı zorluklara ve bu zorlukların üstesinden gelmek için kullandıkları yöntemlere bakıldığında problemlerin ve zorlukların en çok 60-65 aylık öğrencilerle yaşadığı görülmektedir. Literatürü ele aldığımızda yaşın bu denli bir etkisinin olduğunu savunamayız, fakat okula hazırbulunuşluluk literatürüne göre yeni sistemde okula kayıt yaşı 60-65 aylık olan öğrencilerin okula hazır olmadığı sonucuna varabiliriz. Aynı zamanda araştırmanın diğer bulguları okulun altyapısının ve öğretmenlerin de bu yaş grubu için hazır olmadığı sonucuna da vırılabilir. Zira, oyun ve fiziki etkinlikler dersinde yaşanan materyal bulma sıkıntısı, uyum ve hazırlık çalışmalarında kitapların geç gelmesi gibi durumların da okulun ve MEB'in bu öğrenci grubunun okula başlamasına hazır olmadıklarını göstermektedir. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin özellikle karmayaşlı sınıflarda eğitim-öğretim çalışmalarını sürdürmek için aldıkları hizmet öncesi ve hizmetiçi eğitimlerinin onları bu duruma uygun hazırlamadığı da öne sürülebilir. Zorlukların üstesinden gelmede uygulanan teknikler literatüre uygun olmakla birlikte, MEB, okullar ve öğretmenler için aşağıdaki öneriler sunulmaktadır:

- Öğrencilerin okula hazırbulunuşluluğunu hızlandıracak programlar öğrenciler okula başlamadan uzun bir süre uygulanabilir. Dünya genelinde evden okula geçiş döneminde öğrenciyi okula en hızlı ve etkili şekilde hazırlayacak programlar uygulanmaktadır. Bu programların sonuçlarının genelde iyi yönde olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Bu aşamada MEB veya okullar öğrencilerin gelişimlerini hızlandıracak programları uygulayarak veya teşvik ederek bütün çocukların gelişimsel olarak eşit düzeyde okula başlamasını sağlamalıdır.
- Karma sınıflarda eğitim-öğretimin daha etkili olabilmesi için öğretmenlerin bu sınıfların avantaja çevirmek için gerekli olan bilgi ve beceri ile donatılması gerekmektedir.
- Aileyi bilinçlendirecek ve bilgilendirecek program veya seminerlerin okullarda veya MEB tarafından sağlanması önerilmektedir. Özellikle çocukların gelişimsel özellikleri üzerine anne eğitimi programları düzenlenebilir.
- Sınıf mevcudu ile ilgili daha detaylı bir araştırma yapılması önerilmektedir. Sadece bu araştırmaya bağlı kalınarak bu bağlamda sınıf mevcudunun yaşanan zorluklarla ilişkisinin olduğu saptanmıştır ama ne yönde olduğu gelecek araştırmalara konu olabilir.
- Öğretmen, aile ve öğrencilerin uygulamanın ikinci yılında ne gibi sorunlarla karşılaştığına dair ayrıca bir araştırma yapılabilir.

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