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Examining Turkish Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Terms of Mainstream Curriculum Models

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The authors of the current early childhood education curriculum in Turkey underlined that different early childhood education approaches and models were used to construct curriculums in other countries. They went on to describe their curriculum as a synthesis of child centred practices developed in accordance with different learning theories and models. However, they did not mention which learning theories and models they applied or how they utilised them. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to examine which of the mainstream curriculum models including Montessori, High Scope, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia are included in the Turkish early childhood curriculum launched in 2013. These curriculum models were examined through the content analysis method. The Turkish ECE curriculum was comparatively examined with the mainstream curriculum models. The Turkish ECE curriculum was divided into nine main categories and each category was investigated to identify the effects of mainstream curriculum models. The findings of the study indicated that while most parts of the Turkish ECE curriculum like objectives or characteristics of the curriculum carried the traces of mainstream curriculum models, some parts are unique such as assessment or adaptation.

Keywords: *The Turkish ECE curriculum, Mainstream curriculum models, Adaptation, Children with special needs*

INTRODUCTION

The first draft of the early childhood curriculum in Turkey was published in 1989 (Düşek & Dönmez, 2012, Pökön, 2003; Sapsağlam, 2013). This set out the purposes of the curriculum and went on to specify a daily schedule of activities in the classroom. Important details remained to be developed in terms of the learning process and the learning environment necessary for delivery of the curriculum (Sapsağlam, 2013). These details were determined over a five-year period and the curriculum was finally launched in 1994 (Düşek & Dönmez, 2012). The main focus of the early childhood curriculum was to cover all the developmental domains of children by addressing the objectives associated with each domain (Dilek, 2016). This proved difficult for teachers to implement (Düşek, 2008; Kandır, 2002). After an examination of current approaches in early childhood education worldwide, in 2002, a revised curriculum was introduced that would focus attention on the developmental domains of the cognitive, language,

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psychomotor, social-emotional development and self-care skills of children aged between 36-72 months. For this reason, as argued by Tuncer (2015), it would appear that both the 1994 and 2002 curricula were based on a behaviorist approach. However, information about which early childhood approaches were investigated and how they were utilized in the development of the curriculum were absent.

Thereafter it was decided to investigate the curriculum's fit with developmental and learning theories, and further revisions were introduced in 2006 (Dilek, 2016). The curriculum continued to be grounded on the developmental domains of children but significant detail was added in terms of the developmental characteristics of children aged 36-48, 48-60 and 60-72 months (Gelişli & Yazıcı, 2012). This version of the curriculum was informed by an assessment of early childhood education practices and the various international standards applied in European countries (Düşek & Dönmez, 2012). For this reason, Tuncer (2015) stated that the curriculum launched in 2006 was grounded on the principals of multiple intelligence theory and constructivism. However, the related literature did not specify which early childhood practices or approaches that were analysed to improve the curriculum.

When it comes to the last version of Turkish ECE curriculum launched in 2013, a great number of studies addressed this curriculum. To illustrate, it was investigated in terms of some concepts including health concept (Sönmez & Seyhan, 2016); geography education (Öztürk, Giren, Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2015); development of literacy skills of children (Kandır & Yazıcı, 2016); dimension of assessment (Sapsağlam, 2013); sexual education and sexual development (Deniz & Yıldız, 2018); environmental education (Gülay & Ekici, 2010); science activities (Kiraz & Siddık, 2018); STEM education (Ata-Aktürk, Demircan, Şenyurt, & Çetin, 2017); development of musical ability (Kandır & Türkoğlu, 2015); neurodevelopmental perspective (Aydın, Madi, Alpanda, & Sazcı, 2012). In addition to this, Dilek (2016) compared early childhood curriculum launched in 2013 with the curriculum launched in 2006. Besides, Gelişli and Yazıcı (2012) investigated the early childhood curriculums of Turkey that were put into practice in 1994, in 2002 and in 2006 with regard to structure of the curriculums, purpose of the curriculums, learning and teaching processes and assessment dimension. Besides, Düşek and Dönmez (2012) revealed historical development process and main characteristics of the curriculums. As distinct from previous studies, Tuncer (2015) conducted a research to compare contemporary approaches such as Head Start, Waldorf, Open Education, and Primary Years Programme with the latest early childhood curriculum of Turkey. Tuncer (2015) analyzed these contemporary approaches with Turkish curriculum under the titles of aim of the approach, planning and implementation and the characteristics of preschools and materials. In consequence, previous studies have focused on different aspects of the present curriculum but they have not provided information about which parts of the current curriculum were influenced by the mainstream early childhood models and how these models were reflected throughout the curriculum.

The Current Turkish ECE Curriculum

The most recent version of the curriculum was launched by the Ministry of National Education in 2013 (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2013). It is described as a child-centered, flexible, spiral meaning repeatable, eclectic, balanced, play and learning by doing based program. Moreover, it focuses on development of creativity and encourages daily life experiences and the environment to be used for learning. The subjects are means rather than ends. Learning centers are of the utmost importance and it pays attention to cultural and universal values. Parental education is crucial, and assessment is multidimensional. In addition to this, the curriculum includes children with special needs and puts emphasis on psychological counselling and guidance (MoNE, 2013). The curriculum is set out in the following parts, which are used in arranging the findings of the current research. These parts are:

- The objectives of the curriculum
- The principles of the curriculum

- The importance of the curriculum
- The characteristics of the curriculum
- The objectives in developmental domains
- Learning environment
- Types of the activities and planning of the day
- Assessment
- Adaptation

Mainstream Curriculum Models

In this study, mainstream curriculum models refer to the High Scope, Waldorf, Montessori and Reggio Emilia approaches. These are among the best known and the most commonly used curriculum models internationally (Goffin, 2000), and given their wide use and popularity are likely to have influenced the development of the ECE curriculum in Turkey.

The High Scope Approach

High Scope was developed in The United States of America by David Weikart for children who come from families with a low socio-economic status. It depends on the ideas of Piaget and emphasizes the importance of active learning (Bilaloğlu, 2004). Positive adult- child interactions, learning environment, consistent daily plan with plan- do- review, and assessment are important aspects of the approach. The role of the teachers is to arrange an environment that promotes the active engagement of children (Epstein, 2001).

Waldorf Education

Rudolf Steiner introduced Waldorf Education in Germany in 1919 with an emphasis on healthy and balanced development of the child's sense of self, which affects their whole life positively (Schmitt-Stegman, 1997). Apart from the sense of self, this model aims to educate the whole child; the hand, the heart and the head. The aim of the teachers is to reveal the love of learning for children (Astley & Jackson, 2000). Academic content is then introduced from age 7 onwards.

The Montessori Approach

The ideas of Maria Montessori draw on the approaches of Piaget and Vygotsky. This model aims to encourage the individual development of children by seeing them as having an absorbent mind, and by helping them to develop self- discipline within a respectful learning environment (Morrison, 2012). The classroom and materials are neatly arranged. Materials were designed to encourage children to control error. Montessori materials, thus introduce concepts one at a time so that children can easily see their mistakes on their own and this reduces the likelihood of them experiencing unnecessary failure (Morrison, 2012).

The Reggio Emilia Approach

This approach, launched in Italy by Malaguzzi in 1970, is also founded on the ideas of Piaget and Vygotsky, along with those of Bruner (Edwards, 2002). The aim of this method is for children to be educated as active, independent, and creative individuals (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2013). The environment is called as a third teacher in this approach. Moreover, teachers are thought of as partners to the children in the learning process. Art is given special significance for children to express themselves and this requires ateliers equipped with suitable materials. Assessment forms a critical component of this method and it therefore requires that children's learning is well documented (Wortham, 2006; Cadwell & Gandini, 1997).

The Current Study

The authors of the current curriculum underlined that different early childhood education approaches and models were used to construct curriculums in other countries. They went on to describe their curriculum as a synthesis of child centered practices developed in accordance with different learning theories and models (MoNE, 2013). However, they did not mention which learning theories and models they applied or how they utilized them. For this reason, this study aims to examine which of the mainstream curriculum models including Montessori, High Scope, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia are included in the Turkish early childhood curriculum launched in 2013.

The research questions of this inquiry are as follows:

1. Which curriculum models were used to devise the ECE curriculum of Turkey launched in 2013?
2. Which aspects of the curriculum models can be observed and how are they reflected across the curriculum?

Significance of the Study

There have been various studies that have set out to analyse the early childhood curriculum of Turkey. Firstly Ata-Aktürk et al. (2017) examined Turkish ECE curriculum from the perspective of STEM education through document analysis. Moreover, Aydın et al. (2012) analysed current ECE curriculum in terms of neurodevelopmental perspective on the purpose of contributing to the improvement of ECE curriculum by revealing the relationship between anatomical and physiological structure of brain and ECE curriculum. Deniz & Yıldız (2018) focused on sexual development and sexual education in the current Turkish ECE curriculum through analyzing the content of it. Moreover, Gülay & Ekici (2010) investigated Turkish ECE curriculum whether environmental education is included in this curriculum or not. Furthermore, Kandır & Türkoğlu (2015) evaluated Turkish ECE curriculum with respect to development of children's musical skills. In addition, Kandır & Yazıcı (2016) assessed this curriculum with regard to development of children's literacy skills. Additionally, Kiraz & Siddık (2018) analysed science activities taking place in Turkish ECE curriculum. Öztürk et al. (2015) studied the content of Turkish ECE curriculum in regard to geography education. One another study which is conducted by Sapsağlam (2013) addressed assessment dimension of curriculums of Turkey between the years of 1952 and 2013. Lastly, Sönmez & Seyhan (2016) analysed current Turkish ECE curriculum in terms of health concept through document analysis.

However, there is a gap in the literature related to analysis of the current early childhood curriculum of Turkey in terms of mainstream early childhood education models. This study aims to address this gap by examining each section of the present early childhood curriculum with respect to mainstream early childhood education curriculum models.

The outcome of this inquiry is important because it aims to inform early childhood practitioners about the various early childhood education approaches used in the curriculum. The study might provide an opportunity for early childhood teachers to reach different sources, namely curriculum models, and to implement relevant educational activities. Adamson and Morris (2014) stated that curriculum ideology is a fundamental element of curricula. Thus, being able to identify the curriculum models embedded in the Turkish early childhood curriculum would reveal the philosophy and the developmental and learning theories that underpin it. Furthermore, Goffin (2000) claimed that curriculum models are based on child development theories and differences among curricula result from variations in values regarding what is more crucial for children to learn. Therefore, to comprehend the mainstream curriculum models in Turkish early childhood education would help us to understand the theories of child development affecting the Turkish early childhood curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

The mainstream curriculum models, namely Montessori, High Scope, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia were examined through the content analysis method. In this way, researchers are able to analyse human behaviour indirectly by studying their artefacts including textbooks, newspapers, cookbooks, novels, essays, magazine articles, songs, political speeches, advertisements, in effect, any relevant artefacts (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2013). The researchers thought that this form of analysis would best serve the scope of this inquiry and its purpose in helping teachers to identify the models used in the ECE curriculum in Turkey.

Data Collection

The major informant or data source in this inquiry is the early childhood education curriculum used in Turkey. Data were collected by analysing the present curriculum which was launched in 2013. The entire curriculum was analysed to reveal influences of mainstream early childhood education curriculum models. Additionally, data regarding mainstream curriculum models in early childhood education (ECE) were compiled from the relevant literature in the field that provides detailed information about these curriculum models.

Data Analysis

To conduct content analysis, the researcher needs to determine a set of categories associated with the investigation, (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2013). Preliminary analysis indicated that there were nine main categories in the current ECE curriculum applied in Turkey. The mainstream early childhood education curriculum models could then be analysed according to these categories. For instance, the objectives or goals of the mainstream curriculum models were investigated deeply to find out whether they were parallel to the current Turkish curriculum or not. Accordingly, the sentences or phrases related to the objectives of the curriculum were coded by the researchers. This procedure was employed for all categories in all mainstream curriculum models.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Certain strategies and procedures are necessary for researchers to ensure a qualitative study is trustworthy and its results are valid and reliable (Merriam, 2009).

Validity

Miller and Creswell (2000) specified several strategies to obtain accurate findings in qualitative research. In this inquiry, a peer debriefing method was utilized to ensure validity because strategies including prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation and member checking were not thought appropriate. The researcher's reports were then considered by experts in early childhood education and their feedback helped the researcher to enhance the analysis and to obtain more accurate findings.

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research is the extent to which research findings can be repeated, Merriam (2009). Moreover, Creswell (2007) argued that "reliability often refers to stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets" and emphasized intercoder agreement to ensure reliability in qualitative research. Therefore, the inter coder agreement strategy was used in this study and multiple coders analysed the document independently. Thereafter, they discussed the codes and themes emerged in the analysis process. Finally, the inter-coder formula suggested by Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, and Pedersen (2012) was calculated as .89 for present the study.

FINDINGS

The Objectives of the Curriculum

The primary objectives of curriculum models were indicated in Table 1.

Table 1.

The Objectives of the Curriculum Models

	Turkish ECE curriculum	High Scope approach	Waldorf Education	Montessori approach	Reggio Emilia approach
Objectives of the curriculum models	Holistic development Primary school preparation Embracing environment Speaking in Turkish	Holistic development School and whole life preparation Active learning environment Education for children from low SES	Educating the child as a whole (hand, heart, head) Learning environment which supports the self Respect for each other	Holistic development Well-organized environment	Holistic development Ideal environment

The Turkish ECE curriculum consists of nine main categories, one of which sets out the objectives of the curriculum. The objectives of the curriculum include helping children to achieve physical, cognitive and emotional development and good habits, to prepare them for primary school, to create an embracing environment for all children from all backgrounds, and to speak Turkish correctly (MoNE, 2013).

When the four international curriculum models were examined, it was found that there are similar objectives with the Turkish ECE curriculum. For instance, the High Scope approach emphasizes the importance of providing education for children who come from lower socio-economic status families and trying to create an active learning environment which supports the whole development of children in terms of their social- emotional, cognitive and physical development (Epstein, 2001). In addition, it is also emphasized in the High Scope approach that early childhood education prepares children for school life and whole life by supporting them to become confident, responsible and independent individuals.

Moreover, the objectives of Waldorf education approaches also have some similarities with the Turkish ECE curriculum. The main purpose of Waldorf education is to educate the child as a whole: the hand, the heart and the head (Morrison, 2012). It also aims to provide a learning environment which supports the self of the child, self- confidence of the child, and showing respect for each other (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2005).

The Montessori approach, is also in harmony with the objectives of the Turkish ECE curriculum in terms of early childhood education. For instance, as in Turkish ECE curriculum, Montessori approach emphasizes the whole development of children including cognitive, physical, and social-emotional domains (Bahmaee, Saadatmand & Yarmohammadian, 2016). In terms of the role of the environment in early childhood education, the Montessori approach is in alignment with the Turkish ECE curriculum with the former seeking a well-organized environment providing hands-on experiences has a crucial position in early childhood education (Schmidt & Schmidt, 2009).

The Reggio Emilia approach aims to address the whole development of the child and for this reason an ideal environment should be provided to promote all the developmental domains of children (Malaguzzi, 1994). This emphasis on the role of the environment is shared in the objectives of the Turkish ECE curriculum along with the other models.

The Principles of the Curriculum

Table 2 showed the principles of the mainstream curriculum models along with the Turkish ECE curriculum.

Table 2.

The Principles of the Curriculum Models

	Turkish ECE curriculum	High Scope approach	Waldorf Education	Montessori approach	Reggio Emilia approach
Principles of the curriculum models	Considering individual differences Democratic learning environment Play- based learning Assessment Parent involvement	Active participation Learning environment Positive interactions Daily routine Parents as partners	Holistic development Democratic learning environment Forming sense of self Integrating new information with existing knowledge Power of art Rhythm of the individual Same teacher for 8 years	Uniqueness of each child Democratic learning environment Importance of play Assessment	Uniqueness of each child Interactive environment Cooperation with parents Assessment

The principles of the Turkish ECE curriculum underline the appropriateness of early childhood education to the needs of children and to individual differences. Besides, early childhood education should support the developmental domains of children and prepare them for elementary education by providing a democratic learning environment, supplying a pathway for learning through the known to the unknown, by supporting prosocial behaviours, providing opportunities for children to develop self-discipline, arranging play- based, creative and imaginative learning, taking parents and the environment into consideration, giving importance to assessment and facilitating the active involvement of parents to their children's education (MoNE, 2013).

There are similarities between the Turkish ECE curriculum and the mainstream curriculum models in terms of the principles of the curriculum. For example, although the details of the principles are not given in the High Scope approach unlike the Turkish ECE curriculum, the sources showed that there are five main principles of the High Scope approach (Morrison, 2012). The first principle is that children actively participate in the learning process, including the daily planning section. Another principle of the High Scope approach is for the learning environment to be arranged in such a way that it provides for the indulgence of all. This principle facilitates another principle which seeks positive adult- child interactions. As teachers strive to provide a positive environment for the children, they witness prosocial behaviours and develop mutual respect. Another important principle relates to the daily routine of the High Scope approach which should be consistent but also flexible and include planning, doing and reviewing activities. Another principle is related to the inclusion of parents as partners to learning along with the teachers and their children. This partnership should be supported by sharing all learning experiences with each other (French, 2012; Epstein, 2001; Morrison, 2012; Weikart & Schweinhart, 2009). All of the principles of a High Scope curriculum can be seen in the Turkish ECE curriculum.

In addition to the High Scope approach, Waldorf education has also several similarities with the principles of the Turkish ECE curriculum. The main principle of Waldorf education is to make children

form a sense of self because it is thought to be a determinant factor for their entire life (Schmitt-Stegman, 1997). Another principle is to integrate a newly learned concept with their existing knowledge in order to make learning more permanent (McDermott, 1992). Thus, focusing on the holistic development of children is a significant aspect of Waldorf education. The abilities that children have should be supported and enhanced by providing various learning experiences and by considering all developmental domains of their physical, social- emotional and moral development. However, the importance of art is specifically underlined since it is seen as a power and source for forming the sense of self (Hutchingson & Hutchingson, 1993; Harrington, 1993). The emphasis on arranging a democratic learning environment seen in Waldorf education is also seen the Turkish ECE curriculum (Barnes, 1980; Oberman, 1997). In the Waldorf approach, it is emphasized that the school and the educational system should be independent of political and economic divisions. Waldorf education ideas differ from the Turkish ECE curriculum in two areas. Firstly, Waldorf education focuses on a concept of rhythm, a principle whereby each child matures according to their own pace and dynamics (Lopata, 2000). Another is that children should be educated by the same teacher during the first 8 years of their education because teachers develop detailed information about a child, and they can readily integrate new learning with prior experience (Harrington, 1993). These two principles are not seen in the Turkish ECE curriculum.

According to Montessori, all children have developmental needs and the developmental domains of children should be supported through early childhood education, however each child is unique and differs from each other regarding their needs (Bahmaee, Saadatmand & Yarmohammadian, 2016). In addition to this, the notion of a democratic educational environment in the Turkish ECE curriculum is also emphasized in Montessori approach. The curriculum, education and design of Montessori schools are manifestation of the themes of a democratic educational model whereby children are self-directed, self-confident and they learn to be active (Thayer-Bacon, 2012). Montessori also shares similarity in terms of promoting the acquisition of self-discipline with the Turkish ECE curriculum. That is, Montessori adopts the principle of respect for the child purporting autonomy and self-discipline of children; thus children, are encouraged to choose their own materials and to work at their own pace (Hiles, 2018). With respect to the role of play in the Montessori approach, it is considered as an important tool for learning with the exception of pretend or imaginary play (Lillard, 2013). Montessori education does not place importance on make-believe play or fantasy and children are directed to real work; thus, the Turkish ECE curriculum differs in this aspect. However, the Montessori approach resembles the Turkish ECE curriculum in that it underscores the importance of integration of parents with their children's education (Bahmaee, Saadatmand & Yarmohammadian, 2016). Additionally, the Turkish ECE curriculum and Montessori approach agree on the importance of assessment in early childhood education. Both consider assessment as reflecting children's learning, and both utilize a variety of assessment methods. To illustrate, a Montessori approach relies on teacher observations and anecdotal records as assessment methods (DeLuca & Hughes, 2014); whereas the Turkish ECE curriculum utilizes the documentation of children's artefacts and teacher observations (MoNE, 2013).

The Reggio Emilia approach also shares similarity with the Turkish ECE curriculum in terms of principles. Firstly, in parallel with the Turkish ECE curriculum, the Reggio Emilia approach addresses all developmental domains of children and considers each child as unique (Malaguzzi, 1994). Furthermore, the Turkish ECE curriculum underlines children's early experiences by providing a learning pathway through the known to unknown (MoNE, 2013). Similarly, the Reggio Emilia approach endeavours to bring children's strengths to the fore and to portray children as strong instead of weak (İnan, 2012). Reggio Emilia dwells on the role of the environment on children and states that the learning environment, materials, outdoor environment, ateliers, in short, the environment which children interact with has a crucial impact on children (İnan, 2012). What's more, there should be a strong cooperation between families and teachers in the Reggio Emilia approach (Malaguzzi, 1994). The

Turkish ECE curriculum has a similar principle regarding the role of families. Additionally, the Reggio Emilia approach aims to provide opportunities to promote children’s creative thinking (Pekdoğan, 2012) which is also emphasized in the Turkish ECE curriculum. Lastly, assessment plays a significant role in the Reggio Emilia approach and documentation is considered important (İnan, 2012). The learning processes of children are reflected through documentation which enables parents to realize their children’s activities, helps teachers to better understand children, and enables children to evaluate themselves (Pekdoğan, 2012).

The Importance of the Curriculum

In Table 3, the important aspects of the curricula are included.

Table 3.
The Importance of the Curriculum Models

	Turkish ECE curriculum	High Scope approach	Waldorf Education	Montessori approach	Reggio Emilia approach
The Importance of the curriculum models	The importance of early childhood years	The importance of teacher	The importance of teacher	The importance of early childhood years	The importance of early childhood years
	The importance of environment			The importance of environment	The importance of environment
	The importance of family			The importance of family	The importance of family
	The importance of teacher			The importance of teacher	The importance of teacher
				The importance of materials	

Another aspect of the Turkish ECE curriculum is its emphasis on brain development in early childhood. By enabling rapid brain development, a strong base for other developmental areas can be provided in early childhood years because the child’s brain is very open to environmental effects. In consequence, early childhood years are considered vital to the development and future lives of children (MoNE, 2013). In the Turkish ECE curriculum, the importance of environment, family and teachers are considered and their effects on children’s development are mentioned. An environment that is rich in various opportunities, supportive, and appropriate to the development of children can be facilitative to the development of children and positive early life experiences. The family is another important point that is considered in the curriculum. A family which cares about the child, meets all the needs of the child, and develops a secure attachment with the child can provide positive family relationships which in turn support the child to develop positive social relationships with other people. Lastly, the importance of the teacher is also remarked upon in the curriculum. A teacher who establishes a consistent and a safe bond with the child, considers individual differences, supports the development of all children by focusing on process rather than product, tries to become a good role model, provides new learning opportunities, arranges appropriate learning environments and considers teachable moments, can specify the quality of early childhood education. With such teachers, children are able to feel that they are safe, valued, and loved. In this way children can benefit from the learning opportunities that are provided for them. (MoNE, 2013).

As with the various curriculum models examined, the Turkish ECE curriculum places considerable emphasis on the importance of the teacher in the curriculum. In the relevant literature, the High Scope approach is seen to place significant importance on the teacher adopting a child centered model, encouraging children rather than using praise, promoting problem solving in both academic content and social life, having knowledge about child development, communicating and collaborating with other teachers, arranging the learning environment to provide various opportunities and promoting active parent involvement, all of which can affect the quality of early childhood education (Michael-Luna & Heimer, 2012; Weikart & Schweinhart, 2009).

As in the High Scope approach, Waldorf education also stresses the importance of teachers because the teacher has a role in arranging the environment and establishing the relationship with the family. In Waldorf education, the teacher who is supported by in-service training, knows the child as a whole, aims to become a good role model, uses effective teaching methods and knows the family of the children can play a significant role on rapid growth and development of children in early childhood years (Barnes, 1980; Easton, 1997; Karnow, 1998; Steiner, 1919).

The Turkish ECE curriculum bears a resemblance to the Montessori approach regarding the importance of early childhood education for the cognitive development of children. Montessori suggested the term of absorbent mind which refers to children's soaking up the experiences around them and this process takes place from the period of birth to age 6 (Edwards, 2002). Although the Turkish ECE curriculum and Montessori build consensus on the crucial role of parents and environment in children's development, Montessori varies from the Turkish ECE curriculum with respect to the role of teachers in some respects. Firstly, the teacher as an unobtrusive observer in the Montessori classroom intervenes in children's development as little as possible in order to enable children to develop inner discipline and confidence (Edwards, 2002). Moreover, the Montessori approach has led to the development of specific learning materials that allow children to work independently or in small groups, necessitating teachers handle didactic learning materials in their classrooms (DeLuca & Hughes, 2014).

In terms of the importance of early childhood education in the Reggio Emilia approach, Malaguzzi brought a new perspective that children are provided a variety of ways for self-fulfilment and to express themselves through early childhood education and he called this process as "the Hundred Languages of Children" (İnan, 2012). The notion of rapid brain development occurring during the period of early childhood education is not underlined as much as in the Turkish ECE curriculum and Montessori approach. Additionally, the environment is portrayed as a third teacher in the Reggio Emilia approach should be designed in a way to support children's creativity (Pekdoğan, 2012). In this respect, Reggio Emilia and Turkish ECE curriculum are in alignment about how they consider the importance of the environment for young children. However, the Reggio Emilia approach differs from the Turkish ECE curriculum regarding the importance of parents. While the Turkish ECE curriculum underscores the role of parents in children's development and the effects of healthy and unhealthy parents on children's development (MoNE, 2013), Reggio Emilia focuses on partnership with parents and how to establish a healthy relationship with them (New, 2007). The Turkish ECE curriculum shares features of a good teacher who increases the quality of early childhood education (MoNE, 2013). Likewise, Reggio Emilia teachers need to perform a variety of roles to contribute to the development of children including observer, listener, learner, researcher, assistant, guide, and encourager (İnan, 2012). In short, both underline the importance of teachers to the development of young children.

The Characteristics of the Curriculum

The main characteristics of the curriculum models are indicated in Table 4.

Table 4.

The Characteristics of the Curriculum Models

	Turkish ECE curriculum	High Scope approach	Waldorf Education	Montessori approach	Reggio Emilia approach
Characteristics of the curriculum models	Child centered Flexible Spiral Eclectic Balanced Play- based Respect for diversity Versatile assessment Adaptation Guidance and counselling services	Active participation Child- adult interaction Interest areas Assessment Plan- do- review	Nourishing learning environment Sensory experiences Creative experiences Art education Imaginative play Balance between joy, humor and happiness	Child centered Flexible Balanced Play- based No pre- determined objectives Assessment Adaptation	Child centered Flexible Play- based No pre- determined objectives Assessment Adaptation

The Turkish ECE curriculum defines itself as supportive and versatile in the following ways. First of all, it states that it is a child- centered curriculum which gives place to children’s choices and provides active engagement and investigation. As the curriculum is flexible, the teacher has a chance to change, modify, or enrich the learning activities by considering individual differences, classroom climate and necessities. In addition, the Turkish ECE curriculum has a spiral design, meaning that objectives and indicators can be practiced in different activities in order to increase the effectiveness and the permanence of children’s learning. Since the curriculum is the synthesis of various curriculum models and approaches, it is called eclectic. The curriculum aims to balance and embrace objectives and signs from different developmental areas, by providing various activity types, regulating the time for each activity or arranging the environment as indoor or outdoor. As it is well known that children learn through play, the curriculum is play based and provides opportunities for children to explore and ask questions. Aside from these features, the Turkish ECE curriculum also supplies favourable circumstances for children to support their creativity and to help them express themselves in an authentic way. Furthermore, as the main aim of the curriculum is to attain the specified objectives and signs, the subjects or the themes are merely used as learning tools in order to reach them. Learning centers and daily life experiences are also significant in order to help children to attain the objectives and signs. According to the curriculum, cultural and universal values, respect for diversity, and active parent education and involvement are some of the points that should be considered by the teachers while trying to reach the objectives and signs. Additionally, a versatile assessment process is defined whereby the assessment of the children, the teacher and the program can be actualized in an interbedded way. Moreover, children who have special needs are considered in the Turkish ECE curriculum by providing for adaptation for those children. The teacher is also directed to work with guidance and counselling services in a collaborative way in order to support children’s development, contribute to parents’ education and maintain cooperation (MoNE, 2013).

There are marked similarities in the characteristics of the mainstream curriculum models. For instance, active participation is one of the significant features of the High Scope approach as in the Turkish ECE

curriculum. In High Scope, child- adult interactions are also mentioned as a characteristic of the curriculum in order to provide children with hands on activities and to work together in a collaborative way. Interest areas are used to provide appropriate learning environment for children. Another characteristic of the High Scope approach is assessment which includes careful and direct observations and these assessment findings are shared with families to help them to engage with the learning process. Apart from these characteristics, the High Scope approach has a different feature from the Turkish ECE curriculum. This difference is related with the daily routine which is called plan- do- review and it provides right to speak for children and for them to have a voice in planning their learning process (Epstein, 2001).

Correspondingly, Waldorf education has some similarities and a difference regarding the characteristics with the Turkish ECE curriculum. For example, in order to support children's healthy development, teachers provide love and warmth for both children and their parents. In addition, teachers arrange nourishing learning environments which assist their development of senses and provide opportunities for sensory experiences. Apart from sensory experiences, creative experiences are also emphasized in the characteristics of the Waldorf education. Teachers supply education about art for children with music, drawing, painting, puppet, poetry or sculpture. Additionally, imaginative play is seen as a way of learning in Waldorf education and this feature is paralleled with the play-based characteristics of the Turkish ECE curriculum. Waldorf education also emphasizes a balance between joy, humor and happiness (Howard, 2006), which is not seen in the Turkish ECE curriculum (MoNE, 2013).

To compare the Turkish ECE curriculum with Montessori approach in terms of characteristics, both have commonalities including child-centered programming. In Montessori, children direct their own learning and they choose the activity on their own in which they wish to be involved (Holmes, 2018). Flexibility, one of the characteristics of the Turkish ECE curriculum, allowing teachers to make changes arising from individual differences, classroom climate and necessities shows similarity with the Montessori approach. In other words, Montessori teachers monitor each child's development, provide learning opportunities and materials for each child (Hiles, 2018), thus they can make regulations based on children's developmental level and this enables them to be flexible. The Turkish ECE curriculum is described as a balanced curriculum that refers to giving equal importance to all developmental domains (MoNE, 2013). No one developmental domain is not superior to other developmental domains in the Turkish ECE curriculum (MoNE, 2013). Likewise, Montessori approach focuses on the whole development of children rather than emphasizing one developmental domain such as the cognitive or physical domain (Bahmaee, Saadatmand & Yarmohammadian, 2016). In addition, the Turkish ECE curriculum puts play in the center of the curriculum since children best learn thorough play (MoNE, 2013). In Montessori approach, play is considered as an important tool for learning with the exception of pretend or imaginary play (Lillard, 2013). Montessori education does not promote make-believe play or fantasy and children are directed to real works; thus, the Turkish ECE curriculum differs from Montessori approach in this aspect. Moreover, the Turkish ECE curriculum differs from Montessori approach regarding objectives of developmental domains. There are pre-determined objectives related to each developmental domain and each objective has indicators referring to desirable behaviour or ability that children are supposed to have acquired throughout the period of early childhood education (MoNE, 2013). However, the goal of Montessori approach is to enable children to reach their full potential (Hedeem, 2005), and there are no pre-determined objectives of Montessori approach as in the Turkish ECE curriculum. Another issue that the Turkish ECE curriculum and Montessori approach go along with is assessment of children. As is the case with the Turkish ECE curriculum, multiple assessment methods such as anecdotal records and observations of teachers are utilized in Montessori approach (DeLuca & Hughes, 2014). Last but not least, Montessori approach which originally emerged to promote cognitive levels of children with special needs provides a program appropriate to developmental level of children with special needs in the areas of gross and fine motor skills, language

development, attention deficits (Pickering, 2004). Therefore, the Turkish ECE curriculum resembles Montessori approach regarding education of children with special needs.

When it comes to Reggio Emilia, education is based on children’s interests (Edwards, 2002), which makes Reggio Emilia a child-centered approach like the Turkish ECE curriculum. Moreover, flexibility in the Turkish ECE curriculum can be observed in Reggio Emilia approach through the term of 100 languages of children, adults or teachers. To be more precise, Malaguzzi (1994) argued that early childhood teachers should have different roles and do many things rather than only transmitting information to children. Adapting to various roles in accordance with the context requires teachers to be flexible, which shares similarity with the Turkish ECE curriculum. As discussed in the section on curriculum principles, Reggio Emilia approach aims at addressing all developmental domains of children and an ideal environment should be provided to promote these (Malaguzzi, 1994), which resembles the Turkish ECE curriculum. The Turkish ECE curriculum is described as a play-based curriculum (MoNE, 2013). Similarly, play is the primary element of Reggio Emilia approach since play presents an environment contributing to children’s development (McCormick-Smith & Chao, 2018). Furthermore, providing educational opportunities to support children’s creativity is the focus of both the Turkish ECE curriculum and Reggio Emilia approach. That is, children are considered as capable and creative in the Reggio Emilia approach and their creativity should be promoted through activities (McCormick-Smith & Chao, 2018; New, 2007; Hong, Shaffer, & Han, 2017). However, Reggio Emilia approach and the Turkish ECE curriculum differ from each other in terms of the pre-determined objectives of each developmental domain. There are no pre-determined objectives in Reggio Emilia approach; instead, teachers organize a program based on children’s interests and needs and they make a hypothesis which direct the projects or activities of the children (Pekdoğan, 2012). In terms of assessment of children, Reggio Emilia approach utilizes multiple assessment methods except for traditional tests. In addition to this, Reggio Emilia teachers need to prepare documentation to share children’s progress with their parents, and to enable children to evaluate themselves (Edwards, 2002). In this regard, portfolios suggested by the Turkish ECE curriculum resemble the documentation method used by Reggio Emilia teachers. Lastly, integration of children with special needs is both emphasized by the Turkish ECE curriculum and Reggio Emilia approach. Children with special needs have a right to receive the same education as children with normal development in Reggio Emilia approach (Hong, Shaffer, & Han, 2017).

The Objectives in Developmental Domains

Table 5 indicates objectives in developmental domains of the curriculum models.

Table 5.
The Objectives in Developmental Domains of the Curriculum Models

	Turkish ECE curriculum	High Scope approach	Waldorf Education	Montessori approach	Reggio Emilia approach
The objectives in developmental domains	Objectives and indicators 5 developmental domains	Key developmental indicators 5 main categories	No pre-determined objectives	No pre-determined objectives	No pre-determined objectives

The Turkish ECE curriculum focuses on the whole development of children by presenting objectives and indicators for each developmental area. Indicators are the observable forms of the objectives and they are determined from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract. The objectives and indicators are covered under five developmental domains which are cognitive development, language development, social- emotional development, physical development and self- care skills development. For each developmental area, the features of age groups are presented with grouping children as 36- 48

months, 48- 60 months and 60- 72 months of age. After the features of each age group are given, the objectives and signs for each developmental domain are introduced (MoNE, 2013).

The similarities and differences can attract our attention when comparing other curriculum models with the Turkish ECE curriculum. For instance, in High Scope approach, there are key developmental indicators (KDIs) which reflect the objectives of the curriculum. There are totally 58 key developmental indicators which are defined as behaviours in the learning areas and these indicators are grouped in 5 main categories. The first one of these categories is creative representation which covers painting, drawing and role playing. The second category is language and literacy which includes talking about individually worth to say experiences, describing and writing. The third is initiative and social relations which involves making plans, decisions, being sensitive to others and expressing feelings. The fourth is movement and music which incorporates moving in different ways, developing melody and feeling rhythm. The last one is logical reasoning which includes comparing, classifying, counting and being aware of the time (Epstein, 2001). These key developmental indicators are reflected in the objectives and signs of the Turkish ECE curriculum.

On the other hand, in Waldorf education, there are no objectives and signs concepts. It is believed that when the child is ready, the development can occur. For this reason, the same objectives and signs have not been determined for all children. However, three developmental stages are given in Waldorf education which are physical consciousness, emotional consciousness, aware consciousness. Each of these stages lasts seven years (Barnes, 1980; Ogletree, 1997). The teachers need to know the features of these developmental stages. In addition, as physical, mind and imagination development are more important than academic skills development, academic concepts should not be taught until 7 years of age in Waldorf education (Ruenzel, 2001).

Montessori approach does not provide linear objectives and their indicators are not related to each developmental domain. Instead, Montessori splits the period from birth to age 24 into four 6-year phases and the first one is called "The First Plane" (Lide, 2012). The first plane is the period from birth to age 6 in which children's development of absorbent mind, sensitive periods and human tendencies occur (Vaz, 2013). The sensitivities embraced in this period are language and motor development and children develop at their own pace by getting independent of their parents and others. Another sensitivity is the senses which comply with Piaget's stage of sensori-motor. The last sensitivity is order and children in this period adapt to routine and specifics of the physical environment (Lide, 2012). Therefore, Montessori differs from the Turkish ECE curriculum regarding objectives in developmental domains.

With respect to Reggio Emilia approach, as it is a process of inviting learning rather than a pre-set curriculum, there are no specific goals for children to achieve in the various developmental domains (Vodopivec, 2012), as in the Turkish ECE curriculum. On the other hand, Reggio Emilia approach has general goals such as providing an environment appropriate to the needs of children, and providing an active learning process based on children's activities (Vodopivec, 2012).

Learning Environment

The crucial aspects of learning environment for each curriculum model are included in Table 6.

Table 6.
Learning Environment in Curriculum Models

	Turkish ECE curriculum	High Scope approach	Waldorf Education	Montessori approach	Reggio Emilia approach
Learning environment	Learning centers (interest areas) Developmentally appropriate materials	Learning centers (interest areas) Developmentally appropriate materials Home- like items	Outdoor environment Natural materials No learning area arrangement	Planned, prepared and neat environment Learning areas	Environment as a third teacher Learning areas Atelier Piazza

Table 6.
Cont'd

	Outdoor environment	Specific materials
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In order to enhance active learning and promote creative problem-solving skills, the various curriculum models stress that the learning environment should be arranged carefully. In the Turkish ECE curriculum, there are learning centers which can be called interest areas. In these centers, there are various materials which support the developmental areas of children and facilitate them reaching objectives. The placement of the learning centers is also emphasized in the Turkish ECE curriculum. For instance, as children can play with movement in the block center, the book center should be placed as far as possible away from this. Apart from the placement of the learning centers, the materials they contain are also significant. These centers and the materials should be developmentally appropriate for children and they should be updated according to objectives. In order words, the materials and the centers should be flexible in order to be modified easily. For example, the learning centers might be adapted to the theme of the week by altering the materials. Thus, these learning centers are not to be used for only free play. Another important point is that the physical size of the class should not be an excuse for teachers not to arrange their classroom safely and appropriately for children’s needs, interests and developmental characteristics. For instance, all learning centers in the classroom should be labelled and the children can understand which learning center they are using, for example, using a picture of a book or an appropriate symbol to denote the book center. In addition, the learning centers should be separated from each other with a suitable boundary like shelves. However, such boundaries should not mean that they are not interrelated with each other. In the Turkish ECE curriculum, six learning centers which are the block center, book center, music center, art center, science center, and dramatic play center are indicated. Appropriate materials are also specified in the curriculum. Sensory materials, magnifying glass, mirror, magnet, leaf, poster, or plant are some of the examples for the science center (MoNE, 2013).

Analysis of the mainstream curriculum modes provides evidence of the similarities between them. For example, in High Scope approach, there are also centers in the classroom like a block area, book area or art area. The materials and the space should be arranged carefully in order to support active learning. The space is welcoming to children because it enables them to feel comfortable with cozy places, playing freely, moving independently and safely, or carrying toys from one place to another. In High Scope approach, children have a chance to choose which area they would like to play. For this reason, even if the areas are separated with each other, children are able to see all the areas. Apart from the similarities in learning areas in the classroom, there are different points that should be considered in the learning areas required of a High Scope approach. One of the differences is associated with the home- like items in the learning areas. In High Scope approach, children can encounter home- like items such as familiar cooking materials or family photos in the classroom. Another difference is related to the outdoor environment where the importance of outdoor play is emphasized more than in the Turkish ECE

curriculum. High Scope requires that there should be an inviting outdoor environment which includes plants, climbing equipment or open areas for children's movement. (Epstein, 2001).

The importance of the outdoors and nature are also highlighted in Waldorf education. In order to make children understand that they are the part of nature, Waldorf schools actively commune with nature. The cycle and the rhythm of nature help individuals to create their personal integrity according to Waldorf education. For this reason, the classrooms need to include natural materials. For example, nature tables which include seasonal items can contribute to the development of children and the calming effect of the classroom. Apart from natural materials, there should be real and simple materials in Waldorf classrooms to help children learn better (Hutchingson & Hutchingson, 1993; Steiner & Trostli, 1998). However, the Turkish ECE curriculum does not arrange outdoor learning areas or incorporate nature in the classroom in the same way as the Waldorf or High Scope approaches.

As in the Turkish ECE curriculum, Montessori learning environment is carefully planned, prepared and neat to enable children to work independently or in small groups. Moreover, Montessori classrooms include areas of practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language and culture which contains art, music and science areas (Edwards, 2002). The learning areas are similar to the Turkish ECE curriculum. However, there are some specific materials mostly consisting of wooden, aesthetic, and self-correcting materials that pertain to Montessori approach (Lillard, 2013). Such materials are not required in the Turkish ECE curriculum.

The learning environment specified by the Reggio Emilia approach also needs to be well prepared to provide a sense of ease, beauty and well-being (Edwards, 2002). The environment, namely third teacher in Reggio Emilia, is organized to support children's creativity. Furthermore, the classrooms are spacious and include areas for art, literacy, sandpit, water pool, math, block, science and drama (Pekdoğan, 2012). However, those spaces are not separated from each other and there is a smooth transition between each other so that children can move freely (Valentine, 2006). To compare with the Turkish ECE curriculum, some of the learning centers such as art, science and drama are similar but Reggio Emilia approach places special emphasize on art and creativity so there are wide areas called as "atelier" enabling children to do artwork with a wide variety of art materials (Pekdoğan, 2012). Lastly, Reggio Emilia differs from the Turkish ECE curriculum in that schools have a Piazza, a kind of courtyard, and classrooms open onto a central Piazza so that children interact with other children and teachers (Valentine, 2006).

Types of the Activities and Planning of the Day

Table 7 places activity types and fundamentals of planning a day in curriculum models.

Table 7.

Types of the Activities and Planning of the Day

	Turkish ECE curriculum	High Scope approach	Waldorf Education	Montessori approach	Reggio Emilia approach
Types of the activities and planning of the day	Various types of activities Daily schedule	Various types of activities Plan- do- review	Various types of activities Home- like activities Routines Rhythms	Various types of activities Children are free to choose the activity	Various types of activities Flexible daily plan

In Turkish ECE curriculum, there are various types of daily activities which are Turkish, art, drama, music, movement, play, science, math, school readiness and field trips. These activities might be structured, semi- structured or unstructured. In addition, the activities might be integrated with each

other rather than focusing on each activity one by one with individuals, small or large groups of children. Besides, it is suggested in the curriculum that outdoor venues can be arranged for these activities as far as possible. The activities are prepared by the teachers in order to reach objectives by considering the developmental characteristics, interests, and needs of the children. In the Turkish ECE curriculum, planning of the day which is called daily schedule provides teachers and children with an opportunity to frame the activities in a day. Generally, a daily schedule consists of time for starting the day, play time, activity time, assessment time, eating time and resting time. However, the principle of flexibility should not be overlooked. According to the current situation, teachers can make some changes in the schedule of the day (MoNE, 2013).

A number of similarities and the differences are seen in comparison to the curriculum models. For example, in High Scope approach, the activities are categorized according to KDIs' five areas. These are approaches to learning, language, literacy and communication, social and emotional development, physical development, health and well-being and lastly arts and sciences which include mathematics, science and technology, social studies and arts. The activities are shaped around these categories by using appropriate materials and providing for active child participation. KDIs are the building blocks of the High Scope approach. The characteristics of the activities are similar with the activities in the Turkish ECE curriculum because both of them defend that school-like activities are not appropriate for children's development. In other words, rather than to teach reading or writing to children, to prepare appropriate learning environments with suitable materials like a print rich environment or to provide experiences for children like listening to stories or exploring various books can be more beneficial for children (Epstein, 2001). On the other hand, the planning of the day shows some differences between the Turkish ECE curriculum and High Scope approach regarding child participation in the planning process. In High Scope this is done by the teacher and the children. Thus, the child is more active in High Scope approach (Hohmann & Weikart, 2000). This consistent daily routine which provides children with the opportunity to make plans and predict what will happen next gives children a feeling of confidence and a sense of control. A general day in High Scope approach includes plan- do- review, small group time, large group time which provides sense of community, outside time which should be at least 30 minutes a day, transition times which enable smooth passing between activities and lastly eating and resting times. Plan- do- review is one of the most significant points of High Scope. In planning time, children think out and prepare what they want to do in that day. In doing time, children carry out their plans and are actively involved in the activities. In reviewing time, they share and discuss their experiences during the activity process (Epstein, 2001).

In Waldorf education, we see different practices regarding types of activities and planning of the day. Storification plays a significant role in developing the activities. The day starts with a story that is associated with the theme and the children are engaged in asking questions related to the story. Giving a chance to children to express themselves is critical in this process. After storification, each child does something which is related to the subject in the story such as drawing, singing, writing, playing or sculpturing. Children's products are collected to create their own books. Apart from these activities, home-like activities are also seen in Waldorf education such as cleaning, or setting the table (Schmitt-Stegman, 1997; Nicholson, 2000; Hutchingson & Hutchingson, 1993). The planning of the day is also different from the Turkish ECE curriculum. There are routines for daily, weekly and seasonal activities such as Mondays which are known as craftwork day or Tuesdays which are singing day. In addition, there are rhythms in each day like resting time- play time or quiet time- noisy time (Uchmacher, 1995; Lopata, 2000).

There are remarkable differences between the Turkish ECE curriculum and Montessori approach. That is, the activities such as math, science or music taking place in the Turkish ECE curriculum are planned and organized by teachers (MoNE, 2013). In Montessori schools there are lessons and related materials

for all subjects including math or music for each classroom level as in the Turkish ECE curriculum (Lillard, 2013). However, because independence and autonomy are the core principles of Montessori approach, children are free to choose activities they will participate in and the duration of the activities in which they are going to be involved. The role of Montessori teachers is to present Montessori specific materials to children and to enable them to work independently with minimum adult support (Lillard, 2013; Holmes, 2018).

When it comes to Reggio Emilia approach, the planning of the day is more flexible than the Turkish ECE curriculum. More precisely, children and teacher discuss and decide together the activities of the day. Children ask questions and strive to answer these questions as researchers through projects. Art is a fundamental part of these projects covering weeks, months or longer periods and Reggio Emilia schools have an "atelier", namely studio, consisting of natural and art materials and an "atelierista" who is an expert in graphic arts (Bennett, 2001). Therefore, a great deal of emphasize on art and more flexibility in the planning of the day distinguishes Reggio Emilia approach from the Turkish ECE curriculum.

Assessment

Assessment methods utilized in each curriculum model are shown in Table 8.

Table 8.

Assessment

	Turkish ECE curriculum	High Scope approach	Waldorf Education	Montessori approach	Reggio Emilia approach
Assessment	Three aspects (children, program, teacher) Child observation form Developmental report Portfolio Assessment questions	Preschool child observation report (COR) Preschool program quality assessment (PQA) Portfolio	Developmental report Home visit	Observation	Portfolio Documentation

Assessment in early childhood education is considered as a core concept in the Turkish ECE curriculum and considers the children, the program and the teacher. Children are evaluated by using teachers' notes during the day in order to prepare a child observation form and developmental report. Developmental reports for each child depend on the child observation form and this report is prepared twice a year to give information about the child's progress to parents. In addition to the child observation form and developmental report, a portfolio can be used as an assessment technique. The teacher collects all the products that the child has prepared during the term and it is shared with the parents. The children should be encouraged to share their own portfolios with their parents. The program should also be evaluated with the help of multiple assessment techniques. The monthly plan and all activities are considered during assessment. The assessment of the day facilitates the assessment of the month. Thanks to daily evaluation, the process can be reviewed and the information can be reinforced. Discussion about the activity, making presentation, worksheet, drawing, preparing a poster or arranging an exhibition are some of the ways a child's progress can be assessed in the program. In addition, in order to make discussion more meaningful, some questions can be utilized which are categorized as descriptive questions, sensual questions, objective questions and daily life questions. In the Turkish ECE curriculum, the sample questions for each type are presented to guide teachers. Another aspect of the assessment is evaluation of teachers. When teachers evaluate the child and the

program, they can collect data and reach valuable information about themselves. In the light of this information, teachers can see their weaknesses and strengths. In other words, this evaluation provides an objective view toward the learning process for teachers. According to the results of this assessment, teachers can appeal for support from the school administration in order to improve themselves (MoNE, 2013).

Several similarities in assessment are seen between the curriculum models and the Turkish ECE curriculum. For instance, in High Scope approach, a good evaluation system determines the quality of the curriculum. There are two tools to assess education in this curriculum model. These are the Preschool Child Observation Record (COR) which records the child's progress and the Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA) which is used to evaluate the program. COR in the High Scope approach is similar to the child observation form used in the Turkish ECE curriculum. Both include teachers' notes about the child in a situation and each note is associated with a developmental area such as language and literacy or social relations. PQA is utilized in order to assess the program by focusing on seven areas which are learning environment, daily routine, adult- child interaction, curriculum planning and assessment, parent involvement and family services, staff qualifications and staff development, and program management. With these two assessment tools, child progress and program quality can be evaluated in High Scope approach. Additionally, the portfolios can also be used in order to evaluate and to share progression of children as in the Turkish ECE curriculum (Epstein, 2001).

The aim of assessment which monitors the child's progress in Waldorf education is the same in the other curriculum models. Labelling or classification of the children according to results of the evaluation is not appropriate to Waldorf philosophy. Developmental reports and home visits are included in the assessment to enable holistic evaluation. The important point of assessment in Waldorf education is to make children aware of their development and progress. In this way, children can feel the enthusiasm of learning and producing (Nicholson, 2000).

The Turkish ECE curriculum resembles Montessori approach in terms of assessment of children. The primary assessment tool used in the Turkish ECE curriculum is child observation forms and developmental reports which are based on teacher observations (MoNE, 2013). Similarly, evaluating children's development and progress through observation is emphasized in Montessori approach because teachers have an opportunity to evaluate children and their learning in their natural settings (Holmes, 2018; Bahmaee et al., 2016). In addition to this, as in the Turkish ECE curriculum, teachers of Montessori make observations by taking a holistic approach that evaluates all of a child's developmental areas rather than focusing on one (DeLuca & Hughes, 2014). With respect to assessment in Reggio Emilia approach and the Turkish ECE curriculum, they resemble each other in that portfolios as an assessment method in the Turkish ECE curriculum share some similarity with documentation. Documentation is one of the greatest contributions of Reggio Emilia to evaluate children's learning and development (Katz & Chard, 1996). Documentation which includes children's ideas, photos, videos, comments of teachers or parents is used to evaluate children's learning process through children's ongoing projects and their daily experiences (Vodopivec, 2012). The portfolio used in the Turkish ECE curriculum provide a similar opportunity. It is known that documentation enables children to review their own works and experiences as it involves with the learning process rather than end product (Valentine, 2006). Assessment of learning process rather than end product is also emphasized in the Turkish ECE curriculum (MoNE 2013).

Adaptation

The key facets of adaptation of children with special needs in each curriculum are indicated in Table 9.

Table 9.
Adaptation

	Turkish ECE curriculum	High Scope approach	Waldorf Education	Montessori approach	Reggio Emilia approach
Adaptation	Guideline for teachers	Progression own pace	Special schools Eurythmy	Manipulative materials	Special rights Additional teacher

The Turkish ECE curriculum gives wide coverage to adaptation and provides guideline for teachers as an appendix. This appendix includes eight types of special needs and focuses on each of them. The curriculum specifies the symptoms of these special need types and points to consider while working with children with visual disability, hearing impairment, physical disability and chronic illness, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, cognitive disability, speech and language disturbances and lastly gifted children. The suggestions provided for teachers are divided into categories like language, cognitive or social- emotional (MoNE, 2013).

The adaptation of children with special needs in High Scope approach is very similar to the approach used in the Turkish ECE curriculum. Children can be adapted to the education process as self-contained or the adaptation can be provided with inclusive education. According to High Scope philosophy, the development of the abilities in each developmental area is critical for all children rather than focusing on whether the child has a special need or not. The child who has special needs is observed by the teacher and the current situation of the child can be determined by considering all aspects of development. Then, teachers are supposed to arrange the environment and to provide rich experiences for the child. The critical point is that children with special needs should be allowed by their teacher to progress at their own pace (Epstein, 2001).

In Waldorf education, there is a different practice for children with special needs. They have special schools for those children without considering their disability types. These special schools have the same characteristics as regular Waldorf schools which starts from day care to high school, however children with special needs are not accommodated in the same school. Providing a comfortable place and a good quality of education are significant points in order to prepare children with special needs for an independent life (Damovska, 2005). Besides, Eurythmy is another important point in Waldorf education when adaptation is considered. Eurythmy concerns the art of movement combined with spiritual quality, music and language. According to previous literature, it can be used as an alternative way in order to support and improve the development of children with special needs (Steiner, 1927).

The Turkish ECE curriculum and Montessori approach have similar understanding regarding adaptation of children with special needs. That is, Montessori approach adopts the idea of integration of children with special needs into the education of children without special needs (Vaz, 2013). Similarly, the integration of children with special needs is also underlined in the Turkish ECE curriculum. As distinct from the Turkish ECE curriculum, Montessori approach relies on manipulative materials to propel children's development because Montessori materials address all developmental levels and the needs of all children (Kristiyani, 2018). Teachers of Montessori provide materials to children with special needs and work with them one to one (Pickering, 2004). With regard to Reggio Emilia approach, children with special needs are named as having special rights and those children are integrated into the education of other children in the same classes. Moreover, an additional teacher is employed in the classroom where the child with special needs is included, but that teacher is thought of as an additional support for whole group instead of the child with special needs. Therefore, the Turkish ECE curriculum and Reggio Emilia approach agree on the notion of integration of children with special needs. However,

the Reggio Emilia approach differs from the Turkish ECE curriculum by employing a different procedure which is to assign an extra teacher (Valentine, 2006).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When creating early childhood curriculums, various countries have been inspired by curriculum models which are child centered, considering individual differences and focusing on the developmental characteristics of children. These are based on various models which offer advantages in various ways (Ekici, 2015). For instance, children who have experienced Montessori education have high academic performance including math and science (Dohrmann, Nishida, Gartner, Lipsky & Grimm, 2007; Lillard & Else-Quest, 2006; Yiğit, 2008), improved social- emotional skills (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005) and enhanced communication skills (Keçecioglu, 2015; Koçyiğit & Kayılı, 2008). Another example indicates that children who have been educated in Reggio Emilia schools have a high level of self-confidence and creativity (Pekdoğan, 2012). Thanks to all these benefits, mainstream curriculum models have been inspired in various countries. For instance, when Montessori approach is utilized in a variety of countries, it was found that children have more independent learning process and tolerate diversity in their classrooms (Duckworth, 2006; Lei & Wiegand, 2005). Another example is related with modelling Reggio Emilia approach which showed that children in Reggio inspired schools develop positive relationships with their peers and it enhances their communication and play skills (Hong et al., 2017). In addition to these examples, High Scope approach is also used in different countries with the effects of positive intellectual and social development (Peyton & Rapporteur, 2005). It was also shown that children in High Scope approach has decreased levels of criminal activity, substance use and delinquency (Schweinhart, 2007). Waldorf education has been a model for different countries thanks to its positive effects on artistic practices, creative thinking and drawing skills of children (Kirkham & Kidd, 2015; Park, 2018). The Turkish ECE curriculum has also been influenced by the various successes of the High Scope, Waldorf, Montessori and Reggio Emilia approaches.

This study comparatively examined the Turkish ECE curriculum with the mainstream curriculum models of early childhood education, namely Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf and High Scope. The Turkish ECE curriculum is divided into nine main categories and each category is investigated to identify the effects of mainstream curriculum models. While most parts of the Turkish ECE curriculum carry the traces of mainstream curriculum models, some parts are unique. With respect to the similarities, the Turkish ECE curriculum underscores the whole development of children in an appropriate environment as do the mainstream curriculum models. Moreover, the principles of the Turkish ECE curriculum indicate a great deal of similarity with the mainstream curriculum models. Here, the needs of children, individual differences, supporting developmental domains, democratic learning environment, previous experiences and knowledge of children, play-based learning, active participation of parents and assessment of children are the most shared concepts. Both Montessori and the Turkish ECE curriculum underline that fastest growth occurs in the period of early childhood education and thus this period is very critical for the development of children. The characteristics of Turkish ECE curriculum resemble mainstream curriculum models in terms of child-centeredness, flexibility of the curriculum, and play based learning. However, there are obvious differences between the Turkish ECE curriculum and mainstream curriculum models with respect to objectives related to each developmental domain. The Turkish ECE curriculum sets pre-determined objectives of each developmental domain, while the mainstream ones do not, with the single exception of High Scope.

The learning environment in the Turkish ECE curriculum consists of similar learning centers including science, math or language which are similar to the approaches used in the mainstream curriculum models. However, the organization of the learning environment and materials vary across curriculum models. To illustrate, ateliers and a great deal of emphasize on art in Reggio Emilia, practical and sensorial areas and specific materials in Montessori, home-like items in High Scope pertain to these

curriculum models and are not seen in the Turkish ECE curriculum. In addition, although the activity types such as science, math, or language share similarity with other curriculum models, there is a significant difference in how those activities are planned and conducted. In the Turkish ECE curriculum activities are planned and organized by the teachers but children in Montessori, Reggio Emilia and High Scope are more active in the process of planning and organization of the activities. Related to this, Bilaloğlu (2008) noted that the Turkish ECE curriculum is more teacher centered and teachers would rather plan group activities than individual activities that might result from a great number of children in the classroom.

The assessment part of the Turkish ECE curriculum is most similar to the High Scope approach since teachers of both curricula employ assessment procedures to evaluate both children's development and quality of program. Furthermore, teacher observations and portfolio used in the Turkish ECE curriculum are also utilized in the mainstream curriculum models to assess children's development and learning. Lastly, except for Waldorf education, the Turkish ECE curriculum resembles other curriculum models with regard to adaptation of children with special needs. These three curricula argue that children with special needs should be integrated into education of children without any special need. For instance, Montessori approach have been preferred for the education of children with special needs and studies proved that it has positive effects such as decreased agitated behaviours on children with Dementia (Lin et al., 2009; Skrainer, Malone, Camp, McGowan, & Gorzelle, 2007). Reggio Emilia approach is also seen as a way of education for children with special needs with benefits such as providing children express themselves in a variety of ways and enhancing their intellectual development (Lai, 2009; Mitchiner, Batamula & Kite, 2018). All in all, when the similar parts are taken into consideration, those parts might be influenced by the mainstream curriculum models because obvious similarities were found between the Turkish ECE curriculum and mainstream curriculum models.

Even if similarities can be seen in a written form in the curriculum, these similarities might not be seen in practice for several reasons. This finding corroborates the idea of Kotaman (2009), who explained why Waldorf education cannot be totally applied in a Turkish context. He indicated that because Waldorf education is independent from authority, and it needs an environment which is closely related with nature, the Turkish education system would not be able to implement this curriculum. Besides this finding which is about mismatch in application of the curriculum models is in agreement with Günay-Bilaloğlu's (2018) findings which showed the reasons for differences in practices between the High Scope approach and the Turkish ECE curriculum. She underlined the significance of active children especially in the planning part. In the High Scope approach, children are actively engaged in the planning of the day, children have the right to speak about their education or they have chance to choose the activities that they would like to attend throughout the day. Moreover, she added that this difference in application between these two curriculum models might be caused by the high number of children. In Turkey, there are many children in an early childhood classroom and generally there is only one teacher in this classroom, thus a plan- do- review approach might be difficult to apply. Such previous studies have mainly focused on a specific curriculum model such as Waldorf and High Scope. In addition, there are other findings of the studies which are consistent with the finding about mismatch of the application of curriculum models. When all the mentioned curriculum models were considered, the active involvement of children and the role of the teacher are the major differences that were seen between the Turkish ECE curriculum and others (Tuncer, 2015). In the Turkish ECE curriculum, the role of the teacher is more dominant than in the other curriculum models. Thus, the active engagement of children can be influenced by this teacher directed way of education. According to a study of the views of in- service early childhood teachers about the Turkish ECE curriculum, it was found that teachers are pleased with the curriculum because it was prepared as flexible, child centered and supporting active

learning. However, they added that there were some problems in the application because of inadequate physical environments and the high number of children (Özsırkıntı, Akay, & Yılmaz Bolat, 2014).

All in all, although the Turkish ECE curriculum has similarities with mainstream curriculum models, it shows differences in application for various reasons such as the physical environment, role of the children or role of the teacher. However, it needs to be remembered that a specific curriculum model should not be totally applied in a country just because of its success elsewhere in another context. A variety of points need to be considered when adapting a successful curriculum for use in a different country as a new curriculum. Culture, characteristics of the society, physical conditions, readiness of the individuals, teachers' self- efficacy and quality and features of the children are some of the critical points that needs to be focused on while a curriculum is adapted, in order to provide a good match between its theory and application.

Recommendations

For future research, further curriculum models such as Bank Street or Integrated Curriculum might be added to broaden our knowledge about the theoretical background of the Turkish ECE curriculum. Additionally, mainstream curriculum models can be observed in their origins and in this way first-hand information could be gathered about their correct application that might afford better opportunities to compare practices between Turkish ECE classrooms and these curriculum models. Moreover, in order to have deeper understanding about the application of the curriculum, future studies might be conducted with early childhood teachers and their ideas compared. Thus, their knowledge of application might be better understood and relevant in- service education could be provided where necessary to help our professionals meet the objectives of the ECE curriculum in Turkey.

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MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programının Ana Akım Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programları Açısından İncelenmesi

Genişletilmiş Özet:

Güncel okul öncesi eğitim programı 2013 yılında MEB tarafından yayınlanmıştır. Çocuk merkezli, esnek, eklektik, dengeli, oyun temelli keşfederek öğrenme gibi özellikleri barındıran bu program dokuz bölümden oluşmaktadır. İlk bölümde okul öncesi eğitimin amaçlarından bahsedilmektedir. İkinci bölümde ise okul öncesi eğitimin temel ilkelerine yer verilmektedir. Okul öncesi dönemin önemi üçüncü bölümde vurgulanmıştır. Dördüncü bölüm ise programın temel özellikleri hakkındadır. Sonraki bölümde gelişim alanları ile ilgili kazanım göstergelere yer verilmiştir. Altıncı bölümde öğrenme ortamı üzerinde durulurken, yedinci bölüm de etkinlik türleri ve günün planlanması üzerinedir. Sekizinci bölümde ise değerlendirme boyutu ele alınmıştır. Son bölümde de özel gereksinimli çocukların nasıl destekleneceği konusunda bilgi sağlanmaktadır. Programın özellikleri kısmında eklektik olduğundan ve farklı öğrenme kuram ve modellerindeki çocuk merkezli uygulamalardan yararlanılarak bir senteze ulaşıldığından bahsedilmiştir. Ancak hangi uygulamalardan yararlanıldığı konusunda herhangi bir bilgi sağlanmamıştır. Dolayısıyla bu araştırmanın amacı, MEB okul öncesi eğitim programının, Montessori, High Scope, Waldorf ve Reggio Emilia gibi anaakım okul öncesi programlarıyla hangi alanlarda benzerlik gösterdiğini incelemektir.

Araştırma yöntemi olarak içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Veri kaynakları MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı ve anaakım okul öncesi programları ile ilgili bilgi verici araştırma makaleleri, kitap bölümleri ve kitaplardan oluşmaktadır. İlk olarak MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı araştırmacılar tarafından dokuz kategoriye ayrılmış ve anaakım okul öncesi eğitim programları bu başlıklar altında incelenmiştir. Verilerin güvenilirlik ve geçerliliğini sağlamak amacıyla uzman görüşü ve kodlayıcılar arası güvenilirlik yöntemlerinde faydalanılmıştır.

Araştırmanın bulgularına göre, okul öncesi eğitimin amaçları açısından MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı, diğer okul öncesi eğitim programlarıyla olduğu gibi bütüncül gelişim odaklıdır. Ayrıca çocukların gelişimini destekleyen kapsayıcı bir öğrenme ortamının oluşturulması diğer anaakım okul öncesi programlarla paralellik göstermektedir. Çocukların Türkçeyi doğru ve güzel konuşmalarını sağlamak dışında MEB Okul Öncesi Programı diğer anaakım okul öncesi programlarla hemfikiridir.

Okul öncesi eğitimin temel ilkeleri ile ilgili olarak MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı, bireysel farklılıklara, demokratik öğrenme ortamının yaratılmasına, oyun temelli öğrenmeye, değerlendirmeye ve aile katılımına vurgu yapmıştır. Bu temel ilkeler anaakım okul öncesi programlarda da mevcuttur.

MEB Okul Öncesi Programı okul öncesi dönemde çocukların gelişim alanlarında ve özellikle beyin gelişiminde hızlı bir ilerleme gösterdiğini o yüzden bu dönemin kritik bir dönem olduğunu söylemektedir. Ayrıca bu dönemde çevrenin, ailenin ve öğretmenin önemine vurgu yapmaktadır. Diğer okul öncesi programlar incelendiğinde MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programının bu başlıklar altında en fazla Montessori ve Reggio Emilia ile benzerlik gösterdiği en az Waldorf ve High Scope ile benzerlik gösterdiğini söylemek mümkündür.

Program özelliklerine bakıldığında MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı çocuk merkezli, esnek, oyun temelli bir programdır. Farklı değerlendirme yöntemleri kullanımını teşvik eder ve özel gereksinimli çocukların eğitime dahil edilmesinin gerekliliğinden bahseder. Bahsedilen bu özellikler diğer okul öncesi programlarla benzerlik teşkil etmektedir ancak MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programının eklektik, sarmal olması ve rehberlik hizmetlerine önem vermesi onu diğer okul öncesi programlarında ayırtmaktadır ve bu başlıklara diğer okul öncesi programlarda vurgu yapılmamıştır.

MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programını diğer programlardan ayıran önemli bir özelliği de gelişim alanları ile ilgili kazanım göstergeleridir. Beş gelişim alanı ile ilgili kazanım ve göstergeler MEB Okul Öncesi

Eğitim Programında belirtilmiştir. Benzer olarak sadece High Scope programında beş alana ait gelişimsel göstergeler vardır ama diğer üç programda gelişim alanlarına yönelik önceden belirlenmiş kazanım ve göstergeler yoktur.

MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programında öğrenme ortamında öğrenme merkezleri vardır ve gelişimsel olarak uygun materyallerin seçilmesi önemlidir. Diğer programlara baktığımızda High Scope programında da bu iki madde önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Waldorf programında ise öğrenme ortamı öğrenme merkezleri diye ayrı bir şekilde düzenlenmemiştir. Montessori programında ise öğrenme merkezleri vardır fakat Montessori'ye özgü materyaller onu diğer programlardan ayırt eder. Son olarak Reggio Emilia programında da öğrenme merkezleri vardır fakat çocukların fazlaca zaman geçirdiği atölyeler bulunmaktadır ve Reggio Emilia programı için önemli bir yere sahiptir. Özetle MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı öğrenme ortamları açısından en fazla High Scope programı ile benzerlik göstermiştir.

Etkinlik türleri ve günün planlanmasına baktığımızda MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programında çeşitli etkinlik tipleri vardır. Etkinlik türleri diğer programlardan çok farklı değildir fakat günün planlanması konusunda bazı farklılıklar mevcuttur. Örneğin, günün planlanması MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programında genellikle öğretmen kontrolündedir ama Montessori ve Reggio Emilia programında çocuklar günün planlanması hususunda daha fazla söz hakkına sahiptir.

Değerlendirme boyutu ile ilgili olarak MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programında çocukların değerlendirilmesi, öğretmenin kendini değerlendirmesi ve programın değerlendirilmesi gerekmektedir. Değerlendirme yöntemi olarak çocuk gözlem formları, çocuk gözlem raporları, portfolyo ve değerlendirme sorularından faydalanılmaktadır. Diğer programlara baktığımızda bu yöntemlerin çokça kullanıldığını söylemek mümkündür. Örneğin High Scope programında çocuk gözlem raporları ve portfolyo, Waldorf programında gelişim raporları, Montessori de gözlem yöntemi Reggio Emilia programında ise portfolyo ve dokümantasyon yöntemleri kullanılmaktadır. Dolayısıyla MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programının bu programlardan etkilenmiş olabileceğini söylemek mümkündür.

Bir diğer önemli nokta ise özel gereksinimli çocukların nasıl destekleneceği konusudur. MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programında özel gereksinimli çocuklar sınıf ortamına dahil edilir ve etkinlikler bu çocukların da aktif katılabileceği şekilde düzenlenir. Waldorf programı dışında diğer programlar da bu anlayışı benimsemektedir. Waldorf programında ise özel gereksinimli çocuklar için ayrı okullar vardır ve özel gereksinimli çocuklar bu okullarda eğitim alır.

Kısaca MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programının dünyada yaygın olan diğer okul öncesi programları ile birçok açıdan benzerlik gösterdiği bu araştırmada bulunmuştur. Dolayısıyla MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programının eklektik kısmında bahsedildiği gibi bu programlardan etkilenmiş olabileceği söz konusudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: MEB okul öncesi eğitim programı, Anaokul okul öncesi eğitim programları, Adaptasyon, Özel gereksinimi olan çocuklar.