



Preparing highly qualified pre-school teacher candidates in the light of total quality management

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Abstract

This research aimed to determine teacher qualification requirements of pre-schools implementing national and international pre-school programs in Turkey. Data were obtained from job vacancy advertisements of preschools published on the most popular job search sites, on the websites of pre-schools, and in newspapers. A total of 237 pre-school teacher job vacancy advertisements were collected between August 2020-May 2021 and analyzed with the Document Analysis method. Teacher qualification requirements of the pre-schools were categorized as socio-demographic features, duration of teaching experience, education level, soft and hard skills. Research data may shed light on educational faculties in process of updating and improving their pre-school teaching undergraduate programs. Also, pre-school teachers and candidate teachers can evaluate themselves based on the requirements of pre-schools, see their strong and weak points, and try to improve their weak points to become qualified teachers highly sought by all pre-schools. It is highly recommended to do similar research in other countries to empower future teachers.

Keywords Education management; higher education institutions; pre-school teacher; pre-school teacher education program; total quality management

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1. Introduction

1.1. Importance of Pre-School Education

Pre-school education is the first step of the education ladder. A pre-school offers education to children between ages of 2-6 before they begin the compulsory education at primary schools. A good pre-school education can be a predictor of lifelong academic achievement of students because quality pre-school education strengthens social and emotional development of children, promotes language and cognitive skills, helps children to gain self-confidence. "Preschool education is a necessary condition for the development of every child" (Unicef, 2020). Learning during the early years is very important for the lifelong development of children because neurological pathways for coloring to calculus, are constructed within the first few years (Burlacu,2013). Early life experiences are the determinants of further experiences (Bagiati et al., 2010). The brain is able to wire specific skills during fertile times called "windows of opportunity" at an

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optimum level in which positive experiences result in positive outcomes and negative experiences result in negative outcomes. Social development, attachment, independence, cooperation, emotional intelligence, trust, impulse control, thinking skills can be enhanced greatest from 4 years to puberty. Motor development, vision can be enhanced from 2 years to puberty, and language skills can be enhanced greatest between 2-7 years. A child builds approximately 1,000 trillion synapses through the experiences he/she encounters because human interactions and earthly experiences are needed for neurons to forge the neurological networks which will be the foundations for language, thinking, reasoning, emotional and social behaviors, and for physical movement. Also, repetition strengthens the wiring between neurons. The brain of 3-year-old child is two-and-a-half times more active than an adult's (Schiller 2010). Children can get benefit more from pre-schools with qualified up-to-date education. Many studies confirmed that preschool education has many positive effects on school readiness and school success of children (Barnett & Hustedt,2003), leads to positive outcomes in life such as enhances cognitive development, school progress, social skills, high school graduation rates, and also leads to positive outcomes in health, employment (Morgan,2019).

1.2. Effect of Pre-School Teachers' Competencies on Childhood Education

Teacher competencies have a significant effect on students' learning process (Prasertcharoensuk et al.,2015) and there is a positive relationship between teacher-child relationships and teachers' competence (Chung, Marvin and Churchill,2005). Thus, pre-school teachers need to receive quality education at the universities to meet the requirements of their students. Pre-school teachers are expected to have good communication skills, creativity, interpersonal skills, organizational skills, patience, and physical stamina (U.S. Department of Labor, 2021), to be a guide, to know to teach and learning very well, to observe students and to change and develop constantly so that pre-school teaching requires more qualification to have these characteristics (Covill,2011). Studies in the literature about the parents' preferences and expectations for selection of pre-schools emphasize that safety and security (Mensing, French, Fuller and Kagan,2000; Sevinç, 2006; Dahari and Ya, 2011; Dağlı,2012; Polat and Çelmeli, 2015) ; health (Yaman and Saçkes,2017), cleanliness and order (Arnas, 2002; Vandebroek et al., 2008; Argon and Akkaya,2008; Dahari and Ya,2011); happiness of child and staff qualifications (Hugh Foot et al,2000) are the most important factors for parents. In the studies related to parents' expectations about preschools, researchers mentioned that parents want pre-school teachers who graduated from a university (Şimşek and İvrendi, 2014), have a positive attitude towards the child, cooperate and communicate well with parents, educate well, are good role models and free from violence and oppression (Seyfullahoğulları,2012). Also, teachers' interest, approach, and availability(Ceylan,2019) and physical properties (clothing, appearance) of the teacher (Şimşek and İvrendi, 2014) are the other important factors for parents to select a pre-school good for their children. Children in high quality early childhood education and care settings grow up to be more productive and healthier adults and improvements in these settings can lead to better educational, economic and societal benefits (Manning et al.,2019). There is strong relationship between early childhood education and care environment and the level of

teacher qualifications (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005) and child developmental and educational outcomes (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001).

1.3. Turkish Context

There are state and private pre-schools implementing Turkish national pre-school curriculum and also there are American, British, and Canadian culture pre-schools that are implementing international programs such as European Language Portfolio, GEMS (Great Explorations in Math and Science), bilingual education, Montessori, Waldorf approach in Turkey. Students who graduated from the child development section of vocational high schools with duration of 4 years can work in preschools as teachers or co-teachers. In addition, teachers are required to receive a diploma from a pre-school teaching undergraduate program at universities to be able to work as pre-school teachers at state or private pre-schools in Turkey. Duration of the Pre-school Teaching Undergraduate Programs is 4 years with 8 terms. The Turkish Ministry of National Education determined “The General Teacher Competencies” and “Special Field Competencies” of the preschool teachers in 2008 and updated these competencies in 2017 to be a guide for developing teacher training undergraduate programs. Preschool Teacher Special Field Competencies consist of seven competence areas, 19 competence items, and 168 performance indicators. Seven core competence areas identified by the Turkish Ministry of National Education are “Development Areas, Communication with Families, Family Participation and Family Education, Assessment, Communication, Creativity and Aesthetics, Collaboration with School and Society, and Professional Development” (MEB, 2008:108). Under the coordination of the Council of Higher Education, the first restructuring studies regarding Education/Educational Sciences Faculties and teaching undergraduate programs were carried out within the scope of the Ministry of National Education Development Project in 1997-1998, and partial arrangements were made in 2006 and 2009. Later, due to the developing conditions and needs, new regulations were made regarding the Education Faculties, depending on the structural changes made in the education system in 2012. The departments and undergraduate programs were reviewed and necessary arrangements and updates were made. New programs have been implemented since the 2018-2019 academic year. The courses in the teaching undergraduate programs updated in 2018 were again categorized in three groups: 45-50% Field Education Courses; 30-35% Teaching Profession Courses, and 15-20% General Culture Courses. In the Pre-school Teaching Undergraduate Program, the intensity of the courses was determined as Teaching profession 35%, general culture 19% and field education 46%. It was stated that the terms, national/local credits, and ECTS of the compulsory and elective courses in the programs cannot be changed by the universities. In addition to the elective courses recommended in the programs, a maximum of six courses can be added to the Teaching Profession and Field Education elective course pool after the reasons and course definitions are made in line with the interests, requests, and needs of the students and the approval of the Council of Higher Education. Elective courses to be added to the Field Education elective course pool should be for the teaching of the subject area. For the courses to be added to General Culture elective courses, there is no restriction, and the approval of the Council of Higher Education is not required (Council of Higher Education, 2020). Names of 19 different field education courses and their teaching terms at universities and also 15 field education

elective courses are shown in table 1. Six of these elective courses can be chosen by each student till graduation at pre-school teaching departments of universities.

Table 1. Field Education Compulsory and Elective Courses

Field Education Compulsory Courses	Term	Field Education Elective Courses (6 of them can be chosen)
Introduction to Early Childhood Education	1.	Family Education and Participation
Child Health and First Aid	1.	Children and Media
Development in Early Childhood Period	2.	Child Behavior Management
Development and Education in Infancy	2.	Movement Development and Education in Child
Science Education in Early Childhood	3.	Social Skills Education in Child
Early Childhood Mathematics Education	3.	Traditional Children's Games in Early Childhood Education
Preschool Education Programs	3.	Language and Concept Development in Early Childhood
Elective 1	3.	Sensory Education in Early Childhood
Early Childhood Music Education	4.	Rhythm, Dance and Orff Education in Early Childhood
Play Development and Education in Early Childhood	4.	Creativity in Early Childhood and Creative Children's Activities
Drama in Early Childhood Education	4.	Early Childhood Education in Different Countries
Elective 2	4.	Education of Hospitalized Children
Art Education in Early Childhood	5.	Children at Risk and Education
Recognition and Evaluation of the Child	5.	Evaluation of In-Class Learning
Learning Approaches in Early Childhood	5.	Family and Child in Turkish Culture
Elective 3	5.	
Early Childhood Environmental Education	6.	
Child Mental Health	6.	
Early Childhood Literature	6.	
Elective 4	6.	
Character and Values Education	7.	
School Adaptation and Early Literacy Education	7.	
Elective 5	7.	
Early Childhood Education Policies	8.	
Elective 6	8.	

16 different Teaching Profession Compulsory courses, their teaching terms, and 20 Teaching Profession elective courses are shown in table 2. Six of these elective courses can be chosen by each student at pre-school teaching department of universities.

Table 2. Teaching Profession Compulsory and Elective Courses

Teaching Profession Courses	Term	Teaching Profession Elective Courses (6 of them can be chosen)
Introduction to Education	1.	Open and Distance Learning
Educational Philosophy	1.	Child Psychology
Educational Sociology	2.	Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder
Education psychology	2.	Education Law
Turkish Education History	3.	Education Anthropology
Research Methods in Education	3.	Education History
Elective 1	3.	Drama in Education
Instructional Technologies	4.	Non-Program Activities in Education
Teaching Principles and Methods	4.	Program Development in Education
Elective 2	4.	Project Preparation in Education
Turkish Education System and School Management	5.	Critical and Analytical Thinking
Measurement and Evaluation in Education	5.	Inclusive Education
Elective 3	5.	Comparative Education
Morals and Ethics in Education	6.	Micro Teaching
Classroom Management	6.	Museum Education
Elective 4	6.	Out-of-School Learning Environments
Teaching Practice 1	7.	Learning Difficulty
Counseling in Schools	7.	Individualizing and Adapting Teaching
Elective 5	7.	Sustainable Development and Education
Teaching Practice 2	8.	Adult Education and Lifelong Learning
Special Education and Inclusion	8.	
Elective 6	8.	

9 different General Culture Compulsory courses, their teaching terms, and 18 General Culture Elective courses are shown in table 3. Four of these elective courses can be chosen by each student at pre-school teaching department of universities.

Table 3. General Culture Compulsory and Elective Courses

General Culture Compulsory Courses	Term	General culture elective courses (4 of them can be chosen)
Atatürk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution 1	1.	Addiction and Fight Against Addiction
Foreign Language 1	1.	Nutrition and Health
Turkish Language 1	1.	History and Philosophy of Science
Information Technologies	1.	Science and Research Ethics
Atatürk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution 2	2.	Economy and Entrepreneurship
Foreign Language 2	2.	Traditional Turkish Handicrafts
Turkish Language 2	2.	Human Rights and Democracy Education
Elective 1	2.	Human Relations and Communication
Community Service Practices	4.	Career Planning and Development
Elective 2	4.	Culture and Language
Elective 3	5.	Media Literacy
Elective 4	6.	Professional English
		Art and Aesthetics
		Turkish Folk Dances
		Turkish Sign Language
		Turkish Cultural Geography
		Turkish Art History
		Turkish Music

Turkish Council of Higher Education took a decision that Education/ Educational Sciences Faculties of higher education institutions can update and develop teaching undergraduate programs considering Turkey Qualifications Framework and Teaching Profession Competencies determined by the Ministry of Education. According to the

meeting of the Council of Higher Education Council on 10.08.2020, it has been decided that

- a. "By considering the grouping of course categories as "Field Education Courses, Teaching Profession Courses, and General Culture Courses",
- b."By paying attention to the order in this grouping in terms of "number of courses, course hours/number of credits and their intensity", the relevant boards of higher education institutions are authorized in determining the courses, curricula, and credits in teaching programs".

This regulation on Education Faculties grants universities a wide range of freedom of action, and this "transfer of authority" can be considered as a historical decision regarding Education Faculties and teaching programs.

1.4. How to improve Pre-school Teaching Undergraduate Program of Educational Faculties

Teaching is not simply a transfer of knowledge, learning how to teach is a difficult process (Fernandez, 2005). Planning teacher education programs is a challenging process due to the varying needs of qualified teachers. Teacher education programs comprise courses that help teacher candidates to develop competencies in teaching (de Lange & Nerland, 2018), content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and hands-on experience (Schroth & Helfer, 2018). "The quality of education depends on teachers and high quality teachers need high-quality training. Coursework, courses about pedagogy, field experiences, classroom management, assessment practices, learning issues, special needs, and use of technology in education are important to consider when designing and also reforming teacher training (Unesco, 2021). Staff qualification is one of the important factors for parents (Hugh Foot et al,2000) to select the best pre-school for their children. "Total quality curriculum is imbued with basic principles of total quality management so that core principles and processes of TQM could be applied to the process of curriculum development" (Glatthorn, 2004).

Key principles of Total Quality Management in education comprises involvement of stakeholders of education (students, parents, employers, instructors, and society) in continuous development (Sallis, 2002; Al-Ibrahim, 2014; Bunglowala and Asthana, 2016), focusing on their needs and expectations and satisfying them (Ene and Tatar, 2010; Gruber et al., 2010; Militaru et al., 2013; Sweeney, 2016; Senol and Daglı, 2017). Educational faculties, focusing on quality education and designing their programs to meet the needs and expectations of the stakeholders of the education can support and advance the 21st-century skills of their students, achieve higher success of being preferred by the teacher candidates and also have higher rates of graduates sought by the employer schools. Graduates of pre-school teaching undergraduate programs of universities are the main stakeholders of education. Pre-schools are the employers of the

graduates of Educational Faculties and they are one of the stakeholders of education. Teacher education programs should be carefully designed to meet the requirements of the stakeholders of education. Today's professionals in any occupation should have soft skills to be in demand in labor market to build career and achieve personal success so that they can work in a team, take responsibility, to organize own time and to adapt new situations quickly. Although soft skills are not quantifiable and not generally described in job descriptions, the soft skills ensure productivity and high efficiency in any occupation (Tsalikova and Pakhotina, 2019).

Hard skills are the technical requirements of a profession and soft skills complement hard skills. Specific soft skills that should be implemented and used in teacher education programs are communicative skills, leadership skills, teamwork force, thinking skills and problem solving, life-long learning and information management, entrepreneur skill, ethics, moral and professionalism (Pachauri and Yadav,2014). Soft skills should be infused to curriculum (Pachauri and Yadav,2014) and the integrated soft skills training module should be utilized by teacher educators during training of teaching professionals (Ngang et al.,2015). There is a gap in the literature about the socio-demographic, soft and hard skills of teachers required by pre-schools in Turkey.

In that sense, teacher qualification requirements of pre-schools need to be considered during the process of updating and developing teaching undergraduate programs at universities. Also, pre-school teachers and candidate teachers can evaluate themselves based on the requirements of pre-schools, see their strong and weak points, and try to improve their weak points to become qualified teachers highly sought by all pre-schools.

1.5. Aim of the study

Due to gap in the literature, this research aimed to determine teacher qualification requirements of pre-schools in Turkey. The research questions which will be answered are

1. What are the teacher qualification requirements of pre-schools implementing national and international pre-school curricula?
 - a. Socio-demographic features
 - b. Duration of teaching experience
 - c. Education level
 - d. Soft skills
 - e. Hard skills

2. Method

2.1. Sampling procedures

Data were obtained from job vacancy advertisements of preschools published on the most popular job search sites, on the web sites of pre-schools, and in newspapers. A total

of 237 pre-school teacher job vacancy advertisements were collected between August 2020- May 2021.

2.2. Research Model and Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with Document Analysis method which is one of the qualitative research methods. Document analysis is used to carefully and systematically analyze the content of written documents (Wach, 2013) and requires the analysis and interpretation of data in order to make sense, create an understanding of the relevant topic, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In document analysis, besides existing documents, interviews, participant and non-participant observations and all physical documents can be analyzed together (Yin, 1994). Qualifications of pre-school teachers sought by the pre-schools were categorized as socio-demographic features, duration of teaching experience, education level, soft skills, and hard skills and number and frequency of each item were calculated.

3. Results

In this section, the findings of the research are presented under the heading of each of the research questions.

Research Question : What are the teacher qualification requirements of pre-schools implementing national and international pre-school curricula?

a. Socio-demographic features

When the job vacancy advertisements of the pre-schools were examined, it was seen that most of the pre-schools did not indicate their preference about gender of the teacher (total f= 161, 67.93%). Rest of the preschools implementing both national and international curricula preferred female pre-school teachers (f=56,23.63%) the most. The percentage preference of pre-schools implementing international programs for male pre-school teachers is nearly close to their preference of the female teachers (f=5; 17.24%) (Table 4).

Table 4. Sociodemographic features of the pre-school teachers

	Pre-schools implementing Turkish National Curriculum (n=208)		Pre-schools implementing international programmes (n=29)		Total (n=237)	
Gender	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Female	50	24.04	6	20.69	56	23.63
Male	0	0	5	17.24	5	2.11
Female or Male	15	7.21	0	0	15	6.33
Not stated	143	68.75	18	62.07	161	67.93

b. Teaching Experience

Analysis of the job vacancy advertisements of pre-schools showed that most of the pre-schools did not state the duration of teaching experience of candidate teachers (f=70, 29.54%). The other pre-schools mostly are seeking teachers having experience in child development (f=47, 19.83%) and having minimum 2 years of teaching experience (f=43, 18.14 %) (Table 5).

Table 5. Duration of teaching experience of the pre-school teachers

	Pre-schools implementing Turkish National Curriculum (n=208)		Pre-schools implementing international programmes (n=29)		Total (n=237)	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Inexperienced	2	0.96	1	3.45	3	1.27
Minimum 1 year	10	4.80	0	0	10	4.22
Minimum 2 years	37	17.79	6	20.69	43	18.14
Minimum 3 years	29	13.94	4	13.79	33	13.92
Minimum 4 years	9	4.33	2	6.90	11	4.64
Minimum 5 years	12	5.76	1	3.45	13	5.49
Having experience in child development	39	18.75	8	27.59	47	19.83
Having private school experience	7	3.37	0	0	7	2.96
Not stated	63	30.29	7	24.14	70	29.54

c. Education level

Research results showed that most of the preschools both implementing national and international programs are seeking teachers having an undergraduate diploma in pre-school teaching received from a university (f= 155, 65.40%). Second most preferred

education level of teachers is having vocational high school diploma (f=98, 41.35%)(Table 6).

Table6. Education level of the pre-school teachers

	Pre-schools implementing Turkish National Curriculum (208)		Pre-schools implementing international programmes (29)		Total (n=237)	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Vocational High School Diploma (MYO Associate-2 years)	91	43.75	7	24.13	98	41.35
Diploma of Pre-school Teaching Undergraduate Degree (4 years)	133	63.94	22	75.86	155	65.40
Postgraduate education (master / PhD)	10	4.81	3	10.34	13	5.49
Pedagogic formation	25	12	4	13.79	29	12.24

d. Soft skills

The most preferred 7 soft skills of the teachers sought by all of the pre-schools good communication skills (f=141;59.49%), being prone to teamwork (f=104;43.88%), being innovative and creative (f=72;30.38%), being smiley (f=66;27.85%), loving children (f=61;25.74%), being dynamic/energetic/active (f=52;21.94%), and being open to personal development /life long learning (f=49;20.68) (table 7).

Research analysis showed that pre-schools implementing national pre-school curriculum are seeking teachers having 46 different soft skills and international pre-schools are seeking teachers having 21 different soft skills. Having good communication skills is the most preferred teacher skill sought by both types of pre-schools (f=120; 57.69 %national pre-schools; f=21 72.42% international pre-schools). The other characteristics

of teachers sought by the national pre-schools are being prone to teamwork (f= 98; 47.12%), being smiley (f=66; 31.73%),being innovative and creative (f=63; 30.29%), loving children (f=55; 26.44%),being young and dynamic (f=43;20.67%), open to personal development (f=39; 18.75%), loves his/her job (f=35; 16.83%), caring for appearance/personal care (f=33;15.87%), productive (f=27; 12.98%) and has patience (f=26;12.5%) in order.

The other preferred characteristics of teachers by the pre-schools implementing international curricula are being open to personal development / lifelong learning (f=10; 34.48%), innovative-creative and being young and dynamic (both f=9; 31%) , caring for appearance / personal care (f=7 24.14%), loving children and being prone to teamwork (f=6 ;20.69%), gives importance to service quality (f=4; 13.79%), productive and having the business discipline and work ethic (both f=3 ;10.34%) in order (Table 7).

Table7. Soft skills of pre-school teachers

	Pre-schools implementing Turkish National Curriculum (208)		Pre-schools implementing international programmes (29)		TOTAL (237)	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Good communication skills	120	57.69	21	72.41	141	59.49 *
Prone to teamwork	98	47.12	6	20.69	104	43.88 *
Innovative and creative	63	30.29	9	31	72	30.38 *
Smiley	66	31.73	0	0	66	27.85
Love children	55	26.44	6	20.69	61	25.74 *
Young and dynamic/energetic/active	43	20.67	9	31	52	21.94 *
Open to personal development / lifelong learning	39	18.75	10	34.48	49	20.68 *
Caring for appearance / personal care	33	15.87	7	24.14	40	16.88
Love his/her job	35	16.83	2	6.90	37	15.61
Productive	27	12.98	3	10.34	30	12.65

Have patience	26	12.5	0	0	26	10.97
Have business discipline and work ethic	19	9.13	3	10.34	22	9.28
Strong human relations	18	8.65	2	6.90	20	8.44
Responsible	19	9.13	1	3.45	20	8.44
Having good diction	16	7.69	2	6.90	18	7.59
Non-smoker	17	8.17	0	0	17	7.17
Good problem-solving skills	13	6.25	2	6.90	15	6.33
Work devotedly	14	6.73	0	0	14	5.91
Good organization and practical thinking	12	5.77	1	3.45	13	5.49
Solution-oriented	9	4.33	2	6.90	11	4.64
Developed research skills	8	3.85	1	3.45	9	3.80
Achievement-oriented	9	4.33	0	0	9	3.80
Presentable	8	3.85	1	3.45	9	3.80
Self -confident	8	3.85	0	0	8	3.38
Positive	8	3.85	0	0	8	3.38
Gives importance to service quality	4	1.92	4	13.79	8	3.38
Tidy	4	1.92	2	6.90	6	2.53
Idealist	6	2.88	0	0	6	2.53
Sensitive to nature and environment	6	2.88	0	0	6	2.53
Project development skills	5	2.40	0	0	5	2.11
Reliable /honest	5	2.40	0	0	5	2.11
Protect national and moral values	5	2.40	0	0	5	2.11
Contemporary	5	2.40	0	0	5	2.11
Mature	4	1.92	0	0	4	1.69

Kind	4	1.92	0	0	4	1.69
Understanding and harmonious	3	1.44	0	0	3	1.27
Persuasive	3	1.44	0	0	3	1.27
Classroom management skills	2	0.96	0	0	2	0.84
Tolerant	2	0.96	0	0	2	0.84
Faithful to working principles	0	0	2	6.90	2	0.84
Sociable	2	0.96	0	0	2	0.84
Resourceful	1	0.05	0	0	1	0.42
Respect differences	1	0.05	0	0	1	0.42
Fond of art events	1	0.05	0	0	1	0.42
An example with her/his behavior	1	0.05	0	0	1	0.42
Without health problems	1	0.05	0	0	1	0.42
Friendly	1	0.05	0	0	1	0.42

e. Hard Skills

When table 8 is examined, it is seen that Most of the preschools require teachers to have good computer literacy and command of today's educational technologies (f=91;38.40%), to attend to training and seminars for professional development (f=57;24.05%), knowledge about alternative education methods (Reggio Emilia, Montessori etc) (f=33, 13.92%) and fluent English (f=30, 12.66 %)(table 8).

Pre-schools implementing national pre-school curriculum are seeking teachers having 15 different types of hard skills. Mostly sought type of knowledge is having a good computer literacy and a command of today's educational technologies (f=87; 41.83 %). The other types of knowledge that teacher need to have to be preferred by preschools implementing national curricula are attendance to training and seminars for professional development (f=51; 24.52%), knowledgeable about alternative education methods (Reggio Emilia, Montessori, High Scope, Waldorf system, IB-PYP program) (f=24; 11.54%), fluent English (f=18 ;8.65%), knowledge of teaching principles and methods(f=14; 6.73%), classroom management knowledge (f=11; 5.29%), having the ability to produce and

execute game, material and workshop content (f=5; 2.40%), knowledge about puppet and drama and stem/robotic coding (each f=3; 1.44%), kindergarten education equipment (f=2; 0.96%); orf, workshop-oriented teaching model, behavior management knowledge, measurement and evaluation, knowledge about outdoor activities (each =1 0.48%)(Table 8).

Pre-schools implementing international pre-school programs stated 7 different hard skills that pre-school teachers should possess. Mostly sought type of knowledge is fluent English (f=12; 41.38%). The other types of knowledge that pre-school teachers need to have to be preferred are knowledge about alternative education methods (Reggio Emilia, Montessori, High Scope, Waldorf system, IB-PYP program) (f=9; 31%), attendance to training and seminars for professional development (f=6; 20.69%), having a good computer literacy and a command of today's educational technologies (f=4;13.79%), having the ability to produce and execute game, material and workshop content (f=3; 10.34%), knowledge of teaching principles and methods (f=2; 6.90%) and classroom management knowledge (f=1;3.45%) (table 8).

Table8. Hard skills of pre-school teachers

Knowledge related to teaching	Pre-schools implementing Turkish National Curriculum (208)		Pre-schools implementing international programmes (29)		Total (237)	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Having good computer literacy and a command of today's educational technologies	87	41.83	4	13.79	91	38.40*
Attendance to training and seminars for professional development	51	24.52	6	20.69	57	24.05*
Knowledgeable about alternative education methods (Reggio Emilia, Montessori etc)	24	11.54	9	31	33	13.92*
Fluent English	18	8.65	12	41.38	30	12.66*
Knowledge of teaching principles and methods	14	6.73	2	6.90	16	6.75
Classroom management knowledge	11	5.29	1	3.45	12	5.06

Having the ability to produce and execute game, material, and workshop content	5	2.40	3	10.34	8	3.38
Knowledgeable about puppet and drama	3	1.44	0	0	3	1.27
Stem / Robotic Coding	3	1.44	0	0	3	1.27
Kindergarten education equipment information	2	0.96	0	0	2	0.84
Knowledge about Outdoor activities	1	0.48	0	0	1	0.42
Measurement and evaluation	1	0.48	0	0	1	0.42
Behavior management knowledge	1	0.48	0	0	1	0.42
Orf	1	0.48	0	0	1	0.42
Workshop-oriented teaching model	1	0.48	0	0	1	0.42

4. Discussion

A good pre-school education can be a predictor of the lifelong academic achievement of students. Thus, pre-school teachers need to receive a quality education at the universities to meet the requirements of their students. The General Council of Higher Education in Turkey on 10 August 2020 decided to authorize the relevant boards of higher education institutions in determining the courses, curricula, and credits in teaching programs by considering the grouping of the course categories determined as "Field Education Courses, Teaching Profession Courses and General Culture Courses". Also, continuous improvement of universities to have qualified graduates and satisfying the needs of stakeholders of education are the key principles of total quality management in education (Sallis, 2002; Ene and Tatar, 2010 ; Gruber et al., 2010; Militaru et al., 2013; Sweeney, 2016; Al-Ibrahim, 2014; Bunglowala and Asthana, 2016; Senol and Daglı, 2017). There is a gap in the literature about the socio-demographic, soft and hard skills of teachers required by pre-schools in Turkey. This study aimed to determine teacher and principal qualification requirements of pre-schools implementing national and International pre-school programs. Total of 237 pre-school teacher job vacancy advertisements were collected and analyzed with Document Analysis method.

Results of the analysis of data about teacher qualification requirements of pre-schools are as follows:

Analysis of job vacancy advertisements showed that most of the pre-schools did not indicate their preference about gender of the teacher on their advertisements. The rest of the preschools implementing both national and international curricula preferred female pre-school teachers the most and these schools prefer to recruit teachers having experience in child

development and having minimum of 2 years of teaching experience. Most of both types of pre-schools are seeking teachers having an undergraduate diploma in pre-school teaching received from a university. Second most preferred education level of teachers is having vocational high school diploma.

The most preferred 7 soft skills of the teachers sought by all of the pre-schools good communication skills; being prone to teamwork; being innovative and creative; being smiley; loving children; being dynamic/energetic/active; and being open to personal development /life long learning. Soft skills are a combination of social skills, interpersonal people skills, communication skills, character traits career attributes, attitudes, and emotional intelligence quotient among others (Robles,2012). Tsalikova and Pakhotina (2019) made content-analysis of documents, articles and results of statistical reports in international databases of Scopus and Web of Science published in last 44 years and found out that there are some common problems about soft skills in different countries such as

- Lack of appropriate attention to development of soft skills during designing educational programmes
- Insufficient involvement of employers in this process
- Complexity of observation and evaluation of soft skills
- Difference between soft skills of graduates and expectations and demand in labour market

Educational programs need to be refocused on development of the soft skills (Tsalikova and Pakhotina, 2019) and these skills should be infused to curriculum process of teacher education (Pachauri and Yadav,2014). Most of the preschools require teachers to have good computer literacy and command of today's educational technologies, to attend to training and seminars for professional development, knowledge about alternative education methods and having fluent English. In a study, Nyarko (2018) explored the perspectives of school administrators to recruit pre-school teachers and found out that all administrators preferred female teachers having teaching experience ranging from 0-5 years. Other qualities administrators of preschools looked at when recruiting preschool teachers were age, classroom management, good interaction with children, professional conduct, appearance, response to children's needs, personal attributes, religious affiliation and spirituality, communication, and health and medical concerns. In the report for the European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture about "Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care", Urban et al. (2012) stated that individual competencies of teachers comprise knowledge of developmental aspects of children; different strategies of learning; communication with children and participation; working with parents and local communities; knowledge of team working ; working in contexts of diversity ; care and health of young children, and social protection. Results of this study are supported by studies of Urban et al. (2012); Covill,2011; U.S. Department of Labor (2021), and pre-school teacher competencies stated by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MEB, 2008:108).

5. Conclusions

Quality pre-school education strengthens social and emotional development of children, promotes language and cognitive skills, helps children to gain self-confidence. Pre-schools need qualified teachers so that teacher education programs are very crucial for the preparation of teachers who possess necessary knowledge, and skills to meet the needs of their students. This research collected data about the teacher qualification requirements of pre-schools implementing national and international pre-school programs in Turkey. Teacher qualification requirements of the pre-schools were categorized as socio-demographic features, duration of teaching experience, education level, soft and hard skills. It is believed that the results obtained from this research will contribute to the relevant literature and help universities to update and improve their undergraduate pre-school teaching programs to educate candidate teachers with the necessary skills required by the pre-schools. Also, pre-school teachers and candidate teachers can evaluate themselves based on the requirements of pre-schools, see their strong and weak points, and try to improve their weak points to become qualified teachers highly sought by all pre-schools. It is highly recommended to do similar research in other countries to empower future teachers.

On the basis of the results of this study, the following suggestions can be made for the researchers;

- They can design studies to evaluate the candidate pre-school teachers' competencies based on the expectations of pre-schools. Data which will be collected from this type of research can shed light on candidate teachers to see their strengths and also weak points and also allow candidate teachers to strengthen their weak points before they are recruited by the pre-schools.
- They can make interviews with instructors of educational faculties to determine their suggestions how to infuse soft skills into teacher education curricula and learning programmes
- They can adapt this study to their own country context and do similar research in their countries

On the other hand, the following suggestions can be made for the educational faculties of Higher Education Institutions;

- They can evaluate the data of this research and find out the weak points of their teaching programmes designed for pre-school teacher candidates
- They can update and improve their pre-school teaching programmes by considering the expectations of pre-schools about teacher qualifications

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