

# The Opinions of Preschool Teachers about Ethical Principles

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## **Abstract**

Can we fulfill our responsibilities and obligations while we are working? Today, professional ethics is a necessity for each occupation. As teachers are directly responsible for children's growth, professional ethics and ethical decision making are important for them. Although many countries, particularly the United States, have prepared ethics codes for preschool teachers, there are none listed for this group in Turkey. In this study, 29 preschool teachers from Samsun, Turkey were interviewed about preschool teachers' professional ethical principles by using semi-structured questions. Content analysis was used to determine the opinions of the teachers after the interviews, and an ethics code list was prepared. Each different opinion was an item in the list and frequency values were calculated. Thus, the first ethics code framework was created for Turkish preschool teachers.

## **Key Words**

Professional Ethics, Codes of Ethics.

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The word “ethics” comes from the Greek language, meaning character or ideal, or from the abstract idea of examining rules and the value of judgments. In fact, many different meanings are encompassed by ethics. Sometimes, ethics means moral values; other times, it means legal limitations on behavior and understood community standards. It is important to understand what is intended (Bibby, 1998; Lovat, 1998a). The American Counseling Association (ACA) expresses ethics as the clarification of “the nature of the ethical responsibilities held in common by its members” in other definition (Hill, 2004, p.132). The definition of responsibilities held in common (ACA, 1995) must be examined for every professional group. Pehlivan (1998) defines ethics as a statement about the past and present, true or false, or as a branch of philosophy regarding the expression of people’s general or ethical structures, behaviors, or ideas. Also ethics is a “standard of behavior or action in relation to others” (Hill, 2004: 132). Some writers (Corey et al., 1998) define ethics as something in a group or person’s behavior that must be obeyed for suitable behavior. According to philosopher C. Soloman (as cited in Pehlivan, 1998), ethics is interested in two basic subjects: the properties of a good person and certain behaviors of, or what rules limit, a person. Ethics is also sometimes classified as aspiring promulgate ideals; educational and regulatory codes; or as high ethics, low ethics, perceptual ethics, and survival ethics or meta ethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics (Andolsen, 2006).

If we look at ethics from a philosophical point of view, we understand that the concept is discussed in three dimensions. First, Plato’s *Republic* (1987) and his world view he mentions that societies have one hierarchy and inequality, and that every truth is God’s truth. This statement is important. Individual ethical judgments are assisting people in being better individuals and making society reach for perfection. However, according to Birkelund (2000), Plato’s view is actually far from today’s working society because it creates the idea of a man living in a work-free society. The second dimension is a sophistical philosophy corresponding to Plato’s view in which rights lay in a person’s own hands. In other words, rights are individual beliefs. Moreover, ethical principles are defined by individuals. According to sophistical philosophy, the truth is what is good for, or the best thing for, the individual. At present, a new ethical culture is growing. The third ethical dimension is intercultural and a person’s vision of global responsibility. In other words, in con-

trary to Plato's view, it is not for the individual but for everybody. This dimension of ethics structure is a synthesis; it is neither looked at as the individual's reality nor as a group's view. With global understanding that covers the whole, ethics is looked at in many societies' as the truth. Consequentially, today's ethical understanding presents more important values. This ethical understanding tells about the importance of coherence and equality (Lovat, 1998a).

There is a strong connection between ethics and social morality, about which Frederich Paulson says:

The science of moral duty; more broadly the science of the ideal human character and the ideal ends of human action... The chief problems with which ethics deals concern the nature of the summum bonum, or highest good, the origin and validity of the sense of duty, and the character and authority of moral obligation (Hill, 2004: 133).

Thus, it is understood from Paulson's definition that the concept of ethics cannot be abstracted from society and its rules or expectations. Campbell expresses some ideas similar to Paulson: "In teaching, the ethics of practice cannot be separated from the moral nature of the work" (Campbell, 2000: 213). Thus, ethical behavior is a type of moral responsibility in either work or personal life, and it is also a form of character.

Looking at professional ethics in light of these definitions and explanations, firstly, it is more important that professions provide an important public service. This idea is current for occupations such as doctors, carpenters, or plumbers because they relate to people's needs. The most important part of professional ethics is related to human rights. Therefore, for many fields, professional ethics is characterized by welfare or human rights. Moreover, with too many different organizations, professional ethics aims for a steady tempo and a clear atmosphere; employees have to have a high degree of individual autonomy (independence in judgment) for effective practice. However, each profession either has a basic philosophy or an ethical dimension. Thus, each occupational field has a systematic study of value concepts, such as right and wrong, and the broader principles justifying the application of rules of conduct. How, then, do we define a "professional"? Carr (1999) explained that the professional has to be someone who possesses, in addition to specified theoretical or technical expertise, a range of distinctly moral attitudes,

values, and motives designed to elevate the interest and needs of clients or pupils above self-interest. Briefly, professional ethics helps us in our business life and difficult circumstances. Moreover, professional ethics helps provide judgment when we have difficulty responding to circumstances or practice. Therefore, it is said that professional organizations provide ethical or moral ingredients. From this view, every professional organization must clearly introduce responsibilities and obligations (Carr, 1999).

There have been some theoretical and practical studies on the dimension of professional ethics called “code of practice.” According to Hill (2004), ethical principles are explained by an ethical analysis. Improving ethical principles is comfortable, fortunate, and provides for an increased quality of life for every business field (Hill, 2004). Also, according to Hill, “ethical analysis is the art and skill of engaging with ethically troubling material in ways that support client welfare” (2004: 133).

Codes of ethics in education have improved, but they have been criticized regarding their benefit and necessity in practice, strengths and weaknesses, since 1900. Arends and his colleagues note that “given the current for a greater emphasis on teaching as moral action... Professional associations should take heed and, as a minimal first step, revisit and revise the standards they uphold for the teaching profession” (Campbell, 2000: 204). Therefore, professional ethics must be emphasized and revised over and over. Such a revision of the standards could include the articulation of professional ethical practice in the form of a code.

Campbell and others have noted that ethics codes must be determined, particularly for teachers (Arends et al., 1998; Hynes, 1998; Lovat, 1998b), and that becoming familiar with the principles inherent in the codes may have value for professionalism (Campbell, 2000). Campbell expresses the importance of the development of ethical codes:

Once we initiate the development of an ethical code of practice in teaching, we, as a collective professional body, start to reject the prevailing relativism and subjectivism that so influence contemporary beliefs about ethics by the very act of attempting to codify objective ethical principles as valued ideals that should govern the practice of individuals. Once this reality is acknowledged, those developing the code can move

on in the process better prepared to address the complexities that will challenge their decisions (Campbell, 2000: 209).

Considering the ideas of Campbell (2000), Haynes (1998), and Lovat (1998a), we understand that ethical codes include some universal judgments, such as justice, honesty, loyalty, and respect for persons, and these principles are generally grouped into two titles: overarching values or beneficence (what one should do) and non-maleficence (what one should not do). Therefore, ethical code items are prefaced by the positive/proactive/imperative perspective associated with beneficence, namely “shall”, or the negative/prohibitive perspective associated with non-maleficence, namely “shall not”. Generally, the idea of what should not be done is taken into consideration when these lists are arranged, but the most preferable approach would be a combination of the two. For example, what one should do and what one should not do. In addition to providing an open statement about maintaining the level of service, professional ethics serves as a guidebook for professionals. Thus, the main purpose of professional ethics is to set the standards for suitable behaviors. In other words, a code of ethics is essentially an attempt to resolve (Campbell, 2000; Hynes, 1998; Lovat, 1998a).

Learning true and false begins in the family. A mother provides her child with what is right and wrong beginning from infancy, and these early lessons stay with us for a long time if reinforced by the society. Hence, as societies grow and become more complex day by day, individuals have to make decisions about things they have not seen before or are unsuitable cases in their lives. In other words, changing the ethical codes used to make decisions is not easy in view of the expectations of society, cultural values, technology, and politics. Improved professional ethics codes either improve individuals or increase their prestige, and create a new, quality ethics-legal parameter in the workplace (Simpson, 2004). According to Brandl and Maguire (2002), codes of ethics act as a guide for suitable decisions with the judgment of societal values. Although ethical codes cannot provide solutions for the issues or conflicts in society and workplaces, they help both teachers and schools by providing teachers information about their obligations, responsibilities, and consciousness. The main purpose and benefit of ethical codes is to provide internal discipline in which there is public autonomy in the workplace (Brandl & Maguire, 2002). Also, ethical codes improve accurate behavior in teaching. For the school itself, clear ethical stand-

ards provide concrete guidelines for dealing with situations, both in the teaching profession and other working areas. Ethics takes into account the greater good and integrity of the profession. Because professional ethics protect the workers in the workplace by compounding with individual value judgments, it creates a stronger workplace bond with fellow workers and their supervisors. A code of ethics provides individuals with security that protects him or her from possible abuses by unfair management and helps individuals to work as a team. Thus, ethics codes either increase satisfaction and productivity or society derives an indirect benefit (Bibby, 1998).

Martin Bibby states that “all professionals face complex ethical issues for which there are often no pre-determined rules. Some are intrinsic to the professions, arising from the distinctive values it serves. Others are shared with other professionals. Hiring a professional is thus hiring their values” (Bibby, 1998: 32). Simpson (2004) also determines the definition of professional ethics as a rule, as an external standard for the conduct of one’s profession, and continues to explain that professional codes of ethics give practitioners material for internal reflection to encourage self-criticism by the practitioner. Thus, a code of ethics is reflective of a profession’s attitude toward service and responsibility. Briefly, the benefits and functions of codes of ethics are the setting of standards for professional work; covering the workers and their needs; improving an internal mechanism for the workers; providing guidance to professionals as to their rights, responsibilities, and obligations; protecting the professionals from outside intervention and providing community trust; and, finally, obtaining the status and legitimacy of professionals (Bibby, 1998).

According to Davis and Elliston (1986), each professional field has social responsibilities within themselves and no one can be professional unless he or she obtains social sensibility. Accordingly, one’s very status as a professional requires that one possesses this moral truth. This truth comes in different shapes in each profession; for example, lawyers seek it in the form of justice. Thus, each profession must seek its own form of social good. Unless there is social sensibility, professionals cannot perform their social roles (Davis & Elliston, 1986). According to the teaching profession, ethics codes arranged for teachers provide facility in judgment. At the same time, ethics codes develop the ethical schools and their basics. So what are the ethical principles that teachers use?

Briefly, these can be said to clarify the ethics of the profession, to reflect the honor and respect of the profession, prompt an effective education, and provide decision making skills (Fosters, 1998).

Higgins (2003) emphasized that the ethics of teaching focuses on how the practice of teaching contributes to the teacher's flourishing, and he focuses on the relationship between ethics and morality according to R.S. Peters' view of ethics in education, which is the two basic views "matter" and "manner". Moral professionalism concerns the principles of professional conduct, duties incurred through roles and relationships, and moral dilemmas in practice (Higgins, 2003). Thus, teachers should ensure that they examine education aims to determine whether they are truly working to help children flourish and develop children's moral sensibilities and capacities. Teachers should also reflect on whether their own professional conduct meets these moral standards. In education, teachers are important models of moral purpose as a moral agent and moral authority because teachers' views about ethical and moral issues denote their intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical views (Campbell, 2000, 2003).

According to Forster (1998), and addressed by Plato, an ethical school must necessarily be combined with the ethical culture. Forster also determined that teachers are the best decision-makers when they improve their professional ethical principles for their field. Forster also explained that these ethical principles must be improved with ethics culture. Thus, an educator should take care of the following points (Forster, 1998; Lovat 1998a; New Zealand Teachers Council, 2006). 1) Teachers should be sensitive of their civil rights, educational politics, and the school system. Teachers should be aware of their responsibilities. 2) Teachers should determine their ethical principles using cases and circumstances. 3) When making decisions, teachers should be aware of ethical principles. 4) Teachers should take into account various moral theory when they determine ethics rules. These theories are utilitarianism, meaning the appeal to general principles such as justice, human rights, or respect for persons; an ethics of care, which means being guided in each case by case, compassion, and a concern for the human relationships within a situation; virtue theory, which means valuing dispositions appropriate to human flourishing and an integrated life; communitarianism, meaning an appeal to the shared and evolving traditions of one's community. 5) Teachers should provide peace and happiness to children, defend

their positive social relationship, and be respectful of their ideas and personalities because they are each different persons in the ethics rules. 6) Teachers should be aware of insufficiencies in the concepts reconciled within themselves, being responsible, cooperative, honest, and respectful to others ideals: knowledge, curiosity, thinking creatively, and learning throughout life. 7) Teachers should be aware of values such as respect for social rights and justice and eliminate discrimination.

There are ethics codes that include four main titles in terms of both pre-school teaching and general teaching (Association for Early Childhood Educators, 2006; Early Childhood Australia, 2006; Illinois Institute of Technology, 2006; Minnesota Rules, 2006; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2006; New Zealand Teachers Council, 2006):

1) Commitment to children. Teachers nurture the capacities of all learners to think and act with developing independence and strive to encourage an informed appreciation of the fundamental values of a democratic society. Teachers also carry out an education according to the child's needs and cares, increasing their knowledge and experience and sharing these with the children in their care, and protecting children's rights.

2) Commitment to parents and family. In this category, teachers recognize that they work in collaboration with the children's parents or family to encourage their active involvement in education. This category includes support and having the family know some matters related to their children, protecting their rights, and being respectful of their ideas.

3) Commitment to society. This category includes teachers' responsibilities in the society. Teachers are vested by the public with trust and responsibility, together with an expectation that they will help prepare students for life in the society, in the broadest sense.

4) Commitment to the profession. Teachers have responsibilities to their colleagues as well as families and society. This commitment includes situations such as the development of teachers themselves, sharing this new knowledge with their colleagues, and creating a fair and reflexive professional culture.

Nowadays, ethical rules are an important professional matter in the developing world. When we look at the position in Turkey, we see that



the subject of ethics has become a current issue in science, research, law, press, politics, sports, educational management, and psychological counseling and guidance. There is no defined ethical codes for the teaching profession and preschool teachers. For preschool education, ethics rules are briefly mentioned in the changed curriculum of the program book, which is prepared by the Ministry of National Education (MNE - MEB) (MEB, 2006). In this respect, in Turkish National Education and nearly all of the education phases it is a necessity to define ethical principles in addition to the law (Aydin, 2006; Pehlivan, 1998). For preschool teachers, these kinds of rules are prepared in some countries such as the United States and Australia (Early Childhood Australia, 2006; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2006).

Consequently, the factors that force the researcher to perform a study like this can be expressed as these points:

- 1) Being able to mention the educational dimension in detail, as well as the theoretical dimension dealing with different dimensions.
- 2) Ethics codes that are not yet determined for teachers are created with the help of teachers in preschool training and other academicians related to the topics.
- 3) As in all professions, to bring the topic of ethics to the preschool profession, which has not been emphasized yet in Turkey, and discuss what the necessities are and what the principles and ethical behavior of a preschool teacher have to be, as well as help other researchers who want to study this area.

According to the factors given above, important answers to fill this gap for preschool teachers will be sought in this study, particularly to answer the following questions:

1. What are the opinions of preschool teachers about their responsibilities to themselves and to children?
2. What are the opinions of preschool teachers about their responsibilities to their occupation and colleagues?
3. What are the opinions of preschool teachers about their responsibilities to families and society?

The main purpose of this study was to determine the opinions of preschool teachers related to the ethical principles that must be obeyed in their profession.

## Method

### Study Group

The study consisted of 29 formal preschool teachers working in Samsun, who have no ethics or professional ethics education.

### Data Collection

A semi-structured interview form which was revised with the help of three academicians, one of whom is a preschool education scholar, other one works in the area of guidance and psychological counseling, and the other works in education management and literature review (Association for Early Childhood Educators, 2006; Early Childhood Australia, 2006; Illinois Institute of Technology, 2006; Minnesota Rules, 2006; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2006; New Zealand Teachers Council, 2006). The form consisted of three main questions that draw from the headline of the study and overlap with the aim of the study as given above. In every school, the interviews were conducted with the teachers in groups which were focal grouping (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005) and every interview was recorded with a tape recorder. The interview started with the question "what responsibilities does the teacher have to the child?" and continued in the following order: what responsibilities do teachers have to them, to their colleagues, to the family, and to society. While the interview was semi-structured, it was also guided by different sub-questions that helped teachers explain their opinions according to the conversation's progress. The researcher guided the teachers in order to not digress from the subject.

### Data Analysis

After the interviews, each of the recordings was listened to and transcripts were written. The items provided by the teachers for each of the six main questions were noted. A tally was kept for each item and noted as numerically. Afterwards, the opinions of the teachers regarding each headline were written as items and the frequency values were calculated with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The teachers' opinions about the ethical codes were grouped according to the subtitles and a table was created. When each teacher gave an opinion on more than one item, the total percentage is higher than 100% in the subtitle. The opinions of the teachers regarding ethics codes were also listed in tables. After the interviews, the opinions were discussed with the help of the recorded transcripts and literature.

## Results

Items with a frequency of 10% or more are given in the tables, and items with a frequency of less than 10% are given as “others.” In Table 1, ethics regarding responsibilities towards the child and the teacher’s self are given. In section I, responsibilities towards the child’s personality and children who need special education are expressed, most common are “the child must be seen as an individual” (21%) and “the personal differences between children must be well-known” (17%). Children who need special education are also taken into consideration as another item in I.B., and it is implied that the teacher must use suitable techniques for children in the program (21%). The ethics codes regarding the responsibilities of the teacher towards oneself are given in the second part, which is divided into two subtitles: Responsibilities towards the occupational characteristics and responsibilities towards the personal characteristics of the teacher. Most commonly expressed were that the teacher “must never show his/her negative emotions and personal problems to children” (45%), “must know the child” (17%), “must observe the child” (24%), and “must create a democratic atmosphere” (17%). The teachers also expressed that the teacher “must love children and show his/her love” (35%), “must be patient” (38%), and “must be healthy, both physically and psychologically” (21%).

**Table 1**

*Responsibilities to the Child and Teacher’s Self*

**I. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE CHILD**

*I.A: Responsibilities to the child’s personality: 64%*

I.A.1	The child must be seen as an individual: 21%
I.A.2	The teacher must be respectful to the child: 10%
I.A.3	Personal differences between children must be well-known: 17%
I.A.4	Others: 19%

*I.B: Responsibilities to children who need special education: 41%*

I.B.1	The teacher must use suitable techniques for children in the program: 21%
I.B.2	Others: 20%

**II. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE TEACHER’S SELF**

II.A: Responsibilities regarding occupational characteristics: 159%

The teacher:

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II.A.1	must know the child: 17%
II.A.2	must observe the child: 24%
II.A.3	must create a democratic atmosphere: 17%
II.A.4	must never allow physical, emotional, or cognitive abuse: 10%
II.A.5	must never show his/her negative emotions and personal problems to children: 45%
II.A.6	must encourage children to be resolute, not competitors: 10%
II.A.7	Others: 36%

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II.B: Responsibilities regarding the personal characteristics of the teacher: 153%

The teacher:

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II.B.1	must love children and show his/her love: 35%
II.B.2	must be patient: 38%
II.B.3	must behave carefully in order to be a good example for the child: 10%
II.B.4	must be healthy, both physically and psychologically: 21%
II.B.5	Others: 49%

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The first item discussed with the teachers, naturally, was the commitment to children. The most discussed issues in this topic were “to see the child as an individual,” “to love and show respect to the child,” “make no discrimination between children,” “show respect for the child’s opinions,” and “create a democratic education atmosphere.”

**B.Ç. (2):** “The first thing I want to say is we must not forget that the child is also an individual. To thank or apologize is really very important, and these make the child feel that he/she is a separate person. We must see the physical characteristics of the child and show our love... We must make them have self-confidence... These are our responsibilities to the child. It is also important to create a democratic atmosphere.”

**D.D. (4):** “A teacher must never discriminate against based on belief, language, or the nationality of children. Teachers must be objective.”

**A.E. (5):** “A kindergarten teacher must be lovely to children.”

**B.T. (6):** “The first thing is that a kindergarten teacher must love children.”

**i.K. (10):** “We must love children, be patient, and love teaching. A teacher should like learning at the same time. I do not think that everybody can do our job.”

**S.Ö. (13):** “A person must love himself/herself, then his/her job and children. This goes step by step. We first choose a job that we can do

with love. You should love your job. As we love children the biggest problem is being solved. As we work we see the right and wrong, and we learn everything beginning from our study lives.”

**Ö.T. (25):** “The teacher must create a democratic atmosphere.”

**T.Ç. (27):** “The teacher must use a program where children are in the center. They must never expect the same result from each child, and he/she must see the differences between them.”

These “social goods,” loving children, showing them respect, taking them as individuals (Brock, 1998), are necessities for teaching preschool. Creating a democratic atmosphere in the classroom is an ethical principle for the teacher.

Communication skills are important in all human relations and professions, especially in teaching. Having a good relationship with the child and the child’s family are necessary in preschool teaching (Brock, 1998; McKenzie & Clark, 2003).

**Z.Y. (12):** “I think that the teacher must have good relationships with other people and must know how to communicate.”

**İ.K. (10):** “If you do not listen to children and their parents, you cannot do this job. And personally I think that we do not know how to listen to each other as well.”

The teachers have stated that they should never reflect their personal problems into the classroom, in order to be a good model for children. Consequently, it is expected that teachers will be suitable behavior models in the classroom (McKenzie & Clark, 2003).

**Y.K. (16):** “I want to talk about being a good model for the child. Teachers being a good model for the child is not enough alone. Parent must do this as well. For example, sometimes a child comes with negative behavior models and goes home showing positive models, or sometimes just the opposite happens. The teacher’s talking, acting, etc. is really very important here. That’s why I believe that the teacher must be a good model for the child.”

**H.O. (15):** “What I have realized is the mood. If I get into class angry one day, the next day the children are showing no interest. This is really a big problem.”

The last issues discussed with the teachers are the responsibilities towards children who need special education; the kindergarten teachers frequently come across disabled children in the classroom. The teachers

have stated that they should be helpful to those children and help them socialize. They implied that these children must receive help from professionals, and the only thing they could do is make arrangements in the classroom for these children.

**H.O. (15):** “Talking about integrated education, we can only integrate them in a social way because they are receiving needed help from professionals. The teacher can help them be social. I think so.”

**H.S. (1):** “We must make these children be accepted by the others in the class; otherwise they can hurt them by giving them nicknames, and so forth. To protect them from this, we must first make arrangements for these children, and then try to solve the problem, and the teacher must prepare different programs for these children.”

The ethical codes of teachers’ responsibilities to their profession and colleagues are given in Table 2. The responsibilities in this group are divided into three subtitles. The first subtitle is the responsibilities to the educational program. The items expressed most often were: the program “must be prepared according to the developing characteristics of the child” (31%), the teacher “must be prepared so that he or she can be flexible, and the teacher must write in the evaluation form which changes were made” (28%), “to take into consideration the educational level of the family” (24%) and “the teacher must use different techniques and methods” (28%), and that the program “must be prepared according to the environmental conditions of the child” (21%). The second subtitle is the responsibilities to the profession. The most often expressed items were that a teacher “must not be seen as a caretaker or an employee, must interfere only when it is necessary, and must have a constant limitation of duty” (55%), “should be self-critical” (35%), “must present the job well and honorably” (35%), and “must be a model for the trainees” (38%). In addition, the teachers stated that they “must be inquisitive and use various sources in order to educate themselves” (62%), “must be objective and impartial, must never show his/her social or political beliefs to the children” (28%), and, if something like that happens, for example if a child asks something about God, the teachers “must never interfere in the privacy of the families and must provide a general definition when a question is asked by children regarding traditions or beliefs” (35%). The third subtitle is the responsibilities to colleagues. The responses included that teachers “must work in cooperation with their colleagues” (69%), “must never see their colleagues as competitors and must work as a team” (28%), and “must be respectful and honest with their colleagues” (31%).

**Table 2***Responsibilities to a Teacher's Job and Colleagues***I. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: 252%**

The education program:

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|------|---|
| I.1  | must be prepared according to the interests and needs of the child: 14%   |
| I.2  | must be prepared according to the developing characteristics of the child: 31%  |
| I.3  | must be prepared according to the environmental conditions of the child: 21%  |
| I.4  | must be prepared prior to planning the activities: 10%  |
| I.5  | must be prepared so the teacher can be flexible, and the teacher must write in the evaluation form which changes were made: 28% |
| I.6  | must be prepared according to the behaviors that children ought to gain: 17%  |
| I.7  | must contain subjects about the environment and environmental arrangements: 10%   |
| I.8  | must contain national and cultural values: 14%  |
| I.9  | must be prepared taking the economical conditions of the school into consideration: 14%   |
| I.10 | must contain different methods and techniques: 28%  |
| I.11 | must let teachers use occasional technological improvements, and the teachers must be able to continue their education: 17%     |
| I.12 | must take the education level of the family into consideration: 24%   |
| I.13 | Others: 24%   |

**II. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PROFESSION: 425 %**

The teacher:

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|-------|--|
| II.1  | Should not expect everything from the Ministry: 21%  |
| II.2  | must not be seen as a caretaker or an employee, must interfere only when it is necessary, and must have a constant limitation of duty: 55% |
| II.3  | should be self-critical: 35%   |
| II.4  | should take in-service training: 10%   |
| II.5  | must know his/her occupational rights to defend his/herself: 35%   |
| II.6  | must represent the job well and honorably: 35%   |
| II.7  | must cooperate with colleagues while defending occupational rights: 21%  |
| II.8  | must be inquisitive and use various sources in order to educate him or herself: 62%  |
| II.9  | must use the Internet as a source, but must not use curriculums from the Internet as a whole: 31%  |
| II.10 | must be objective and impartial, must never show his/her social or political beliefs to the children: 28%                                  |
| II.11 | must never interfere in the privacy of the families, must provide a general definition when children ask about traditions or beliefs: 35%  |
| II.12 | must be a model for trainees: 38%  |
| II.13 | Others: 19%  |

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 III. RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES: 155%
 

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 The teacher:
 

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|-------|--|
| III.1 | must work in cooperation with his/her colleagues: 69%  |
| III.2 | must never see his/her colleagues as competitors, must work as a team: 28%   |
| III.3 | must be respectful to and honest with his/her colleagues: 31%  |
| III.4 | must communicate with his/her colleagues in a friendly way, such as visiting them when they are ill, or greeting them: 17% |
| III.5 | must warn his/her colleague of negative behavior: 10%  |
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The characteristics of a teacher should have, according to their profession, was another item discussed with the teachers. Looking at the conversations below, it is possible to list a lot of ethical codes for the teachers.

**Author:** “I also want to ask this: Is a preschool teacher’s personality important?”

**A.E. (5):** “Yes. I think it really is very important. A teacher must be very patient.”

**B.T. (6):** “They must love children.”

**A.E. (5):** “Because if they do not love children, they will make big mistakes somewhere and somehow.”

**B.T. (6):** “They cannot stand at all.”

**D.D. (4):** “A teacher must show respect to him or herself first of all. Then, he or she must see children as individuals. He/she must be respectful of them and must love them. A person who does not love himself will disturb the children. A teacher must be lovely. For that, a teacher should never reflect his/her own problems in the class.”

**B.T. (6):** “The teachers must work in cooperation, as a team. They have to show respect to their colleagues and must be friendly to them.”

It is possible to list some responsibilities and obligations from the conversations above: pre-school teachers should be patient, love children, show respect for themselves, be respectful to the children and treat them as individuals, and never reflect their own problems in the classroom. It was also frequently implied by the teachers that they must work with their colleagues.

**Author:** “So, how should the teachers behave with their colleagues?”



**Z.Y. (12):** “There must be cooperation first of all.”

**İ.K. (10):** “They must be honest with their colleagues.”

**Z.Y. (12):** “There should be sharing.”

**Author:** “Like what?”

**Z.Y. (12):** “In all types, I mean, knowledge. I am saying it all.”

**İ.K. (10):** “They must be able to convey what they have learned.... They should be able to share professionally what they know, and they must see their colleagues as friends, not as competitors. They should be able to have something in common with their friends instead of being in competition. That’s what I think.”

**F.U. (11):** “I agree exactly. I mean there should not be a competition.”

**İ.K. (10):** “There should be an ‘us’ notion, not ‘I am’. This must cause teamwork. Especially at schools, where there are lots of teachers working.”

Thus, the teachers argue that working in cooperation with other teachers at school is a commitment because they think that they must be working together instead of being in competition. Irvine et al. (2002) emphasized that the teamwork must be enforced in different professional areas and that there should be teamwork between disciplines. Thus, the teachers working in preschool education should work in multi-disciplinary cooperation with psychologists and health experts, among others.

During this interview, we talked with the teachers about the curriculum. In preschool education, the programs are prepared according to the child’s age, developmental level, interests, and needs. The teacher is responsible for the child and his/her profession.

**D.D. (4):** “We do not force children to do things they cannot do. We do not prepare exaggerated plans. We do not prepare plans higher than the child’s level.”

**A.E. (5):** “Or it can be flexible sometimes. I mean, if the children get bored of the activities we do, I can change it easily.”

**Z.S. (24):** “Yes... There should be flexibility during the preparation of the programs to reach the aim. Sometimes, you are able to add something to the activity suddenly, which you may have thought of at the beginning. You can change it to the children’s interests or their suggestions so that it becomes an original activity. We always take their needs into considera-

tion. Or as you said, if you just read a story regularly it becomes boring, and it becomes much more interesting to use paper puppets when you read the story. So, we use projectors. As long as we use technology in the classroom it seems a reward to those who do not have a computer at home. Then the children start saying, 'I will come to school every day.' So it increases their interest and enjoyment in the class."

**S.Ö. (13):** "It means that after meeting the child and his/her family the teacher has made half the program. As the teacher prepares the program for the students' level, it becomes easier to write about which methods and techniques will be used and what will be taught. Taking into consideration the socio-economic and educational levels of the children's families, it will not be difficult for the teacher to prepare a daily or yearly plan, so they can be efficient and have the results they want."

It has been emphasized by different authors (Bibby, 1998; Brock, 1998; McKenzie & Clark, 2003) that teachers should be as flexible as possible, and that the teacher should be able to get to know children and their families. It will be helpful for the teacher to use different methods, techniques, and technology during the lessons. We can take the responses below as examples:

**Z.Y. (12):** "It becomes very interesting for children when we use different materials... For example, using a projector or a puppet while we are reading a story it makes a big difference for them instead of reading it from a book."

**İ.K. (10):** "They like it when they directly participate in the activity. The activity is much more fun for them if they can move in the class or touch the puppet. These should be used in the class because the flash cards or story books are not as useful as they were before."

Another point discussed with the teachers was "in-service training":

**Author:** "What do you think about in-service training?"

**H.S. (20):** "Not enough."

**Author:** "If the Ministry of National Education does not supply in-service training, are the teachers able to make it on their own? I mean should the teachers try for that?"

**K.P. (20):** "Yes, and also teachers must improve themselves and their job, too. As time passes, the knowledge and the teacher's point of view are changed."

**B.C. (2):** “The teacher must be honest with himself or herself. He/she must be self-critical and think what must be done, for example reading books, using the internet, or talking with the specialists, etc., to be better.”

**Ö.C. (22):** “Okay, then let’s not expect it from the Ministry of National Education. The university here makes panel discussions, open forums, conferences, etc... I see them, but I cannot go at the time of the activities that conflict with the time of my classes. A teacher also needs these kinds of activities; he/she must be able to go, but how can we go unless a legal arrangement is made by the Ministry of National Education?”

As we can see from the conversation above, teachers educating themselves have been accepted by the teachers as an important commitment. However, as was mentioned, the Ministry of National Education remains deficient in creating these kinds of activities for the preschool teachers. The teachers mention that, sometimes, the subject of the seminars is not related with preschool teaching or they are not able to go the districts where the symposiums or seminars take place because of personal reasons. It was also added by the teachers that they do want to go, but because their applications were refused they were not able to join. Another point was that the Ministry of National Education receives help from the universities, which are limited in number. In addition, the teachers we spoke to accepted that they must continue to develop by reading books and going to conferences and panels, among other things, instead of waiting for these events to come from the Ministry of National Education because the basic responsibility of a teacher is to be the best in his/her branch. This idea is also a necessity for ethical principles (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2006).

Another important fact is the difference between the cultural and moral beliefs and values of the families. Because there are no religious classes in the preschool-teaching system, the teachers stated that they leave this subject to families, and they add that they are only able to interfere if a child asks a question because these subjects can be different between countries or regions in a city. The teachers also had different points of view on the same subject. One teacher said not to interfere in the family; another teacher in the group said that, if the family makes a mistake, the teachers should have the responsibility to correct it. The idea that teachers should not present their own ideas in class was also conveyed.

Thus, teachers are expected to act objectively, especially with religious and cultural subjects that depend on the families (Irvine et al., 2002).

According to the responsibilities toward the occupation and colleagues, it is seen as a problem that teaching preschool is not well-known in the public; preschool teaching is seen as babysitting and some people, who are not teachers, are working as if they were preschool teachers. Nearly all of the teachers emphasized the same point and said that teachers have a big responsibility to represent the job.

**i.K. (10):** “Another point is that our job is wrongly understood by other people. Then they reflect this on us. I mean, they see us as babysitters. To be honest, this disturbs us very much. What I have never thought about is what can be done for this. We have to do something, but I do not know what.”

**Z.S. (24):** “In kindergarten, only teachers must be employed. First of all, we must claim our own job; we must accept it and show respect. I am against it because, as long as people who are not teachers working in preschool as teachers, the real ones appear as babysitters. And another point is that a teacher is not supposed to do the retainer’s work. We say this to the families, but, when we say this, they take it as contempt and they take their child/children away. This makes us upset.”

**K.P. (20):** “This problem can only be solved by the government. Then, there will be no more kindergarten problem.”

In Table 3, the ethics codes are given for the responsibilities to the society and family, which were taken into consideration separately during the interview. This part is divided into two subtitles due to the responsibilities to the families. The first subtitle is the relationship with the family; the second is the teacher’s work for the family. The teachers in the first group stated that teachers “must meet the families often, be in contact with the family in the context of respect and cooperation, and have a good relationship with them” (37%), “must be honest about giving truthful information to the family about the child without exaggeration” (37%), “must be objective to the families and show respect for privacy” (17%), and “must never share the situation of the family with their colleagues” (20%). In the second part, the teachers said that they “must encourage families to join in the daily activities” (57%) and also “must inform families about the importance of preschool education so the prejudice about preschool education and preschool teachers can be broken” (27%). The teachers in the second group stated that only with the help of this information can the prejudices of the families regarding preschool teaching dissipate. It was also stated that the teachers “must

give seminars to the families on the required subjects” (23%). The last topic was the responsibility to the society. It was emphasized by the interviewees in the third part that teachers “must be sensitive about using different techniques to inform the public about preschool education” (37%) and “must show sensitivity when cooperating with colleagues to broadcast the preschool education” (33%).

**Table 3**

*Responsibilities to the Family and Society*

*I. RESPONSIBILITIES THAT DEPEND ON FAMILY RELATTONSHIPS 157%*

The teacher:

- I.1 must try to know the family: 13%
- I.2 must meet the families often, be in contact with the family in the context of respect and cooperation, and must have a good relationship with them: 37%
- I.3 must be honest about giving true information to the family about the child without exaggeration: 37%
- I.4 must warn the family if they are behaving in an inconvenient way: 10%
- I.5 must be objective with the families and show a respect of privacy: 17%
- I.6 must never share the family situation with his/her colleague, except in difficult situations: 20%
- I.7 must prevent intervening in the families using convenient communication skills: 10%
- I.8 Others: 13%

*II. RESPONSIBILITIES THAT DEPEND ON FAMILY PARTICIPATION: 127%*

The teacher:

- II.1 must encourage families to join in the daily activities: 57%
- II.2 must give information to family about the daily curriculum: 17%
- II.3 must inform families about the importance of preschool education so the prejudice about preschool education and preschool teachers can be broken: 27%
- II.4 must give seminars to families on the subjects that are needed: 23%
- II.5 Others: 3%

*III. RESPONSIBILITIES THAT DEPEND ON SOCIETY: 83%*

The teacher:

- III.1 Must be sensitive about using different techniques to inform the public about preschool education: 37%
- III.2 must show sensitivity when cooperating with colleagues to broadcast preschool education: 33%
- III.3 must be sensitive to informing the government about preschool education: 10%
- III.4 Others: 3%

The most emphasized subjects about family and social responses and obligations are the privacy of the families; informing the public and the government about preschool teaching, especially in a country like Turkey where preschool education rate is too low (25%; Turkish Statistical Institute, 2008); and a relationship with the families.

**Author:** “How should a teacher behave towards the families?”

**D.D. (4) – B.T. (6):** “Must be objective.”

**A.E. (5):** “If you are against a family the problem cannot be solved. You must be consistent with both the family and child.”

**B.T. (6):** “If you cooperate with the families, it will be better.”

One of the important subjects about the responsibilities to the family is privacy. The teachers stated the following:

**D.D. (4):** “If parents share with the teacher, he/she can intervene, but this should be in private.”

**Author:** “Should teachers share these things with their colleagues?”

**D.D. (4):** “No.”

**B.T. (6):** “They may need help in some cases. If they cannot solve the problem on their own, they can take help from colleagues.”

**K.P. (20):** “If this is really a problem related to the child or his/her education, the problem can be shared without giving the family’s name, because it must be confidential. But, sometimes, there are circumstances in which the teacher cannot stand alone. In some cases, the school managers must be on the side of the teacher to help.”

Thus, the teacher must behave objectively and show that he or she is by the family’s side. As discussed above, teachers must obey the principles of privacy, but a specialist’s help may be needed or the school director may need to be informed. In this case, the teacher and school directors must help the family in private.

Another important factor to take into consideration is that the families should join in the educational programs. The teachers imply that there is prejudice against preschool teaching. They also emphasize that there should be informational seminars about preschool teaching and arrangements for frequently meeting the families in order to break down these prejudices. Another important subject is to tell the family the truth about their child without exaggeration, which will be helpful to protecting honesty.

**Author:** “What do you think about families’ participation? Should there be something in the program related to the family?”

**Ö.C. (22):** “I am doing it on occasion. Sometimes for an art activity, sometimes for reading a story, or sometimes they just come. But with the help of these I find the chance to know the parents. This makes both the child and the family, and also peers, happy. I think that the families must participate in activities and there should not be a limitation on this.”

**Z.S. (24):** “As kindergarten teachers, we must be in connection with the families. Our program has just started so I think it really is very good.”

**S.B. (23):** “The participation of the family is needed. Also, we must meet them regularly. They can be invited to the activities sometimes.”

**D.D. (4):** “...also for seminars, I can say that the families are starting to see their mistakes and this makes them happy.”

Another group of teachers gave positive answers when asked if there should be a non-governmental organization (NGO) to represent the occupation. The interviewees also accepted that they are deficient and insensitive in practice. Another group implied that a teacher has a big responsibility for making the preschool teaching broad. It has been said that teachers are unable to do something on their own without being led by a director. Unfortunately, the teachers in this last group said that they cannot rely on the NGOs in Turkey because of their irregular work.

**H.S. (1):** “It becomes really difficult for us to do something on our own. For example, I can personally inform the families around me that their children must participate in preschool teaching, but the NGOs organize the teachers.”

**D.D. (4):** “What I want to say is that individual endeavors are not enough, but maybe we can participate in some projects that aim to broadcast preschool teaching.”

**Author:** “So are teachers responsible for spreading the word about their job or not?”

**D.D. (4):** “Sure.”

**B.T. (6):** “A teacher must be able to talk about his/her branch in the community.”

**D.D. (4):** “The teacher must work very hard to represent the job.”

As we can see from the conversations above, it is a social response for the teacher to inform society about preschool teaching, especially in a country like Turkey where the preschool education rate is very low. If it

is a social response, are the teachers not sufficient enough to inform the government about this subject? The answers provided by the interviewees were as follows:

**D.D. (4):** “Yes, the government is senseless.”

**Author:** “Should the teachers contribute a small share?”

**A.E. (5):** “Yes, I think so. Because they have the authorization to execute so they must have knowledge, too. They must be in the event. It must be asked of them.”

**D.D. (4):** “Different methods and techniques, such as e-mails, etc. must be used for this.”

It can be said that the teachers have a big responsibility to inform society and broadcast their occupation. To accomplish this, the goal should be thought of regionally, and there must be a coordinated team working between the university, city or region, municipality, governorship, and NGOs, as suggested by Öztürk (2005).

### Conclusion

Professional ethics is a very important subject in education. The ethics in preschool teaching is a very new subject in Turkey. As a result of interviewing 29 teachers, it can be said that kindergarten teachers must have ethical codes while doing their jobs. The inferences in this study, which can be seen as a preparation of ethics for preschool teachers in Turkey, can be summarized as follows: It was emphasized by the teachers that the responsibilities to children are that the child must be accepted as an individual person. Also, some important precautions must be taken for disabled children. In responsibilities to colleagues and the job, it was implied that teachers must love their job and cooperate with their colleagues. According to the responsibilities to the family and the society, it was said that teachers can be isolated from neither the families nor the society; teachers must have a good relationship with the families. With the help of this close relationship, teacher can better know the child and his/her culture and socio-economic situation. It was particularly emphasized that teachers have a social mission to inform the public and increase the popularity of their job. We can say that the code of ethics for preschool teachers must be defined. Some examples of this code were previously published (Campbell, 2003; Forster, 1998). This gap in Turkey must be filled, and the ethics codes for Turkey and Turkish culture must be prepared.



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