International Journal of Progressive Education, Volume 14 Number 2, 2018

A Paradigm Shift in School Readiness: A Comparison of Parents', Pre-service and In-service Preschool Teachers' Views

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Abstract

School readiness is associated with children's subsequent school based-outcomes. School readiness covers skills, behaviors, and attitudes related to whole child development. It is a multidimensional issue regarding readiness in children, and for parents and schools. Therefore, the issue concerns parents, teachers, and researchers. In the present study, a phenomenological research design was used to examine and compare parents', pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' views on school readiness. The participants of this study were 50 parents, 50 pre-service and 50 in-service preschool teachers. The participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. Semi-structured interview protocols were used to collect the data. The participants were asked four main questions regarding the definition of school readiness, factors related to school readiness, problems in school readiness, and their suggestions for improvements in school readiness. The findings revealed that the participants mostly defined school readiness from a maturationalistic perspective regarding children's developmental domains, especially cognitive and psychomotor skills. Mothers and preschool teachers were described as the most effective people in the school readiness process. Participants' explanations regarding problems in the school readiness process and their suggestions to improve children's school readiness were discussed in light of the literature.

Keywords: school readiness, parents, pre-service, in-service, preschool teacher, views

DOI: 10.29329/ijpe.2018.139.4

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Introduction

School readiness is an important notion, and researchers have investigated the influence of children's school entrance skills on their subsequent school-based outcomes from past to present (Cartlon&Wishler, 1999; Grissmer, Grimm, Aiyer, Murrah, & Steele, 2010; Porche, Costello, & Rosen-Reynoso, 2016; Quirk, Grimm, Furlong, Nylund-Gibson, & Swami, 2016). Previous studies have mainly focused on children's academic/cognitive competencies and their association with their later school achievement (Bradley et al., 1989; Tong et al., 2007). Recent studies have consistently shown that children's academic/cognitive, socioemotional, language, and psychomotor competencies are related to their effectively engaging school life and school-based outcomes (Pratt, McClelland, Swanson, & Lipscomb, 2016; Quirk, Dowdy, Goldstein, & Carnazzo, 2017; Sabol & Pianta, 2012).Therefore, it is an important issue for children to have an effective and successful start to school and high achievement. School readiness is a multidimensional issue, and there are numerous school readiness definitions (UNICEF, 2012). The National Educational Goals Panel (NEGP, 1997) constructed a conceptual framework for school readiness. NEGP (1997) approached school readiness in terms of readiness in children, readiness for parents, and readiness for schools. The theoretical background of the notion of school readiness has evolved over the past 100 years, and different perspectives have emerged to explain the notion (Cartlon&Winsler, 1999; May &Kundert, 1997; Winter & Kelly, 2008). Winter and Kelley (2008) categorized these perspectives under three approaches: maturationalist, early program, and contemporary models.

The Maturationalist or Nativist Approach (1930s)

The maturationalist approach was derived from the ideas of Arnold Gesell, Granville Stanley Hall, and Alfred Binet on children's development in relation to the Child Study Movement (Cartlon &Winsler, 1999; May & Kundert, 1997). Hall and his student, Gesell, advocated that children have an inner or biological time clock responsible for their development and their development was preprogrammed. Children need to reach a certain maturation level, especially mentally, to profit from school and instruction because development is accepted to advance learning (Cartlon &Winsler, 1999; Kagan, 1990; Touvell, 1992). The idea that deficits in school readiness lie within the child and the development of children cannot be changed or pushed beyond their biological developmental level by experience and teaching (Cartlon & Winsler, 1999; Winter & Kelley, 2008). The maturationalist perspective suggested that children should be given the "gift of time" to mature and a child's entry to school should, if necessary, be postponed for one year (called academic redshirting) or a child should repeat kindergarten (Mathews, 1996). The application of academic redshirting has been questioned based on a child's right to education and in relation to discrimination issues since studies pointed out that lower-class children are more likely to enter school one year later than upper- and middle-class children and more boys than girls are redshirted (Frey, 2005: May, Kundert& Brent, 1995). In addition, previous studies have failed to provide a clear picture of the contribution of academic redshirting on children's development and achievement (Cartlon&Winsler, 1999; Katz, 2000). Furthermore, some researchers have reported that children who are redshirted or retained in the same year are more likely to be placed in special education than children who enter school on time (Graue & DiPerna, 2000; May, Kundert & Brent, 1995).

Early Program Models (1960s)

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 in the United States was passed to combat poverty (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2005). Ruth (1983) highlighted that economically and socially disadvantaged children are more likely to fail elementary school and have poor school readiness skills. To enhance disadvantaged children's school readiness and close the achievement gap before they enter elementary school, High Scope Perry (1962), Head Start (1964), and the Bereiter Engelman (1964) model emerged during the mid-1960s. Head Start is one of the well-known federal funded early intervention programs aiming to reduce social inequality (Ruth, 1983; Wortham, 2006). This program supports the

development and learning of disadvantaged children by providing educational, health, and family services to meet children's emotional, social, educational, health, and nutritional needs (Halle, Hair, Wandner, & Chien, 2012; Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm, &Waldfogel, 2004). Head Start began as an eight-week summer program and then was extended to a full-year remedial program (Roopnarine & Johnson, 2005; Ruth, 1983). The theoretical background of this program was based on Gesell's maturationist theory, Sear's personality and social development theories, Piaget and Bloom's ideas on cognitive development, and Lewin's group dynamic theories (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000; Roopnarine & Johnson, 2005). In the related literature, numerous studies have investigated the contribution of these early intervention programs on children's development and learning. The follow-up cost-benefit studies of High Scope Perry reported that the high-quality preschool program contributed to children's school readiness and educational success as short-term gains, reduced drop-off school and crime rates as well as increased social and economic welfare in the long term (Belfield, Nores, Barnett, & Schweinhart, 2006; Luster & McAdoo, 1996; Rolnick, & Grunewald, 2003; Schweinhart, 2003). However, researchers have commonly pointed out that the Head Start program has a short-term contribution in terms of a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development and school readiness, but studies fail to provide a clear picture of the long-term contribution (Garces, Thomas, & Currie, 2000; Hair, Halle, Terry-Humen, Lavelle, & Calkins, 2006; Ludwig & Philips, 2008; McKey, Condelli, Ganson, Barrett, McConkey, & Plantz, 1985). Early program models demonstrated the benefits of preschool education in terms of children's development and school readiness, but these studies pointed out that the contribution depends on elements such as the quality of the program, parent involvement, and social-economic features of the neighborhoods (Henrich & Gadaire, 2008; Vaden-Kiernan, D'elio, O'brien, Tarullo, Zill, & Hubbell-McKey, 2010).

Contemporary Models

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) examined children's development in an ecological framework. Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that human beings develop within complex and nested environments and there are dynamic interactions between each level of the environment. A child is at the center of the systems, and all systems influence human development (Bronfenbrener, 1999). Family is the innermost environment, while society is an outer one (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Similar to Bronfenbrenner, Vygotksy (1978) emphasized the role of the sociocultural context and advocated that learning can lead to development by scaffolding children's learning in the zone of proximal development (Berk, 2012; Smidt, 2009). The idea underlying the notion of ecological system and sociocultural theories is that children's development and school readiness policies can be targeted to affect multifaceted and nested environments from family to society (Hindman, Skibbe, Miller, & Zimmerman, 2010; McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung & Wright, 2012). The school readiness paradigm shifted to more of a collaborated community phase (Cartlon & Winsler, 1999; Freeman & Power-Costello, 2008; Winter & Kelley, 2008). Brain research made another contribution to the contemporary school readiness notion (Winter & Kelley, 2008). Brain studies showed that the first three years of life are a crucial period for brain development and there are sensitive periods of brain and overall development (Hawley, 2000; Shonkoff & Philips, 2000). Such studies show that the brain is sensitive to effect of insufficient stimulation, nutrition, and interaction; this has an impact on children's overall development and school readiness (Winter & Kelley, 2008). In regard to the contemporary perspective, school readiness is a holistic community issue and early experiences are key to children's development and school readiness from the beginning of life. School readiness is a multifaceted issue, and it concerns parents, teachers, and researchers. Studies showed that parents' and teachers' school readiness beliefs are associated with their practices and children's school outcomes (Jung, 2016; Lally, 2010). In the national context, previous studies examined in-service teachers' (Tantekin-Erden&Altun, 2014; Kotaman, 2014; Şahin, Sak, &Tuncer, 2013), pre-service teachers' (Şahin-Sak, 2016), and parents' (Yeşil- Dağlı, 2012) views about school readiness in an isolated way. Therefore, the aim of the study was to investigate and compare parents, preschool in-service teachers', and pre-service teachers' views about school readiness in a holistic approach.

Method

A phenomenological research design was used to understand parents' and teachers' views about school readiness in this study. Creswell (2009) stated that phenomenological research aims to elicit people's understanding and experiences concerning a phenomenon. The present study aims to reveal parents' and teachers' views about school readiness, children's problem with school readiness issues, and their solutions through interviews.

Participants

The participants in this study were 50 parents, 50 pre-service and 50 in-service preschool teachers. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. All the pre-service preschool teachers were in their senior years and completed "Preparation for Elementary School and Curriculum" course. The course is compulsory for early childhood education undergraduate programs. Among the pre-service teachers, 40 were female and 10 were male.

All the preschool teachers worked in public schools, and their teaching experience ranged from five to 25 years. Most of the preschool teachers were female (n=48). Most teachers (n=32) had a bachelor's degree from an early childhood department. Of these teachers, three (6%) had a master's degree from an early childhood department, and 15(30%) graduated from a child development vocational faculty.

Most of the parents were mothers (n=46). All the parents have preschoolers. Most had two children (n=24). Among the parents, 10 had a single child and six had three children. The range of parents' monthly household income was 1.250–10.500 TL (M=3.275TL ≈ 856$).

Data Collection Tool

Semi-structured interview questions were prepared based on the previous studies (Şahin- Sak, 2016; Şahin, Sak, & Tuncer, 2013). The interview protocol covers four main questions regarding the definition of school readiness, factors related to school readiness, problems in school readiness, and suggestions for improvement in school readiness. In previous studies, participants were required to rank factors (parents, children, teacher, school, and society) related to school readiness as first, second, and third, according to their importance in the school readiness process (Şahin- Sak, 2016). In the present study, participants were required to rate each factor on a continuum between 1 to 10 (minimum–maximum) rather than rank them first, second, and third. The study attempted to gain information about participants' views for each factor. Besides, the participants were asked to explain their reasons to clarify their point of view about school readiness. In addition, brother/sister was added to as a factor in the list, and participants were asked to add this new factor to the list.

Data Collection

The data were collected during the spring semester of the 2016–2017 academic years in Turkey. The participants were interviewed one by one in a quiet and comfortable environment. The interviews were audio recorded. The range of the interview period was 18–46 minutes.

Data Analysis

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed as a word document for each participant. Then, tables were constructed for each question. Parents', in-service teachers', and pre-service teachers' responses were grouped under separate headings. The responses were read a number of times, and the word frequency technique (Bernand, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016) was used to determine

codes and then themes. To establish reliability, a second coder coded the data separately. Inter-coder agreement reached 92% for the codes. In the second round, the researcher and the second coder compared 8% of the disagreement codes, and then inter-coder agreement reached 97%.

Findings

Understandings of School Readiness

Participants were asked to explain their ideas about school readiness and define it in their own words. Their answers mainly focused on maturation, and they explained school readiness in terms of developmental domains. Most of the parents (n=32), pre-service teachers (n=40), and in-service teachers (n=44) expressed that cognitive skills are an important agent in children's school readiness. As Table 1 indicates, psychomotor development is the second-most stated domain. Participants mainly emphasized psychomotor skills required for learning the reading and writing process (holding and using a pencil properly, painting, and cutting). The fewest number of participants mentioned the importance of self-care skills in their school readiness definition.

In addition, pre-service (n=25) and in-service (n=16) teachers mentioned one of the aims of the national early childhood education program is to prepare children for primary school and to foster their school readiness. Detailed information on the participants' definitions in terms of developmental domains is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Definitions of School Readiness Regarding Developmental Domains

	Parents	*Pre-service Teachers*	*In-service Teachers*
Developmental Domains	*f*	*f*	*f*
Cognitive	32	40	44
Psychomotor	24	42	41
Language	15	23	32
Emotional	18	30	27
Social	15	19	24
Self-care	13	18	20
Early Childhood Education			
One of the aims of the program	-	25	11

Agents of School Readiness

Participants were scored for each agent regarding individuals' and institutions' importance for children's school readiness. Parents stated that mothers (M=9.35, SD= 1.25) were the most effective individuals in the school readiness process. According to the parents' responses, the second-most effective group was teachers (M=9.17, SD= 1.62), followed by children (M=8.60, SD= 2.08). Parents gave the lowest scores for society (M=6.03, SD= 2.00).

Table 2. Participants' Score Distributions Regarding Effective Agents of School Readiness

	Parents			*Pre-Service Teachers*			*In-service Teachers*		
	M	*SD*	*Range*	*M*	*SD*	*Range*	*M*	*SD*	*Range*
Mother	9.35	1.25	5-10	9.19	1.21	4-10	9.21	1.51	3-10
Father	7.01	2.14	2-10	7.19	1.74	3-10	8.06	2.12	3-10
Brother/Sister	8.25	1.47	4-10	6.58	1.88	2-10	6.25	2.24	1-10
Preschool Teacher	9.17	1.62	2-10	9.11	1.18	5-10	9.58	.82	6-10
Child	8.60	2.08	1-10	9.04	1.63	4-10	9.64	.87	6-10
School	8.17	1.88	5-10	8.28	1.73	6-10	8.75	1.25	7-10
Society	6.03	2.00	2-10	6.41	2.18	1-10	7.90	1.73	4- 10

When pre-service teachers' answers were examined, mothers (M=9.19, SD= 1.21) were the most effective agents in the school readiness process. Teachers (M=9.11, SD= 1.18) were the second-most important group of people, and children (M=9.04, SD= 1.63) were the third most important. Similarly, pre-service teachers gave the lowest scores for society (M=6.41, SD= 2.18).

As Table 2 indicates, in-service teachers indicated that a child (M=9.64, SD= .87) is the most effective person in the school readiness process. According to teachers' answers, a teacher (M=9.58, SD= .82) is the second-most important person and a mother (M=9.21, SD= 1.51) is the third-most important person. In-service teachers rated brothers/sisters (M=6.25, SD= 2.24) as the lowest.

In addition to this agent list, the participants were asked to add new factors related to children's school readiness. Parents (n=22, M=7.85), pre-service teachers (n=13, M=7.05), and in-service teachers (n=18, M=6.90) emphasized that technology and technological devices (smart phones, tablets, and computers etc.) are related to children's school readiness. The participants mainly mentioned the supportive features of the technological devices and applications on children's school readiness. However, some parents (n=9), pre-service teachers (n=3), and in-service teachers (n=8) indicated negative effects of the devices and applications (distractibility, screen addiction, immobility). Lastly, a few parents (n=8, M= 5.80) stated that babysitters (education level, behavior, attitude) are important for children's school readiness process.

Mothers

When asked about the reasons for labeling mothers as a school readiness agent, most parents (n=38) and pre-service teachers (n=31) noted how mothers spend most of their time with their children and take care of them, so a mother is an important person in her child's school readiness process. Most of the in-service teachers (n=34) emphasized family-school cooperation and the importance of parent involvement in children's educational process.

Table 3. Participants' Explanations for Mothers 'Role in the School Readiness Process

Parents		Pre-Service Teachers		In-service Teachers	
	f		*f*		*f*
The person who spends the most time with the child/takes care of him/her	38	The person who spends the most time with the child /takes care of him/her	31	The person who spends the most time with the child /takes care of him/her	26
The first teacher is within the family; education starts with the family	20	The first teacher is within the family; education starts with the family	15	The first teacher is within the family; education starts with the family	18
School-family cooperation	17	School-family cooperation; the family participation in children's education	21	School-family cooperation; the family participation in children's education	34
Role model	14	The person who knows the child best	18	The person who knows the child best	23
A source of love-trust-motivation for the child	9	Role model	12	Role model	17
My influence at home partially continues at school. My child gives importance to everything the teacher says and does it at school	5			The opinions (positive-negative) of a mother about school and the teacher may directly affect the child	3
As a working mother, I spend limited time, but I am trying to follow up and do the best I can	4				

As Table 3 indicates, only a few parents (n=4) stated that they had limited time to share with their children, but they tried to do their best to support their children's development and education. Of these pre-service teachers, 14 indicated that mothers are role models for children's behaviors. According to in-service teachers' responses, three mentioned mothers' opinions (positive, negative) about schools, particularly that mother can directly influence children's opinions about school and their teachers.

Fathers

According to the parents' responses, the majority (n=30) stated that fathers are less influential than mothers. Fathers shared limited time with their children due to working outside, being busy, and exhaustion. Similarly, pre-service teachers (n=16) and in-service teachers (n=23) indicated that fathers are less influential than mothers in the school readiness process.

Table 4. Participants' Explanations for Fathers' Role in the School Readiness Process

Parents		Pre-Service Teachers		In-service Teachers	
	f		*f*		*f*
Less influential than the mother because of spending less time due to work/being busy/exhaustion	30	Influential but not as much as the mother because he does not spend much time with the child/take care of the child	16	Supportive/helpful to the mother. (unfortunately) Not as influential as the mother because he does not spend much time with the child/take care of the child	23
The father is as influential/equally influential as the mother	13	The father is as influential/equally influential as the mother	21	He is as influential/equally influential as the mother	18
He she listens to his/her father more; closer to his/her father; the father is more	7	School-family cooperation; the family participation in children's education	14	School-family cooperation; the family participation in children's education	21

influential					
The father who is very effective financially school expenses; sending to better school	3	Role model	9	Role model	11

In contrast, some of the participants (parents =13, pre-service teachers=21, in-service teacher=18) emphasized that the father is equally influential as the mother in the school readiness process. As seen in Table 4, seven parents indicated that fathers are more influential than mothers. Only a few parents (n=3) stated that fathers are very influential due to providing financial sources and opportunities.

Brothers/Sisters

The participants described a range of reasons for the role of brothers/sisters in the school readiness process. Most of the parents (n=28) emphasized that the older brother /sister is an important model for children. The older brother/sister's influence can be both negative and positive based on his/her characteristics (school achievement, attitude toward school, temperament, and the relationship between brothers). Similarly, pre-service (n=17) and in-service teachers (n=25) emphasized the brother/sister's role in the same way.

Table 5. Participant's Explanations for Brothers/sisters' Role in the School Readiness Process

Parents		Pre-Service Teachers		In-service Teachers	
	f		*f*		*f*
Prior knowledge and awareness of the school for the child	17	Prior knowledge and awareness of the school	19	Prior knowledge and awareness of the school	23
Being a positive/negative model	28	Being a model/supportive of the child	17	Being a positive/negative model	25
The experience of parents with parenting; school-teacher collaboration roles for the first child	23	It may have a partial/limited contribution	12	The experience of parents with parenting; school-teacher collaboration roles for the first child	19
		The experience of parents with parenting; school-teacher collaboration roles for the first child	9	The age difference among the siblings is significant	11
				Gender of the siblings (sisters are usually more supportive)	6

Among the parents, 23 focused on the first child enabling them to gain experience with parenting. They said that they learned how to communicate with teachers and cooperate with the school through their first child. Similarly, some of the teachers (pre-service=9, in-service=19) stated that older children foster parenting skills. Lastly, few in-service teachers emphasized age (n=11) and gender (n=6) differences of older brothers/sisters as related to their role in the school readiness process.

Preschool Teachers

According to the participants' responses, most parents (n=34) indicated that a preschool teacher is the first teacher for their children. If their children like the first teacher, they will like subsequent teachers and school life. Teachers' attitudes toward children are so important because children leave the home environment and are introduced to the school environment for the first time. As Table 6 indicates, a few parents (n=9) mentioned the quality and endeavor of teachers as an important factor in the school readiness process.

On the other hand, pre-service (n=38) and in-service teachers (n=41) indicated that preschool teachers support children's development and education. Specifically, nine of these in-service teachers emphasized that they have key roles to improve school readiness of socio- economically disadvantaged children.

Table 6. Participants' Explanations for the Role of Preschool Teachers in the School Readiness Process

Parents		Pre-Service Teachers		In-service Teachers	
	f		*f*		*f*
The first teacher—if he/she likes his/her first teacher, then he/she likes school	34	Supportive of the child's development/ education	38	Supportive of children's development/education	41
The most important counselor (guide/main hero/information source)	27	The first teacher he or she met. The person who made him/her like the school/teacher	15	The first teacher he or she met. The person who made him/her like the school/teacher	27
It is important that the teacher is good/interested/loves his or her profession	12	The most influential person after the family	11	The most important person to make up for the shortcomings of children from uninterested/disadvantaged families	9
He or she is complementary of the missing aspects of children's education at home by their parents	9	Who prepares an appropriate educational environment and life	5	Who corrects wrong or incomplete teachings at home	7

Children

All the participants stressed that a child is a key person and s/he is in the center of the school readiness process. On the other hand, most of the parents (n=39) stated that their children's interest, motivation, and attitudes toward school are important in the school readiness process. Most of the pre-service (n=42) and in-service (n=46) teachers indicated that children's developmental level, potential, and capacity are key factors in the school readiness process. Only a few teachers (n=3) mentioned that some special cases (divorce, migration) are also related to children's school readiness process. Detailed information is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Participants' Explanations of Children's Role in the School Readiness Process

Parents		Pre-Service Teachers		In-service Teachers	
	f		*f*		*f*
Love/willingness/enthusiasm about school	39	Child's level of development/capacity/potential	42	Child's level of development/capacity/potential	46

Skills/capacity	14	Love/willingness/enthusiasm about school	15	Love/willingness/enthusiasm about school	19
Personality characteristics/temperament	8	Personality characteristics/ temperament	3	Personality characteristics/ temperament	4
				The special situations that the child is facing (divorce, migration etc.)	3

Preschool Education

Most parents (n=29) emphasized that the preschool environment and physical conditions are important in children's school readiness process. Similarly, pre-service (n=32) and in-service (n=37) teachers mentioned the importance of the school environment. In addition, parents (n=21), pre-service teachers (n=36), and in-service (n=43) teachers stressed that the classroom environment and materials are important for children's school readiness process.

As seen in Table 8, 13 parents mentioned the quality of the education. In a similar vein, 15 pre-service and 11 in-service teachers indicated the role of early childhood education program/curriculum in the school readiness process. In addition, 17 in-service teachers focused on the number of children per class and the teacher-child ratio. Only a few of the in-service teachers stated problems related to the period of education time (part- or full-time education) and the number of school staff.

Table 8. Participant's Explanations for the Role of Preschool Education in the School Readiness Process

Parents		Pre-Service Teachers		In-service Teachers	
	f		*f*		*f*
The physical conditions/ environment of the school	29	The physical conditions/ environment of the school	32	The physical conditions/environment of the school	37
Classroom equipment materials	21	Classroom equipment/materials/learning centers	36	Classroom equipment/materials/learning centers	43
Giving good-quality education	13	Education program/curriculum	15	Class size	17
		Social facilities/events	2	Education program/curriculum	11
				Number of school staff	5
				Support/approach of the administration	3
				Period of education (all day/half day)	1

Society

With regard to the role of society in the school readiness process, 23 of the parents mentioned peers' and friends' behaviors and attitudes toward school as important. In addition, 19 of the parents stated that a child being accepted by classmates is closely related to the child's motivation in school. Most pre-service (n=40) and in-service teachers (n=34) stressed that environmental features and

stimulants are important in children's development. Of these in-service teachers, 12 of them mentioned Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory to explain the environment's influence on children's development and school readiness.

Similarly, parents (n=10) and in-service teachers (n=14) emphasized that comparing a child to other children can create anxiety for the child. As seen in Table 9, a few of the in-service teachers (n=7) stressed that the environment is a multifaceted issue; for this reason, society has a multidirectional influence on children's school readiness process.

Table 9. Participants' Explanations for Society's Role in the School Readiness Process

Parents		Pre-Service Teachers		In-service Teachers	
Environment	*f*		*f*		*f*
Peers'/friends' behaviors/attitudes/are important	23	Social environment/stimulants/opportunities are important in the child's development; Nature vs nurture Bronfenbrenner ecological theory	40	Social environment/stimulants/opportunities are important in the child's development; Nature vs nurture	34
His/her environment affects his/her/ imitate others' behaviors/role models	21	His/her environment has effect on his/her others behaviors/role models	28	His/her environment affects his/her imitation of others' behaviors/role models	33
Comparing him/herself with other children in the environment affects his /her psychology/ can create anxiety	10	Peers/relatives/neighbors are important	17	Comparing him/herself with other children (early learning to read, good writing) can create anxiety	14
I do not think that it is as directly effective as other factors	8			Peers/relatives/neighbors are important	14
				Multidimensional about the financial situation and education level of the family	7

Problems in the School Readiness/Transition process

In terms of problems in the school readiness process, most of the parents (n=32) focused on children's fear of leaving home. According to the teachers' responses, pre-service (n=38) and in-service teachers (n=45) stressed that children have limited time for play, and activities are based on academic and didactic learning in general rather than play-based learning in the first grade. In addition, participants (parents =28, pre-service teachers=16, in-service teachers=20) pointed out a sudden increase in course numbers, course contents, and homework.

Furthermore, parents (n=17), pre-service teachers (n=18), and in-service teachers (n=21) indicated that strict rules and school discipline can cause children to become bored in school. Pre-service and in-service teachers mainly emphasized children's problems in the primary school transition process. Of these in-service teachers, 39 stated changes in the classroom environment. Similarly, pre-service teachers (n=26) and parents (n=19) mentioned problems related to the first-grade environment features, such as desks and limited materials.

Table 10. Participants' Explanations for Problems in the School Readiness/Transition Process

	Parents *f*	*Pre-service Teachers* *f*	*In-service Teachers* *f*
Fear of leaving home/Not wanting to stay in school without his/her mother	32	21	28
The sudden increase in course numbers, course contents, and homework (learning reading and writing, mathematics, etc.)	28	16	20
Reduced playing time/free play/play opportunities/play-based learning/immobility	23	38	45
Change in the classroom environment (school desk, material, toy)	19	26	39
Strict rules, discipline, and responsibilities	17	18	21
Inadequate development of self-care skills	9	13	19
First-grade classroom is more crowded than preschool.	3	9	16
Missing preschool school friends and teacher/concerns about making new friends and getting used to the teacher	15	-	11
Not having pre-school education	4	17	23
Learning to read and write anxiety/competition	13	8	11
Inadequate parent support/parental involvement/ uninterested families		3	9
Overprotective families/helicopter parenting			3

As seen in Table 10, parents (n=9), pre-service teachers (n=13), and in-service teachers (n=19) mentioned that the inadequate development of self-care skills can cause autonomy problems for children. The children have problems going to toilet alone and eating meals on their own. According to teachers' responses, pre-service (n=3) and in-service teachers (n=9) indicated that inadequate parental support and involvement in children's education process might cause school readiness problems. Only a few in-service teachers (n=3) stated that helicopter parenting led to school readiness problems due to hindering their children's autonomy.

Participants' Recommendations for Promoting School Readiness

Finally, participants asked for recommendations to enhance school readiness. Their responses addressed both preschool and primary grade practices and the physical environment. Most participants (parents=20, pre-service teachers=38, in-service teachers=43) suggested providing opportunities to play in first grade and promoting play-based learning. Parents (n=16), pre-service teachers (n=28), and in-service teachers (n=39) suggested a more comfortable, material-rich first-grade classroom environment. As Table 11 indicates, pre-service (n=41) and in-service teachers (n=40) emphasized that preschool education should be expanded nationwide. According to the parents' responses, 18 of the parents demanded seminars/educations for improving their children school readiness. Of these parents, 11 suggested first-grade orientation activities to motivate children to go to school.

With regard to teachers' suggestions, pre-service (n=12) and in-service (n=21) teachers mentioned that preschool term developmental observation reports may share with first-grade teachers and establish cooperation between preschool and first-grade teachers. Detailed information is presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Participants' Recommendations for Promoting School Readiness

	Parent f	Pre-service Teacher f	In-service Teacher f
The physical environment of the classes can be adjusted to the level of the child's development.	16	28	39
Lessons can include play-based learning. They may be given the opportunity to play games/mobility.	20	38	43
Pre-school education should be made widespread/compulsory.	8	41	40
Education/seminar/information should be given to parents. School-parent cooperation should be strengthened.	18	23	15
Preschool developmental observation reports may be shared with the first-grade teacher, and an information exchange may be done.	-	12	21
School management must ensure that children love school with activities, such as (theater, drama, play etc.)	11	8	5
Primary school visits can be organized for children in preschool.	7	13	15
Classroom rules should be increased gradually (duration of lesson, duration of playtime, freedom of movement in class).	15	19	16
Teachers must welcome students with loving and smiling faces and enable children to love school.	5	-	-
Class sizes must be reduced.	3	8	18
Additional support should be provided to the children of disadvantaged families/immigrant/foreign children when they start school.	-	-	3

Discussion

The present study examined and compared parents, pre-service teachers', and in-service teachers' school readiness views. First, the participants' school readiness definitions were examined. All the participants explained school readiness from a maturationalist perspective. All groups primarily stressed the cognitive domain in their definition and these findings were consistent with previous studies (Abu Taleb, 2013; Jung, 2016; Lau, 2014; Şahin et al., 2013; Şahin-Sak, 2016). When the participants expressed their school readiness definition, they focused on academic skills, such as learning to read and write and math, which children gain in first grade. Therefore, the cognitive domain can be seen to dominate the other developmental domains. In this context, the participants' second most frequent domain was psychomotor skills. Most of the participants mentioned holding a pen properly as well as drawing lines and letters. Previous studies support these findings (Buldu & Er, 2016; Kotaman, 2014; Şahin-Sak, 2016). Learning to read and write is one of the key issues in the first grade. Thus, the participants might have stressed cognitive and psychomotor domains. Besides, half of the pre-service teachers and a few in-service teachers stated that the preschool education program aims to foster children's school readiness skills. Pre-service teachers had just completed a course related to school readiness. Therefore, they might emphasize the preschool education program more than in-service teachers in their own school readiness definitions.

Second, the parents and teachers rated the influential people and factors in the school readiness process. Pre-service teachers stated that the most effective factors were mothers, teachers, and children, respectively. Şahin-Sak's (2016) findings revealed that pre-service teachers ranked parents as the most effective people, followed by children and teachers. In the present study, mothers and fathers were rated separately rather than as a single parent category. The mothers received higher scores than fathers. Most participants stated that mothers spend more time with their children and take care of them. The findings were supported by previous studies (Altun, 2016; Altun & Tantekin-Erden, 2015). Although the clear associations between fathers' involvement/fathering skills and children's school readiness was reported in a meta-analysis study (McWayne, Downer, Campos, & Harris, 2013), fathers' role in the school readiness process was ignored in participants' responses. Therefore, the association between fathers' involvement and children's development needs to be strengthened in Turkey context.

One of the interesting findings of the present study was that the participants added technological devices and applications as agents of school readiness. Today's children are accepted as digital natives. Their daily lives are surrounded by *technology*. Buldu and Er (2016) pointed out that technological devices can support children's school readiness if children use them properly. In the present study, the parents had two different opinions. Some advocated that technology fosters children's development and education while others argued that technology hinders children school readiness. Further studies should examine the influence of technology on children's school readiness process.

According to the in-service teachers' responses, the most effective individuals were the children themselves. In-service and pre-service teachers emphasized that children's developmental level and capacity are important, and higher levels allow them to benefit more from early childhood education. Parents focused on children's interest, motivation, and positive attitudes toward the school and the teacher as being important to children's school readiness process. The findings indicate that parents generally avoid talking about their children's developmental level and developmental deficiencies. They tend to connect their children's school readiness with external factors. Finally, society was rated highest by in-service teachers, followed by pre-service teachers and parents. Teachers focused on social and environmental features and opportunities as being sources for children's development. Parents emphasized peers, friends, and other peoples' influence on children's behavior. Teachers obtained professional education about child development; therefore, their explanations might be more detailed and multidimensional.

Third, the participants described a wide range of school readiness problems. They indicated problems related to both the school readiness and school transition processes. Parents mostly emphasized children's fear of leaving home, the increasing number and content of the academic activities, and reduced play time. Teachers mainly focused on the decreased play time, play environment, and play-based learning activities in the first grade. Children have limited opportunities for free play. These problems have been reported in previous studies (Tantekin Erden&Altun, 2014; Şahin-Şak, 2016). In addition, teachers stressed that the first-grade classroom environment is not appropriate for children's developmental level. Children are accustomed to a comfortable classroom environment in preschool with rich materials and toys, where they are free to move around. In the first-grade classroom environment, on the other hand, children are required to sit at their desk for 40 minutes, and their mobility is limited. The new classroom environment and strict rules might be boring for children. The dramatic changes in the classroom environment and rules have been addressed in previous studies (Tantekin-Erden & Altun, 2014; Şahin-Şak, 2016; Yapıcı& Ulu, 2010). The findings revealed that the school transition from preschool to first grade is not smooth for children. The first grade classroom environment should be arranged in a developmentally appropriate way.

Finally, the participants proposed their suggestions to improve children's school readiness. Similarly, the participants emphasized that the first-grade classroom environment, activities, and classroom rules should be adjusted to children's developmental features. The findings of the present

study were consistent with previous studies (Tantekin-Erden & Altun, 2014; Şahin et al. 2013; Şahin-Şak, 2016; Yapıcı & Ulu, 2010). In addition, the participants suggested that preschoolers might visit primary school with their preschool teacher. Chan (2010) reported the same suggestion in his study. To promote children's experience and awareness of primary school, such school trips can be beneficial for children. The other suggestion is that preschool education should be widespread/compulsory nationwide. Previous studies have shown that preschool education fosters children's cognitive (Dursun, 2009; Siva, 2008), psychomotor (Toluç, 2008), language (Altun, 2016; Taner&Başal, 2005), self-care (Toluç, 2008), and social development (Erbay, 2008; Özbek, 2003). Preschool education is not compulsory in Turkey. The Ministry of National Education (MONE) statistics showed that the schooling ratio for five-year-old children is 58.79 and the schooling ratio for three- to five-year-old children is 35.52 (MONE, 2017a). According European Commission Report (2014), Turkey had the lowest preschool participation rate (43%) between European countries. The findings revealed that early childhood education should be accessible for each child. Primary education is compulsory in Turkey. The first-grade enrollment age range is 60–72 months; 60–65-month-old children's first-grade enrollment is not compulsory. It is based on their parents' application. Enrollment for those 66–68 months of age is compulsory, but if their parents make a petition, their children will not be enrolled in first grade. For 69–71-month-old children, enrollment is compulsory, but if they have a medical report, they will not be enrolled; 72 months is compulsory for each child (MONE, 2017b).

To support children's school orientation, first grade and preschool start one week before the other grades. The orientation week has been conducted since the 2006–2007 academic year. It aims to support children's smooth transition to the school environment, to reduce their school concerns, and to introduce new friends and a teacher (MONE, 2016).

One of the striking findings of the present study is that school readiness is a multidimensional issue encapsulating readiness for children, parents, and schools. However, participants mainly focused on children's dimension regarding maturation. Thus, the awareness of parents', schools', and societies' role in the school readiness process should be established. Further studies should examine parents' and teachers' practices regarding promoting children's school readiness. In addition, the researcher will examine how schools and teachers prepare children for a smooth transition from preschool to primary school.

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