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A New Model in Early Childhood Education in the United States: EDUCARE

(ABD’de Erken Çocuklukta Yeni Bir Model: EDUCARE)

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Abstract

In the United States, the Educare network of early childhood programs is helping to shape a new model for delivering education and care to children most at risk of school failure and is serving as a catalyst for broader change throughout the nation. Educare Schools and the Educare Learning Network develop strong community public-private partnerships that draw upon all available resources (school districts, state and federal child care funding, Head Start, Early Head Start, private funders, and others) to provide high quality, comprehensive services for young children and their families. Educare Schools create a recognizable place, typically adjoining a public elementary school, dedicated to educating children from birth to age 5 that demonstrates a strong community commitment to the importance of investing in early childhood. The Educare model is based on research from early childhood development, education, social work and other allied fields. Four core features compose the Educare model: data utilization, embedded professional development, high-quality teaching practices, and intensive family engagement.

Keywords: Educare, early childhood education, children at risk

Özet

ABD’de erken çocukluk programlarında Educare ağı, çoğunluk olarak risk altındaki çocukların oluşturduğu bakımini ve eğitimini kapsayan, ülke içinde geniş çapta değişim için katalizör olarak hizmet veren bir ağıdır. Educare okulları ve Educare ağı okul bölgeleri, eyalet ve federal düzeyde çocuk bakım fonları, Head Start, Erken Dönem Head Start, özel fonlar ve diğer kaynaklar gibi tüm kaynakları kullanarak küçük çocuklar ve aileleri yüksek kaliteli ve kapsamlı hizmetler sağlamak için güçlü devlet ve özel topluluklarının işbirliğini geliştirir. Bu okullar fark edilir ve tanınmış yerlerde, tipik olarak bir ilkokula bitişik ve eklenmiş şekilde inşa edilerek oluşturulur. Bununla beraber, doğumdan beş yaşına kadar eğitimin erken çocuklukta önemli bir çevreyi oluşturduğunu vurgusuna değinir. Educare modeli erken çocukluk gelişimi, eğitim, sosyal çalışma ve diğer ilgili alanlar olmak üzere araştırma temelli bir modeldir ve dört temel öge üzerine yapılandırılmıştır. Bunlar sırasıyla veri değerlendirme, bütünleşik ve sürekli öğretmen mesleki gelişimi, yüksek kalite öğretim uygulamaları ve kapsamlı aile katılımıdır. Bu dört temel öge çocukların doğumdan beş yaşına kadar güvenli, sağlıklı ve öğrenmeye istekli bir şekilde yetişmelerine yardım eden yüksek kalite erken çocukluk programını hayata geçirmek için kapsamlı ve istemli bir yolla birlikte çalışır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Educare, erken çocukluk eğitimi, risk altındaki çocuklar

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Introduction

Children undergo rapid changes in all aspects of development during early childhood, including development of physical, social-emotional, thinking abilities and general knowledge, and language and literacy skills (Berk, 2009). Development of these domains in early childhood occurs through interactions between the child and his/her environment (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006). Therefore, environmental agents such as parents and teachers are vitally important for children's early healthy development. From this perspective, this paper describes the US Educare Model (EM) developed by the Educare Learning Network as an important program to support healthy child development in all aspects. In particular, this paper focuses on qualities of the EM in terms of classroom processes, parent-program partnership, professional development of teachers, and evidence-based practices for better child outcomes.

From the perspective of the Bioecological Human Development Model (BEM; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006), children vary in their developmental domains depending upon their individual and environmental characteristics. The BEM emphasizes that a child's biology and his/her primary environment influences her/his development. The BEM consists of four dimensions: Person, Process, Context, and Time. Person refers to biological and personal characteristics of an individual. Process refers to interactions among other concepts of BEM. Context is a social environment where person interacts with his/her surrounding. Time refers to changes in proximal processes. Proximal process can be effective when they occur consistently over extended periods of time. From the perspective of BEM, human developmental outcomes are influenced by proximal process (interaction between individual and environment) within the microsystem, immediate settings including developing person; mesosystem, processes between person and two or more microsystems; exosystem, processes between two or more settings including person; macrosystem, broader cultural and socioeconomic environment; and chronosystem, influences of change over life course (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Considering the importance of the environmental characteristics in child development, children who live in chaotic households including lack of cognitive and social stimuli by parents may have delays in their developmental trajectories as compared to their peers from advantaged households (Bradley & Cowny, 2002). It has been found that there is a significant gap between children from high socioeconomic households and children from low socioeconomic households in terms cognitive development (approximately three-fifths of a standard deviation higher for children from high socioeconomic backgrounds) (Lee & Burkham, 2002; Coley, 2002). The previous research has shown that the gap between those children's development start as early as 18 months old and continues to grow throughout the early childhood period (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Figure 1 shows that this achievement gap between children from low and high socioeconomic status continues from kindergarten to the elementary school years. This gap can be detrimental for children's school readiness and subsequent school success (Loeb & Bassok, 2007). If this gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children is not closed in early childhood via interventions, it will cause problems for children from low income backgrounds in terms of school readiness, school success, getting ready for the job market, and providing a stable life for their future. Given the importance of the early intervention to close the achievement gap between low income and high income children in early childhood, providing high quality early education may help for this purpose (Loeb & Bassok, 2007).

Previous research has shown that detrimental effects of one context (e.g., effects of chaotic household on child outcomes) can be eliminated or reduced by positive effects of another context (e.g., high quality school environment; quality teachers; quality learning processes) (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). From this perspective, the U.S. federal government and generous philanthropists organizations, (e.g., The Buffett Early Childhood Fund) have decided to establish high quality early childhood programs targeting children from

low socioeconomic backgrounds so that children can be ready for kindergarten with more similar developmental trajectories to their advantaged peers from high income households.

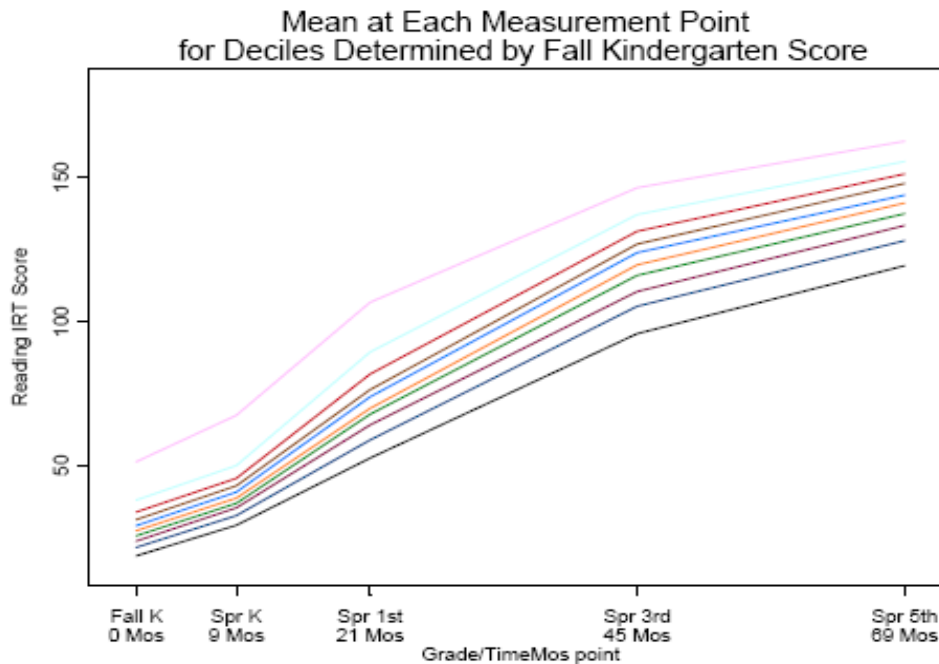


Figure 1. Achievement gap from kindergarten to 5th grade in reading skills (from *Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort*)

Early Head Start and Head Start Programs

Before discussing the EM, we would like to talk about Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) as they preceded EM and HS forms the basis both EHS and EM. *Early Head Start.* Early Head Start programs began in 1994. The EHS’s main goal has been to provide comprehensive support for child development and family support for low-income children under age of 3, including pregnant woman (Head Start Office, 2016). The main principles of EHS feature healthy child development in all areas of development as well as healthy relationships. The EHS program considers parental involvement of crucial importance in children’s development and education so it provides comprehensive and high quality family support for healthy child outcomes. Besides supporting parent involvement, the EHS also provides extensive professional development for its staff to raise the quality of staff, so that they can implement better and evidence-based practices as they scaffold children’s development and education. There are four types of services provided by EHS: (1) center-based services that provide early learning, care, and a variety of experiences for children and their family, (2) home-based services that provide weekly home visits for the enrolled families and children to promote parental involvement in child development; (3) family child care services that provide care and education to children at their family settings, and (4), combination services that combine both home and center-based services for children and their families.

Head Start. Head Start (HS) programs were founded in 1965, to serve children from birth to age of five, though the majority have been 3-5 year olds (Head Start Programs Office, 2016). HS programs mainly focus on school readiness of children from low-income families so that they can be ready to begin kindergarten at similar levels as counterpart peers from affluent families or to reduce the gap between them. HS supports children in their language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge, physical development and health, and socioemotional development. HS programs are comprehensive services that include screenings of children’s care and development as well as family support. These services are provided in learning

environments. HS serves over a million children each year within the U.S. Both EHS and HS programs have been found to be effective, albeit with small effect sizes, in children's academic development and for parenting outcomes (Mulligan, McCarroll, Flanagan & Potter, 2014; Peck & Bell, 2014). In the next section we will talk about Educare programs as Educare builds from HS and EHS.

What is EDUCARE?

Educare programs are enhanced Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Educare Schools provide full-day, full-year, high-quality early education and family support to 150-200 children in each of 21 U.S. communities. Age span of children served is from prenatal to 5 years and fifty percent of the school space is used to provide services for infants and toddlers to emphasize the importance of starting education early in a child's life. Children are those who are most at risk of school failure within their communities. To qualify for Educare, a majority of families are from low-income backgrounds or had a child with a disability but generally live in all parts of their respective communities (see Educare Lincoln Report, 2014-2015 for details). The Educare Learning Network (ELN) is a consortium of programs implementing the core features of the Educare early education model.

Features of the EDUCARE Model

Educare is different from many other early child care programs in that it is a unique model that gives students in poverty the best chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest quality care and education from birth to age five. Students and families from low-income homes often face unique barriers in developing foundations for success and Educare's program model is specifically designed to help at-risk students and their families overcome such barriers. The goal is that students receive the intensive and high-quality services they need to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and do not start so far behind their more economically advantaged peers. Early language and literacy skills, along with social-emotional-behavioral skills, lay the groundwork for academic success in students. Those two skills, along with self-confidence, a sense of curiosity, impulse control, empathy, the ability to engage with other students and teachers, hopefulness, and the ability to prevent and resist social pressure and violence are necessary for a child to have a good experience in school and must be developed in students.

Educare is informed by research from a variety of relevant disciplines, including but not limited to, early childhood education, health, developmental psychology, and social work and encompasses ongoing evaluation in order to assess the quality of classroom environments and to evaluate students' progress (Educare of Omaha Evaluation Report, 2012-13). Research is inextricably linked to all of the Educare's work to narrow the academic achievement gap for children in poverty. Educare explores the latest science about early childhood education and translates those theories to the 'real world' of programs as well as evaluating programs to collect information to improve the programs. Besides, Educare shares findings with policymakers to encourage them to empower early childhood programs in their communities (Tulsa Educare Reports, 2016). Educare Schools serve as a platform to inform and promote the importance of investing in early education, to leverage public and private investment in early childhood, to raise standards of education quality, and to encourage and engage in policy and systems change over time (Yazejian, Bryant & Kennel, 2013). As noted, Educare schools develop strong community public-private partnerships that draw upon all available resources (school districts, state and federal child care funding, Head Start, Early Head Start, private funders, and others) to provide high quality, comprehensive services for young children and their families. Educare Schools create a recognizable place dedicated to educating children from birth to age 5 that demonstrates a strong community commitment to the importance of investing in early childhood.

Altogether, Educare is a program designed to give students in poverty an improved chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest quality care and education from birth to age five. Students and families from low-income homes often face unique barriers in developing foundations for academic success. Educare’s program model (see Figure 2) is specifically designed to help these at-risk students and their families overcome such barriers. Educare’s mission is to ensure that these students receive the services they need to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and participate on par with their more economically advantaged peers. Social-emotional developmental theory, in particular, informs all aspects of the Educare model as the development of healthy relationships and positive social-emotional skills are a key component of student academic success.

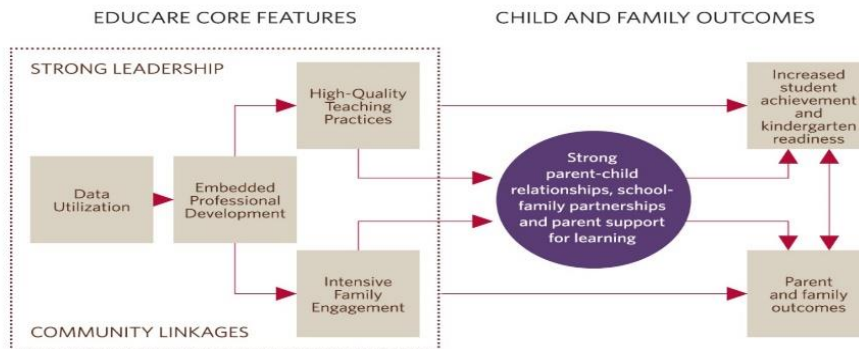


Figure 2. *The Educare Model (see more details from www.educareschools.org.)*

As seen above, Figure 2 explains that four core features compose the Educare model: data utilization, embedded professional development, high-quality teaching practices and intensive family engagement. Strong leadership at Educare schools supports the implementation of the model and develops the culture for high-quality early childhood education and family support services. Educare programs also connect with community-based programs that help children and families access additional resources, such as health and mental health services. According to the Educare Network, “Educare prepares children to achieve in school and life, and it helps parents develop the skills which they need to support their child’s education” (Educare Schools, 2016). Four core features work together in a comprehensive and intentional way to achieve a high-quality early childhood program that helps children from birth to age 5 grow up safe, healthy and eager to learn. The core features are as follows:

- Data utilization encompasses research-based and data-driven practices. Educare incorporates ongoing evaluations to assess the quality of classroom environments and evaluate students’ progress (Implementation Study). Data from these ongoing evaluations is used for program improvements and policy development both at the state and national levels. See below for more information about this feature.
- Embedded professional development emphasizes highly qualified staff, intensive staff development, an interdisciplinary approach that encourages communication and collaboration, and reflective supervision and practice throughout the program. Master teachers provide coaching and support for four to six classrooms each. The Educare Learning Network provides annual training to ensure that programs implement the high quality features of the EM, and to learn about leading edge developments in the field. We elaborate features of the teaching staff below.
- High-quality teaching practices integrate full-day, full-year care and education for children, small class sizes with high staff-child ratios, and continuity of care to help students develop secure relationships. Each program selects a research-based curriculum with an intentional and specific focus on the development of language and literacy, social-emotional

development, early math concepts, problem solving and motor development, as well as using the arts to strengthen and support these skills. Programs also emphasize continuity of care between children and teachers.

- Intensive family engagement supports and covers strong parent-child relationships, family well-being, and ongoing learning and development by providing on-site family support services and emphasizing prenatal and birth-to-three services. Through the coordinated implementation of these core features, Educare promotes high-quality early childhood programs that support and encourage strong family-school partnerships and parental support for children’s learning, helping to assure that children grow up safe, healthy, and eager to learn. If children are better prepared for kindergarten, it is possible to say increase their chances for long-term academic and life success (Educare Learning Network, 2014; Educare Lincoln Report, 2015-2016).

Teaching staff in embedded professional development and high quality teaching practices.

Here we highlight the teaching staff of Educare programs, linking two core features, embedded professional development and high quality teaching practices. Figure 3 is a configuration of Educare staffing patterns. Preschool lead teachers all have bachelor’s degrees in early childhood education or a related field. In states that require a valid teaching certificate (due to state funding as part of the funding package) certifications are also required. For example, in Nebraska Educare, a Teaching Certificate with an endorsement in Early Childhood Education, Preschool Disabilities, or Early Childhood Education Unified is required. Infant/toddler lead teachers also must hold a valid Teaching Certificate. If a teacher does not have this certification, she/he may obtain a provisional certification with sufficient credits and at least a bachelor’s degree in Child Development, Early Childhood Education, or Elementary Education. Staff members (e.g., infant/toddler lead teachers) may also obtain a provisional certification with an out of state certification with endorsement or certification and if they hold a bachelor's degree with showed competency and experience working with the infant/toddler population. In these cases, they continue their pursuit of extra studies with on getting in-state teacher certification and an endorsement in early childhood (Educare Omaha Evaluation Report, 2012-2013). A classroom staff consists of lead teacher, assistant teacher, teacher’s aide. A master teacher is in charge of advising three, four or up to six classrooms. Staff also include family support and administrative supervisor, or operation’s manager. Figure 3 explains the teaching staff construct with more details.

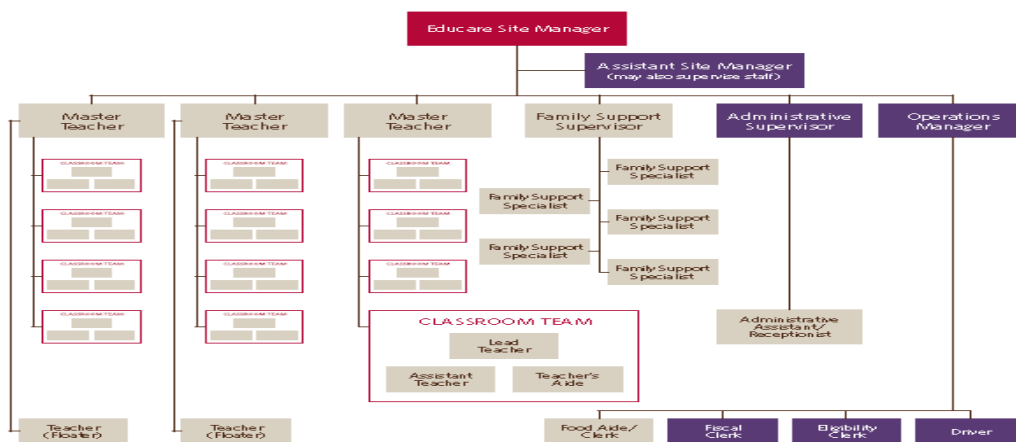


Figure 3: Educare Hierarchical Order of Staff at a Typical School

Data-driven Practices and Program Child Outcomes

Data and evaluation play a special role in the Educare Network. Each Educare has a Local Evaluation Partner (LEP) and common data are collected across all sites that are aggregated by

the National Evaluation Partner (NEP). LEPs collect some unique local data as well to help the program understand matters of local interest. Funded by philanthropists, the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (2016), University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, is NEP and is conducting two studies involving the Educare Model. First, the Educare Implementation Study and, second, the Educare Randomized Clinical Trial (RCT) is designed to test whether children who are randomly assigned to an Educare school show greater gains than comparable peers who are not selected to attend an Educare school.

The Implementation study is designed to document the features of Educare and how implementation of the model contributes to program quality and links to child and family outcomes. The results of the Implementation Study allow the Educare Learning Network to describe and better understand the progress children and families are making in Educare programs, considering unique local features and elements of the larger community context. The Educare Implementation Study has tracked program quality and child and family outcomes since 2006. Every Educare school participates in this study as part of its ongoing program operation and improvement efforts, and every program works closely with an LEP, typically but not always, a nearby university. For example, the College of Education and Human Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is the Local Evaluation Partner for Educare of Lincoln, NE. The Implementation Study provides program staff with information for learning continuous program improvement and families with information to help them better support their children.

Altogether, there are two major purposes of the Implementation Study: using data in a timely fashion to inform the program about its own practices and progress (internal purpose), and presenting aggregate reports and scholarly articles that can inform about the network's efforts overall and inform the field as innovations are implemented in Educare (external purpose).

For instance, in Educare Lincoln throughout 2014-2015, evaluation activities have focused on the first goal by providing timely child-level reports to classroom teachers and administrative staff. Parents were also given data reports about their own children in order to bring all possible sources of information into the planning process for children's growth and well-being. In addition, classroom reports were given to all classroom teams and master teachers for all the classroom measures. Dashboard reports have been prepared for the Policy Council as data became available during the school year. For aggregate reporting, data are shared with Frank Porter Graham for Educare cross-site reports (Educare Lincoln Report, 2014-2015, p. 9-10).

Evaluation reports of Educare focus on determining the overall effectiveness of the programs in providing early childhood services, parenting education, and family support services. As noted, the purpose of the program evaluation is to help the program improve and develop practices while concurrently examining the overall effectiveness of the program. The data may identify possible goals for program consideration. An evaluation report might include staff and classroom quality, children's benefits and outcomes (language development, school readiness, social-emotional development etc.), family benefits and outcomes. The evaluation also provides policymakers, practitioners, funders and others in the early childhood field with hard evidence to demonstrate the impact of high-quality early learning experiences for low-income children and families. Students are assessed twice during the school year on multiple measures. The measures evaluate individual students on language, vocabulary, school readiness and social/emotional factors. Measures include the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-4 (PPVT-4; Dunn & Dunn, 2007) and the Preschool Language Scale-5 (PLS-5; Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 2012) for language and cognitive development; Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA; LeBuffe & Naglieri, 1999) for social-emotional development (Educare Learning Network, 2014; Educare Lincoln, 2014-2015) and classroom quality is assessed once a year using the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R; Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2006), the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-R or 3 (ECERS-3 or ECERS-RHarms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2014;) and Infant, Toddler and Preschool versions of the Classroom Assessment System (CLASS; Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre,

2012; Hamre, Paro, Pianta, & LoCasale-Crouch, 2014). Evaluation is depending on collecting data across multiple sources and utilizing multiple methods. The result is an outcome of the development of students enrolled in Educare as compared to a norming sample (by tool) representative of the general population and changes in the Educare population's development in the progress of time (Educare Lincoln Report, 2014-2015). Multiple assessments are used to explore students' development in a variety of areas. The majority of Educare children who have been in the program since they were infants enter kindergarten ready for school (Educare Learning Network, 2014). The age at which children enter Educare is related to their later achievement scores and the earlier the better. Children, who are bilingual learners, who join in Educare before age 3 have better language skills than their peers who only join in their preschools years (Yazijan, et al., 2015). The language and school-readiness scores of Educare children exceed typical achievement levels for children living in low-income households.

Parent Engagement

Families in Educare are from low-income backgrounds by definition, however, each program's population tends to be unique. For example, some programs serve a majority of Spanish-speaking families; another may serve many African immigrants, others are serving inner city African Americans, while two others serve diverse populations with immigrants from up to 14 or 17 countries. In these latter programs, parents were born in different parts of the world (e.g., central and Latin America, Africa, central Asia, eastern and central Europe). As noted in a particular portion of the homes, English is not the language children hear most often. For example in Omaha and Lincoln Educare Families, some of the homes Spanish is prevalent but in another, other languages are spoken, nearly all parents are employed; many are also in training and many families have multiple children. Altogether, diverse and busy describes many of the Educare parents presenting (Educare Omaha, 2012-2013; Educare Lincoln, 2014-2015). Across the educare sites, half of parents are working full-time and another 30% part-time. Also across sites, 33% of children hear a language other than English at home, with the majority hearing Spanish (Educare Network, 2016).

Implications for Practice and Adaptations to Turkish Early Childhood Education System

The main value of this paper lies in its suggestions for practice and the potential for adaptations for the Turkish early childhood education system. Educare which is a new model in early childhood education in the U.S, has highlighted best practices for improving services and empowering children and their families at risk. This model can be examined from several points of practices such as teacher professional development, school readiness, classroom quality, parent participation and involvement (home visiting, school-home based activities, collaborative family-school strategies etc.), classroom quality (instructional support, emotional support, classroom organization), evidence based school setting and research-based (university-school Partnerships) school.

Firstly, the Educare model suggest the feasibility of incorporating a focus on professional development for early childhood educators that has as its major focus improving teachers' knowledge and their pedagogical skill in high-quality instruction in the classroom. Quesenberry (2007) indicated that teachers feel more efficacious when working in training programs that include: (a) ongoing professional development opportunities; (b) strategies to prevent challenging behaviors; and (c) a system to track the ongoing progress of each child. Quesenberry (2007) studied 43 teachers in six Head Start programs and findings indicated that higher job satisfaction was associated with higher social skills and lower challenging behavior ratings of children. The author found that Head Start teachers reported increased efficacy and job satisfaction at the completion of the program. Teacher training programs offer individualized training and coaching; relationship enhancement and behavioral management strategies; ongoing data collection to tracking; improving social competence and reducing behavioral challenges. In Turkey, teacher candidates first take the highly competitive university

entrance examination. The duration of teacher education at the university are 4 or 5 years respectively. Besides that, there is a pedagogical formation program for employing teachers and creating new opportunities from departments other than education departments, such as science and art or engineering and alternatively, certificated teachers are trained in a short time (approximately 14 weeks). However, this method not only affects the quality of teacher education negatively but also causes the spread of belief among all university students “If you cannot be anything, be a teacher” (Altan, 1998, p. 416, cited from Gokmenoglu et.al, 2015). Promoting the professional autonomy of teachers while designing a professional development model is one of the most important characteristics of successful training programs (Gokmenoglu & Clark, 2015). Guskey (2003) found that the most frequently cited professional development needs of teachers were associated with reform initiatives, and other researchers strongly support the importance of teachers’ professional development for the success of reform movements (Gokmenoglu et.al, 2015). Professional development supports reforms through two strategies such as strategies for instructional change, organizational change (Fullan, 1991). There are major focuses of nation-wide reform initiatives which refer how well professional development programs actualize new strategies, how extent they are responsive to teachers’ needs, and how much they build on and extend teachers’ existing knowledge and skills (Gokmenoglu & Clark, 2015).

There are some practices from U.S Educare that could be examined for Turkey in the realm of “Educare Embedded Teacher Professional Development”. These include reflective meetings for all teachers employed and working with Educare children, supporting teachers to be reflective and adopting and evaluating leading edge innovations. The reflective teaching framework involves teaching that requires a commitment to professional development and growth. This implies an openness to new ideas and a willingness to take the time and do the mental work necessary for professional enhancement. Reflective teachers are those who view teaching as an ongoing problem solving process. Reflective teachers don’t approach teaching as a “follow the recipe” enterprise and don’t hang on to rigidly to a prescribed and limited set of practices. Teachers have knowledgeable professionals who are empowered to make reasoned, deliberate and ethical choices about important goals for the children they teach and about appropriate strategies to meet those goals (Kemple, 2004).

As part of the quest to adopt leading edge innovations, groups of Educare programs experiment with and reflect on new practices. One good example is the teaching pyramid program (adopted by some Educare programs) that demonstrates a system-wide approach to embedded professional development. The teaching pyramid is a framework for training teachers to organize evidence-based practices for promoting social-emotional development and preventing and addressing challenging behaviors in preschool programs. The teaching pyramid is a framework for implementing effective practices in the context of a program-wide strategy for behavior support (Hemmeter & Fox, 2009). This model involves a long-term commitment by early childhood program leaders who are fully committed to program-wide adoption. Team Leaders receive comprehensive professional development and ongoing coaching supports. Parents and families are engaged as valued partners who provide needed input. The pyramid model is also an evidence-based model for supporting social competence and preventing challenging behavior in young children. The needs of all children are addressed with challenging behaviors handled in a comprehensive and systematic process. The pyramid framework includes four tiers that build on one another. The bottom tier refers to an effective workforce that promotes positive relationships with children, parents, and all involved. The next tier refers to an environment that is nurturing and supportive. Next are targeted strategies that provide needed social and emotional support. Finally, the top tier focuses on individualized support for children whose needs are not met in prior levels (CSEFEL, 2016). At each level the program develops program-wide strategies and provides professional development for “getting everyone on the same page.”

Another area of potential implications for Turkey from U.S Educare programs are that partnerships should be formed between family and community programs so that they equipped to work together in promoting children's outcomes (National Academy, 2016). Parents can be the best supporters of their children with special needs when they are armed with information, encouragement and optimism (Gallagher et. al., 2004). Parents and students of teacher's practices regarding parent involvement aim to enlarge studies of families by paying attention to the interplay of family school environments while the children are in school or are preparing for school, from infancy through the high school grades (Epstein, 2011).

Parent engagement is constructed on three dimensions such as parental warmth and sensitivity, supporting child's autonomy, active participation in learning and it is a predictive of social-emotional learning and cognitive development (Sheridan et.al., 2008; Sheridan et.al., 2010). Students who have problem behaviors at schools are at risk for a variety of difficulties, including falling behind academically and school attendance, depression and substance use all of which can be challenges and obstacles for teachers and principals to manage (Stormshak et. al.,2016). Parental engagement with children has been linked to a number of adaptive characteristics in preschool children, and a positive relationship between families and professionals is an important contributor to school readiness. Furthermore, social- emotional competence is a key component of young children's school readiness. Early education and intervention programs can promote children's readiness skills, including social-emotional competencies, via relational contexts that permeate across home and school systems (Sheridan et.al., 2010). Besides, Caspe (2014) suggests family and early childhood or kindergarten connection on the behalf of some transition activities including expecting. Kindergarten teachers to communicate with families before the school year begins and having teachers contact families during the first few days of preschool and kindergarten, holding orientations and workshops for families during preschool, over the summer and through kindergarten to inform parents about kindergarten expectations, encouraging family participations in home learning activities and supporting home visits early in the kindergarten year (Caspe, 2014). We can readily point out that Educare Schools are foundational for providing collaboration and partnerships between parents and teachers and other professionals. In this way, their supports correlate with social-emotional learning and behavioral outcomes for children and families.

Considering that school readiness is an important part of Educare, Educare provides a holistic approach to children's school readiness. School readiness is a multidimensional constructs that includes physical development health, socioemotional functioning, learning approaches, language/literacy development, and cognitive development (Eisenberg, Valiente, & Eggum, 2010; Kids Count, 2005). Educare programs provide learning environments whereby quality teachers support children's development in all aspects including nutrition and healthy development.

In order to achieve school readiness, Educare programs focus on providing quality classroom environments whereby children feel comfortable to explore and learn. Classroom quality consists of emotional support (e.g., positive and sensitive teacher-child interactions), classroom organization (e.g., behavior management), and instructional support (e.g., concept development) (Pianta et al., 2008). Providing high quality classroom environments entailing characteristics above have been found to related to positive social and academic outcomes for children (Curby, Brock, & Hamre, 2013; Merritt et al., 2012). To provide better classroom environment and quality learning for children at Educare, the program uses evidence-based approaches in their classroom practices. Teachers are trained and maintain their teaching skills via receiving ongoing professional development. These professional development tools are based on research and they have been tested in previous studies for their effectiveness.

Collaboration between Educare programs and universities (e.g., Departments of Child Development and Early Childhood Education) provide a platform to create evidence-based practices. University researchers implement evaluation of child development and learning

process and outcomes of children. By doing so, they can create reports of developmental trajectories of children and programs in terms of social, cognitive, and academic skills. Following this evaluation process, Educare is a collaborative, interdisciplinary model that researchers and practitioners can together prepare trainings. Researchers from the university can establish workshops or one-on-one training for teachers to scaffold their skills in classroom so that they can support child development and learning process for better outcomes.

Williams (1997), pointed out that a review of multiple studies of early childhood programs revealed the most effective programs (in terms of at-risk children's chances of later school failure) had some important characteristics such as long-term program involvement often lasting three to five years, working intensively with parents and children, center-based rather than home-based although home visits were an essential component. These programs incorporated age-appropriate health and nutrition components in addition to educational programming (Williams, 1997, p. 90). On the contrary Williams's (1997) some ideas, Educare's target group contains early childhood services which are given to priority health and nutrition services from birth to age five and it is especially based on home-based services. In conclusion, Educare has turned the page to the next "chapter" in early childhood which creates new research in best practices for early education that improves the lives of young children at risk and their families. There is a great impetus for the early childhood education field to act while preparing children academically, socially and emotionally for kindergarten and elementary education.

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