Using the Web Sites of Kindergartens in Parenting Education and the Present Condition in Turkey[1]

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Abstract

Family is the elementary school for children in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills. Qualities of family affect children directly. Supporting families in terms of children's education and increasing their efficiencies will also positively affect children. Thus, schools should consider not only children, but also their families while providing education. The objective of this study is to offer a suggestion for using the web sites of kindergartens as an instrument in parenting education and examine the web sites of kindergartens in Turkey from this aspect. The study was conducted by using case study pattern, which is among qualitative research methods. The study group consisted of 81 official kindergartens from 81 different provinces and 20 private kindergartens from 20 different metropolitans. Schools in the study group were determined by using typical case sampling method, which is among purposeful sampling methods. The first official and private kindergartens that were reached in the internet search engine by writing the name of province and kindergarten (for example, Tokat kindergarten) were included in the study group. The study data were acquired by examining the web sites of kindergartens in the study group in terms of their content and the acquired data were analyzed via content analysis method. As a result of the study; it was seen that information contents were involved under titles like; Our School (f=81/ 100%), Connections (f=81/ 100%), Announcements (f=81/ 100%), Statistics (f=81/ 100%), News (f=80/ 98,4%), Classes (f=62/ 76,2%), Photo Gallery (f=60/ 73,8%) and Counseling (f=47/ 57,8%) in the web sites of official kindergartens. On the other hand, the contents were involved under titles like; Our School (f=20/ 100%), Communication (f=19/ 95%), Counseling (f=14/ 70%) and Announcements (f=9/ 45%) in the web sites of private kindergartens. It was seen that schools involved information about parenting education generally under the title of counseling. It was also seen that topic titles like parental attitudes, children's developmental features, children's nourishment and school adaptation were prominent regarding parenting education.

Keywords: Preschool Period, Family, Parenting Education, Kindergarten, Web Site

1. Introduction

Family is the place where life starts for not only human beings, but also many other species. Family, where first experiences and learnings are realized, is the primary resource for children that meets not only physical needs, but also social, emotional and psychological needs. Qualities of family that are among the primary resources for children affect them directly. Because children recognize the world by taking other individuals as a model and

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[1] This study was presented as an Oral Presentation at the International Conference on Quality in Higher Education that was held in Sakarya University between 23-24 November, 2016.

Journal of Education and Practice
www.iiste.org
ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper)   ISSN 2222-288X (Online)
Vol.8, No.1, 2017

on the basis of them. A strong, informed and qualified family will also create a strong and qualified society.

The Turkish Language Society defines family as; "*The smallest unit within society that is based on marriage and kindredship, and formed by the relations between couples, children and siblings; the whole of individuals from the same ancestry or kindred, all kins and relatives that live together, the whole of individuals that agree on the same goal and work together*" (Turkish Language Society, 2016). Family has the characteristics of society and reflects its value judgements, customs and traditions, tastes, beliefs, prejudices and in short, its culture (Birsöz, 1990).

Parents have a wide sphere of influence upon children. Being responsible for meeting the needs of children in the age range of 0-6; parents are also the first teachers of their children (Gordon, 1993). Social environment of families and children plays an important role in bringing social skills, attitudes and values in children (Unicef, 2012). It is difficult to change habits that are formed in the family environment in following years; however, it is not impossible. Thus, early childhood education is very important as it leaves inerasable traces in children's personality structure (Yılmaz, 2010). Studies show that a child's character is considerably formed within the first five years after birth (Yeşil and Aydın, 2007). Skills acquired by children in the preschool period generally form the basis of their future education (Pagani, Jalbert & Girard, 2005).

Considering the permanent effect of parenting style and parenting features upon the development of children; it is believed that schools should train not only children, but also their families and bring knowledge and skills in families. Berkowitz and Bier (2004) suggest that parents and schools play an important role for children to display positive characteristics. Preschool curriculum involves the following statement, *"the best approach in preschool education is to embrace children together with their families rather than alone"* (Ministry of National Education Preschool Curriculum, 2006). Parenting education and participation of families in the process of preschool education allow children to acquire permanent knowledge, skills and attitudes (Ministry of National Education Preschool Curriculum, 2013). Ömeroğlu (1999) defines parenting education as supporting the person who takes care of the child, providing a rich and energizing home environment for the child, providing the parent-child communication and supporting the family in terms of child development until elementary school.

As a community, school has its own values and reflects these values on individuals who get service from school (Akbaş, 2004). Families and preschool educational institutions are responsible for children's education as from the early years. It is very important to include families in preschool education for the purpose of sharing the responsibility of children's education (Kaya and Gültekin, 2003). Participation of families in educational activities develops the child-rearing skills of parents and paves the way for a healthier parenting (Ministry of National Education, 2006). Being an important part of child education; families should support their children both at school and at home (Morrison, 2006). Studies suggest that participation of families in the process of education increases children's academic achievement (Hill and Tyson, 2009; Şad, 2012) and decreases discipline problems (Epstein and Sheldon, 2002) and absenteeism problems (Jeynes, 2007; Shaw, 2008) that are experienced at school.

Today, different methods are used in many countries in order to include families in the process of their children's education. According to the data of the International Educational Statistics Center (USA), schools in the United States conduct family participation activities like invitations (97%), family-teacher meetings (92%) and voluntariness activities (90%) (Englund, Luckner, Whaley and Egeland, 2004). Preschool curriculum suggests that (Ministry of National Education, 2006) parenting education could be conducted via meetings, conferences, personal interviews or printed instruments like articles, leaflets, guidebooks, journals and educational panels. Majority of these methods being suggested comprise of educational activities that require parents to come to school. However, reasons like intense working conditions, permission problems and transportation make it difficult for parents to participate in educational activities at schools. In the study of Prinz and Sanders (2007), only 14% of families with children who were not older than seven stated that they had participated in parenting education programs. These problems could be solved through using the technology and internet sites in order for parents to keep in touch with school without coming to school.

Internet can be used as an instrument in communicating with parents and sharing announcements. Internet can also be used in informing families and sharing the activities of children via web sites (Temel, Aksoy and Kurtulmuş, 2013). Even though the internet and web sites of schools can be used as an efficient instrument in the school-parent communication; Bouffard (2008) suggests that only 36% of parents state that teachers use the internet to communicate with them. In another study, parents also state that they have limited information about school incidents and expect schools to use digital technologies like electronic mails and short messages more frequently (Byron, 2009). Internet-based communication methods like web sites, electronic mails, blogs and social networks offer new opportunities for school-family communication and remove problems like time and transportation which are among obstacles in the traditional school-family communication (Abdal-Haqq, 2002;

Journal of Education and Practice
www.iiste.org
ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper)   ISSN 2222-288X (Online)
Vol.8, No.1, 2017

Campbell, 2009).

According to the results of the "Research on Household Information Technologies Use" by the Turkish Statistical Institute; 55,9% of individuals in Turkey use the internet, 69,5% have access to the internet, 65,8% of men and 46,1% of women use computers and the internet (TSI, 2015), which signifies that computers and the internet are used very frequently in daily life. Thus, computers and the internet could also be efficiently used as an instrument in parenting education. As the Ministry of National Education obliges all educational institutions to have a web site, almost all educational institutions in Turkey have a web site.

Examining the relevant literature; it is seen that there are many studies on parenting education. Studies in literature mainly concern; fatherhood role and family participation (Şahin, 2012), relationship between family participation and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2007; Mcwayne and Owsianik, 2004), web-based program for school nurses (Campbell, 2009), communication of parents and teachers via the internet (Tobolka, 2006), use of technology for increasing family participation (Olmstead, 2013;Vanderpool, 2009), use of information and communication technologies for school-home communication (Heath, Maghrabi and Carr, 2015), usability of social media in parenting education (Balcı and Tezel-Şahin, 2016), family participation program for parents of disadvantageous children (Uçuş, 2016), family participation at elementary schools and secondary schools (Ahioğlu-Lindberg and Oğuz, 2016) and problems encountered in family participation activities (Günay-Bilaloğlu, 2014).

Studies emphasizing the importance of parenting education and family participation in children's education are mentioned above. Similarly, it is known that problems like working conditions and transportation have a negative effect upon the participation of parents in educational activities. In the light of these information, the objective of this study is to examine the use of the web sites of kindergartens as an instrument in parenting education and the present condition in Turkey. The study is considered important as it suggests a model and examines the present condition in Turkey.

2. Method

This qualitative study was planned as a case study. Case study is a qualitative research approach where the researcher profoundly examines one case or a few cases that is/are limited in the course of time via data collection tools (observations, interviews, visuals-audials, documents, reports) containing multiple resources and defines case-dependent themes (Creswell, 2007).

2.1. Study Group

The study group consisted of 81 official kindergartens from 81 different provinces and 20 private kindergartens from 20 different metropolitans (İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Bursa, Antalya, Adana, Konya, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Kocaeli, Mersin, Diyarbakır, Hatay, Manisa, Kayseri, Samsun, Balıkesir, Kahramanmaraş, Van, Aydın). The metropolitans that were included in the study group were determined according to their population density and 20 metropolitans with the greatest population were included in the study group. The schools in the study group were determined by using typical case sampling method, which is among purposeful sampling methods. The first official and private kindergartens (20 kindergartens) that were reached in the internet search engine by writing the name of province and kindergarten (for example, Tokat kindergarten) were included in the study group.

2.2. Collection of the Study Data

The study data were acquired by examining the web sites of kindergartens in the study group and module/page contents regarding parenting education. Firstly, the web sites of 10 different kindergartens (eight official, two private kindergartens) were examined, module/page titles on pages were determined and a coding list was formed. The web sites of kindergartens were reexamined according to the coding list and the acquired data were recorded.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data acquired within the scope of the study were analyzed via content analysis method. Content analysis method tries to determine relations and concepts (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). According to the findings that were revealed in the content analysis process; the web sites of kindergartens were examined under three categories as "module/page titles on the web sites of official-private kindergartens", "module/page titles involving the contents of parenting education on the web sites of official-private kindergartens" and "topic titles regarding parenting education on the web sites of official-private kindergartens" and findings under these categories were converted into digital data and then tabularized.

Validity and reliability of studies are determined by using various methods and techniques. In this study, the validity and reliability were determined by using triangulation technique. There are four types of triangulation

techniques as; method triangulation, resource triangulation, analyzer triangulation and theory/viewpoint triangulation (Patton, 2014). Analyzer triangulation technique was used in this study.

The researchers individually examined the web sites of kindergartens according to the categories and codes that were formed in the data analysis process. The acquired findings were recorded in the data form and the consistency between the coders were examined. Reliability of the data analysis was tested by using Miles and Huberman (1994)'s Agreement Percentage = [Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement) X 100] formula. Accordingly, the agreement percentage between the coders was determined as 94%.

3. Findings

Findings acquired within the scope of the study were examined under three categories as "module/page titles on the web sites of official-private kindergartens", "module/page titles involving the contents of parenting education on the web sites of official-private kindergartens" and "topic titles regarding parenting education on the web sites of official-private kindergartens" and findings under these categories were converted into digital data and then tabularized. Table 1 shows module/page titles on the web sites of official kindergartens.

Table 1. Module/Page Titles on the Web Sites of Official Kindergartens

Web Site Contents	f	%
Connections	81	100
Announcements	81	100
Communication	81	100
Statistics	81	100
Our School	81	100
News	80	98,4
Classes	62	76,2
Photo Gallery	60	73,8
Menu	51	62,7
Counseling	47	57,8
Our Projects	36	44,2
Service Standards	31	38,1
Bank Account Information	26	31,9
Parent-Teacher Association	21	25,8
Record Medium	17	20,9
Atatürk Corner	10	12,3
Family Participation	6	7,3
Children's Clubs	6	7,3
One Day at School	6	7,3

Examining Table 1; it is seen that the web sites of official kindergartens contain the titles of connections, announcements, communication, statistics and our school at 100% (f=81), which are followed by news 98,4% (f=80), classes 76,2% (f=62), photo gallery 73,8% (f=60), menu 62,7% (f=51), counseling 57,8% (f=47), our projects 44,2% (f=36), service standards 38,1% (f=31), bank account information 31,9% (f=26), parent-teacher association 25,8% (f=21), record medium 20,9% (f=17), Atatürk corner 12,3% (f=10), family participation, children's clubs and one day at school 7,3% (f=6). Table 2 shows module/page titles on the web sites of private kindergartens.

Table 2. Module/Page Titles on the Web Sites of Private Kindergartens

Page-Module Title	f	%
Photo Gallery	20	100
Our School	20	100
Communication	19	95
Counseling	14	70
Announcements	9	45
Menu	9	45
Record Medium	7	35
Our Projects	7	35
Family Participation	6	30
Children's Clubs	6	30
Club Classes	6	30
News	6	30
One Day at School	3	15
Classes	3	15
Atatürk Corner	2	10
Statistics	1	5

Examining Table 2; it is seen that the web sites of private kindergartens contain the titles of photo gallery and our school at 100% (f=20), communication 95% (f=19), counseling 70% (f=14), announcements and menu 45% (f=9), record medium and our projects 35% (f=7), family participation, children's clubs, club classes and news 30% (f=6), one day at school and classes 15% (f=3), Atatürk corner 10% (f=2) and statistics 5% (f=1). Table 3 shows module/page titles involving the contents of parenting education on the web sites of official kindergartens.

Table 3. Module/Page Titles Involving the Contents of Parenting Education on the Web Sites of Official Kindergartens

Title Used on the Informing Page	f	%
Counseling Service	22	46,6
Counseling	15	31,8
Counseling Corner	1	2,1
Department of Counseling	1	2,1
Psychological Consultation and Counseling	1	2,1
Counseling Studies	1	2,1
Monthly Bulletin	1	2,1
Parenting Guidance	1	2,1
Family Participation	1	2,1
Mother-Father Education	1	2,1
Preschool Parenting Guidance	1	2,1
Parenting Education	1	2,1

Examining Table 3; it is seen that the web sites of official kindergartens contain the following module/page titles involving the contents of parenting education: counseling service at 46,6% (f=22), counseling 31,8% (f=15), counseling corner, department of counseling, psychological consultation and counseling, counseling studies, monthly bulletin, parenting guidance, family participation, mother-father education, preschool parenting guidance and parenting education 2,1% (f=1). Table 4 shows module/page titles involving the contents of parenting education on the web sites of private kindergartens.

Table 4. Module/Page Titles Involving the Contents of Parenting Education on the Web Sites of Private Kindergartens

Title Used on the Informing Page	f	%
Counseling Service-Parent Informing	3	15
Psychologist's Corner	3	15
Monthly Bulletin	2	10
Counseling	2	10
Preschool	1	5
Important Information	1	5
Psychological Consultation Service	1	5
Psychologist's Note	1	5

Examining Table 4; it is seen that the web sites of private kindergartens contain the following module/page titles involving the contents of parenting education: counseling service-parent informing at 15% (f=3), psychologist's corner 15% (f=3), monthly bulletin and counseling 10% (f=2), preschool, important information, psychological consultation service and psychologist's note 5% (f=1). Table 5 shows topic titles regarding parenting education on the web sites of official kindergartens.

Table 5. Topic Titles Regarding Parenting Education on the Web Sites of Official Kindergartens

Parenting Education/Topic Title Regarding Counseling Service	f
Blank Page Content	20
Behavioral Problems Encountered in Children	8
Children's Developmental Features	7
Mother-Father Attitudes	4
Nourishment in Children	4
Starting School	4
Computer and Television Addiction in Children	3
Sense of Responsibility in Children	3
School Adaptation	3
Recommendations for Families	2
Communication with Children	2
What Do Children Want	2
Intrafamilial Communication	1
Family's Happiness	1
Academic Achievement	1
Effect of Divorce upon Children	1
Sexual Education	1
Sharing in Children	1
Activities for Children	1
Child and Violence	1
Children's Fears	1
Rules of Child Rearing	1
Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity	1
Preparation to Elementary School	1
School Phobia	1
Preschool Education	1
Games and Toys	1
Special Education	1
Self-Confidence in Children	1

It is seen that 20 out of 47 official kindergartens which have module/page titles regarding parenting education on their web sites have a blank page content. On the other hand, topic titles regarding parenting education are as follows: behavioral problems encountered in children (f=8), children's developmental features (f=7), mother-

father attitudes, nourishment in children, starting school (f=4), computer and television addiction in children, sense of responsibility in children, school adaptation (f=3), recommendations for families, communication with children, what do children want (f=2), intrafamilial communication, family's happiness, academic achievement, effect of divorce upon children, sexual education, sharing in children, activities for children, child and violence, children's fears, rules of child rearing, attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity, preparation to elementary school, school phobia, preschool education, games and toys, special education and self-confidence in children (f=1). Table 6 shows topic titles regarding parenting education on the web sites of private kindergartens.

Table 6. Topic Titles Regarding Parenting Education on the Web Sites of Private Kindergartens

Parenting Education / Topic Title Regarding Counseling Service	f
Blank Page Content	6
Behavioral Problems Encountered in Children	4
Children's Developmental Features	2
Mother-Father Attitudes	1
Nourishment in Children	1
Preparation to School	1
Starting School	1
Toilet Training in Children	1
School Adaptation	1
Anger Management in Children	1
Communication with Children	1
Self-Confidence in Children	1

It is seen that six out of 14 private kindergartens which have module/page titles regarding parenting education on their web sites have a blank page content. On the other hand, prominent topic titles of school web sites are as follows: behavioral problems encountered in children (f=4), children's developmental features (f=2), mother-father attitudes, nourishment in children, preparation to school, starting school, toilet training in children, school adaptation, anger management in children, communication with children and self-confidence in children (f=1).

4. Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

In this study, the idea of using the web sites of kindergartens as an instrument in parenting education was discussed and the present condition in Turkey was examined. The study data were acquired by examining the web sites of kindergartens in the study group and module/page contents regarding parenting education. The acquired data were analyzed via content analysis technique.

As a result of the study, it was seen that all web sites of official kindergartens (f=81) had the pages of connections, announcements, communication, statistics and our school. Other content titles included; news, classes, photo gallery, menu, counseling, our projects, service standards, bank account information, parent-teacher association, record medium, Atatürk corner, family participation, children's clubs and one day at school It was seen that all web sites of private kindergartens (f=20) had the pages of photo gallery and our school. Other content titles included; communication, counseling, announcements, menu, record medium, our projects, family participation, children's clubs, club classes, news, one day at school, classes, Atatürk corner and statistics.

The web sites of 81 official kindergartens were examined within the scope of the study. Among these web sites, 47 had module/page titles regarding parenting education, whereas 34 had none. It was seen that module/page titles regarding parenting education on the web sites of official kindergartens were as follows: counseling service, counseling, counseling corner, department of counseling, psychological consultation and counseling, counseling studies, monthly bulletin, parenting guidance, family participation, mother-father education, preschool parenting guidance and parenting education. On the other hand, module/page titles regarding parenting education on the web sites of private kindergartens were as follows: counseling service-parent informing, psychologist's corner, monthly bulletin and counseling, preschool, important information, psychological consultation service and psychologist's note. The reason for preferring counseling service, counseling and counseling corner as module/page titles regarding parenting education on the web sites of kindergartens could be associated with the fact that these contents are prepared by school counselors and are considered a counseling activity by schools.

It was seen that 20 out of 47 official kindergartens which had module/page titles regarding parenting education on their web sites had a blank page content. Prominent topic titles regarding parenting education were as follows: behavioral problems encountered in children, children's developmental features, mother-father attitudes, nourishment in children, starting school, computer and television addiction in children, sense of responsibility in children, school adaptation, recommendations for families, communication with children, what do children want, intrafamilial communication, family's happiness, academic achievement, effect of divorce upon children, sexual education, sharing in children, activities for children, child and violence, children's fears, rules of child rearing, attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity, preparation to elementary school, school phobia, preschool education, games and toys, special education and self-confidence in children. It was seen that six out of 14 private kindergartens which had module/page titles regarding parenting education on their web sites had a blank page content. Prominent topic titles of school web sites were as follows: behavioral problems encountered in children, children's developmental features, mother-father attitudes, nourishment in children, preparation to school, starting school, toilet training in children, school adaptation, anger management in children, communication with children and self-confidence in children.

It was seen that prominent topic titles regarding parenting education on the web sites of kindergartens were as follows; behavioral problems, children's developmental features, mother-father attitudes, school adaptation, intrafamilial relations and communication, preparation to school and nourishment. The reason for these titles to be prominent could be associated with the demands of parents. Because kindergartens apply need determination form for parenting education to parents at the beginning of every school year and plan parenting education activities according to the information on these forms (Ministry of National Education, 2013).

It was seen that 61 out of 101 kindergartens (official-private) being examined within the scope of the study had module/page titles regarding parenting education and 41 had a page content on their web sites. In other words, only 41 out of 101 kindergartens had a page content regarding parenting education. This result shows that only 40% of the web sites being examined within the scope of the study have a content regarding parenting education. According to this result, it could be suggested that the web sites of kindergartens are not used efficiently in the process of parenting education. Studies suggest that the internet and the social media can be used as an instrument in parenting education (Abdal-Haqq, 2002; Campbell, 2009; Heath, Maghrabi and Carr, 2015; Olmstead, 2013; Temel, Aksoy and Kurtulmuş, 2013; Vanderpool, 2009); however, they are not used sufficiently (Bouffard, 2008; Byron, 2009) and that school heads should inform parents more about child development and education on school web sites (Şahin and Demiriz, 2014), which supports the results of this study.

Internet is used efficiently in almost every life space in this era of knowledge and technology. The use of the internet in parenting education may save time, remove transportation problems, provide accessible knowledge and enable reaching more parents. According to the study results, it is recommended for schools to use the internet more efficiently in the process of parenting education and school-family communication. Contents regarding parenting education should be formed by cooperating with expert academicians and educators. It is recommended to support parents and teachers and increase their awareness and competence on this issue in order to use the internet more efficiently in the process of school-family communication. And finally, it is recommended for researchers to investigate the internet habits of parents, as well as their expectations from kindergartens regarding parenting education studies and from the web sites of schools, and activities that are conducted at kindergartens regarding parenting education.

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