

A New Challenge for Special Education Teacher Training in Turkey: The Newest and Applied Master's Degree Program's Effects

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Abstract

After the new education reform made in Turkey in 2012 under the leadership of the Minister of National Education Prof. Dr. Omer DINCER, considerable steps have been taken in training teachers who will work in the field of special education. According to Sari (2013), it is known that 48% of approximately 5580 teachers in 2468 special education institutions in Turkey are the graduates from special education departments and 52% of these teachers are the graduates from other departments. Turkey is urgently in need of the appointment of 22000 teachers graduating from the department of special education in 2014 and afterwards. Within the scope of this need in Turkey, one of the steps taken in order to train teachers having required competence in this field is the Applied Master's Degree Program (AMDP). It is a program, which was suggested to the Council of Higher Education by the Minister of National Education Prof. Dr. Omer Dincer, who was on duty between 2012 and 2013, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hakan Sari, the General Director of Special Education and Guidance Services of that period. It includes a total of 857-hour training and at least 4-semester compulsory education with a 196-hour learning practice in the field of special education, which is the first in Turkey. It is a program in which students are chosen among students graduated from the faculties providing education for teachers or among students having pedagogical formation (knowledge of teaching field) graduated from other faculties. As it is a program which is being applied for the first time in the world, it is necessary to introduce the practices carried out in special education institutions after completing the courses successfully and the tasks that students must perform within the process of practice, and to share its practicality in other countries. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to provide a basis to be able to apply this model in other countries by sharing the acquisitions of the program, which is being applied for the first time in Turkey in order to train qualified special education teachers in both institutional frame and implementation phase. In this research, 'Document Analysis' method was used. With this method, the research was completed by analyzing all admitted correspondences, written documents that would form a basis though 'Content Analysis Method'. Until now, most of the applied solutions to the case of teacher training in special education have caused concerns in terms of quality problems. It is believed that the special education teachers that graduate from AMDP will be able to continue their professions with a more qualified and sufficient capacity. This paper is just a sample template for the prospective authors of IISTE. Over the decades, the concepts of holons and holonic systems have been adopted in many research fields, but they are scarcely attempted on labour planning. A literature gap exists, thus motivating the author to come up with a holonic model that uses exponential smoothing to forecast some quantitative variables in labour-intensive production. These varying parameters include the machine utilisation that reflects the demand and the worker absenteeism and turnover that constitute the disturbance. Collective equations are formulated to periodically compute the number of workers required. For model validation purpose, twenty-four-month data analysis is conducted on a mock-up basis.

Keywords: teacher training, special education, applied master's degree program in special education, teacher education

1. Introduction

Social and economic development of a country and quality of its education are the subjects that are correlated in the conducted studies. When both sustainable development and qualified education are discussed, in meeting these needs the significance of the teacher training system is accepted by many countries. The innovations made in educational policies, investing in education and teacher training systems point to this significance (Sözen and Çabuk, 2013).

The most important component of an education system is certainly the teacher. A good teacher must have two main factors. The first one consists of qualifications including being skilled for the profession, being a sample that teaching requires, being a model and personal characteristics including being humanistic, faithful, directive, willing, ambitious and affectionate. The second one is the professional features including general knowledge, field knowledge, and knowledge of teaching profession. The qualifications in the first group can be considered to be selection criteria. The features in the second group are acquired within the education before profession and their continuity is maintained by the help of in service training (Bilir, 2011). It is accepted that the quality of a teacher becomes an important factor in school experiences of children and teenagers beginning from early childhood and

continuing during secondary education. This is because it is reported that the success rate of students whose teachers are inexperienced and do not have adequate qualifications decreases (Drame and Pugach, 2010). Basically, a qualified special education teacher must be sufficient in; (a) effective teaching methods, (b) competing behavioral problems, (c) planning and evaluating the teaching, (d) preparing and applying individualized education program (IEP), (e) cooperation with parents and experts, (f) materials and learning environment, (g) laws, (h) individual and professional development fields (Güleç-Aslan, Özbey, Sola-Özgüç, Cihan, 2014). When specially trained staff, specially arranged program, specially produced equipment, materials and environment which are thought to be the four important components of special education are taken into consideration, it is seen that this type of education requires expertise, that is professionalism, and it is a field including multi-purpose activities (Sarı, 2012). These activities are performed by the staff equipped with satisfying knowledge, emotions and skills. Although there is a considerable shortage of teachers in special education field, it is observed that some teachers working in special education field do not have the required education. Due to the difficulties experienced in special education, the requirements of focusing the attention on training teaching staff in this field and training teacher candidates who will work in this field by the teaching staff trained in special education field have been included among the decisions of the 18th National Education Council. However, most of these teachers were trained through in service training and a 160-hour certification program until 2012 (Coşkun and Boldan, 2014; the 18th Decision of National Education Council, 2010; Kök, 2002). It is emphasized that there is a need for studies in terms of both undergraduate education programs that teachers receive and the qualifications of teachers and other experts working in this field. In the research in which Aydın, Uysal, Doğan and Dökmeci (2007) compared the teacher training policies and processes being applied in Turkey with England and Norway, which are the members of The European Union, it was concluded that the dimensions of general knowledge and teaching practices within the processes of selecting students for the faculties and training teacher candidates in the faculties do not receive sufficient attention, and the significance and rates of general knowledge and teaching profession courses are not in accordance with each other. Kilimci (2006) comparatively investigated the primary school teaching programs in Germany, England, France and Turkey. Comments and suggestions were provided in the direction of the collected findings and it was concluded that it is necessary to reorganize primary school teaching programs in Turkish education system, which is in the process of membership to The European Union, and to regulate university entry requirements, content arrangements, school experiences and teaching practices. Vuran, Ergenekon and Ünlü (2014) report that there is a need for more qualified counseling in regard to teaching practices conducted in special education teacher training programs. In the study where the current program training teaching staff was evaluated, it has been found that disciplined, coordinated and cooperative implementation processes provide multi-faceted learning and teaching experiences for the implementing teaching-staff, implementing teaching staff candidates and teacher candidates. The study conducted by Ergül, Baydık and Demir (2013) with the participation of 160 special education teacher candidates and 107 special education teachers (52 of them were the graduates of special education teaching, 38 of them were special education teachers with a certification program and 17 special education teachers from other branches). The opinions of the participants about the effect of undergraduate special education programs on their competence in their field and their professional competence were studied. According to the results of the research, special education teachers who graduated from special education teaching programs think that they are more competent than the teachers in the other group and special education teacher candidates. However, the participants in this research reported that they continually wish to update their knowledge by underlining in-service training. Besides it was determined that the participants felt themselves incompetent in academic skills teaching, classroom management, teaching speaking and communication skills, the scope of autism and language skills. The results of the research conducted by Gözütok, Karacaoğlu and Akgü'nün (2005) with the participation of 60 teachers revealed that the perceptions of teachers about their professional competence were high in general, but observations showed that teachers possessed a lower level of competence. While the teachers participating in the research considered themselves competent in their profession, they had doubts about how competent they felt themselves in classroom applications. For example, teachers considered themselves competent in willingness to self-evaluate and follow professional developments most, however, it was determined that following the publications related to their field was the behavior observed at the lowest level. Additionally, the issue that teachers felt themselves least incompetent in assessment and evaluation indicates that they must receive training primarily on it. It was determined that the teachers were incompetent in supporting cooperation among students and compatibility of equipment with the visual design principles (color, shape, texture, pattern, size). The research done by Coşkun and Boldan (2014) to learn opinions of teachers on functionality of certification program for teaching individuals with mental retardation was conducted with 56 course attendees who volunteered to participate among a total of 141 course attendees. Based on the obtained research findings, the primary school teacher candidates for children with mental retardation stated that they preferred this program due to employment opportunities. It was determined that the opinions based on increasing the functionality of courses in the program focused on insufficiency of practice.

The shortage of special education teachers working in the field gave rise to provide solutions in the short run. It was observed that these short-term training programs affected the quality and the competence in the field in a

negative way (Sari, 2013). It is necessary to support the teachers working in special education through in-service training based on practice during their undergraduate education and after beginning to work. As, when it is considered that the teachers who are the graduates of other departments work in this field with short-term certification programs, the importance of this matter in terms of teaching children with special needs becomes apparent. Consequently, although there are inadequacies, this research aims sharing the content, applications and acquisitions of Applied Master's Degree Program, which provides institutional courses and practices for teachers before they begin to work in order to train largely needed qualified special education teachers and generalizing the program and training more qualified special education teachers.

2. Method

In this section, the research method of this study is presented in detail.

2. 1. Research Model

In this research, the available literature related to teacher training was searched. The attained written documents were examined by reading them separately and constructing themes with the key words. Therefore, the method of this research is "Document Analysis" method. This method involves the analysis of written materials including information about a fact or facts which are going to be examined (Fals Borda, 2011; Şimşek, 2009; Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Delgado-Gaitan, 1993; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

2. 2. Data Collection

In order to obtain research findings, all written documents related to the theories which have formed a basis for the idea of Applied Master's Degree Program in Special Education department, the reasons beyond this idea and implementation of the program were examined. For these documents, primarily the current correspondences of that period among the Minister of National Education, The General Director of Special Education and Guidance Services, Head Council of Education and Morality, The Council of Higher Education and other relevant organizations and mutual meetings were evaluated. Finally, the research was conducted by examining Council of Education and Morality decision numbered 9 in connection with the implementation of AMDP.

2. 3. Analysis of the Data

Based on the Document Analysis Method, the data in this research were analyzed by using 'Content Analysis' technique. The main purpose in content analysis was to obtain concepts and relationships that may explain the collected data. For this purpose, first of all, the collected data must be conceptualized. Then, the data must be organized according to the obtained concepts and themes explaining the data must be determined (Fals Borda, 2011; Şimşek, 2009; Charmaz, 2000; Denzin & Lincol, 2000; Gergen, & Gergen, 2000; Denzin, & Lincol, 1994).

3. Findings

In this part, the need for Applied Master's Degree Program (AMDP) and the information about the content and application of the program were involved.

3. 1. Applied Master's Degree Program and Its Content

Applied Master's Degree Program (AMDP) is included at Necmettin Erbakan University Institute of Education Sciences Department of Special Education. ANTMDP is a program consisting of an intensive course period for two semesters, intensive practice for one semester and also a 15-20 thousand word thesis research, lasting at least four semesters and graduating successful students with the title of Science Expert in Special Education. The candidates of ANTMDP complete the program by taking 42-credit and 857-hour courses in total and a 196-hour practicum in special education school, and this program enables their appointment as special education teachers by The Ministry of National Education.

Table 1: Courses Studied within the Applied Master's Degree Program

Course Code	Course Title	Theoretical	Applied	Credit
First Semester				
8306010073	Children with Special Needs and Special Education	3	0	3
8306010074	Identifying and Evaluating Individuals Needing Special Education	3	0	3
8306010075	Parent Education in Special Education	3	0	3
8306010076	Developing Individualized Education Programs for The Mentally Handicapped	3	0	3
8306010077	Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Special Education	3	0	3
8306010078	Legal Regulations and Organization Concerning People with Special Needs	3	0	3
Second Semester				
8306010079	Mainstreaming and Integration Education of Individuals with Mental Retardation	3	0	3
8306010080	Self-care, Daily Living and Social Skills Training for Mentally Retarded Children	2	2	3
8306010081	Applied Behavior Analysis	2	2	3
8306010082	Teaching Concepts and Skills to Individuals with Mental Retardation	2	2	3
8306010085	Teaching Material Designing and Developing for Individuals with Mental Retardation	2	2	3
	Teaching Academic Skills to Children with Mental Retardation	2	2	3
Total		31	13	42
Total Credits		42		

As it is seen in Table 1 given above, the courses providing general information on identifying special education, the necessity of special education and which people are included in special education are studied in the first semester of ANTMPD; and the courses consist of Children with Special Needs and Special Education, Identifying and Evaluating Individuals Needing Special Education, Parent Education in Special Education and Developing Individualized Education Programs for The Mentally Handicapped. Besides the courses titled Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Special Education, Legal Regulations and Organization with regard to People with Special Needs are studied.

In the second semester, the courses providing students more advanced skills and knowledge related to the field, preparing them for practice and helping students in developing the scientific frame that they acquire in the first semester are studied. Second semester courses include; Mainstreaming and Integration Education of Individuals with Mental Retardation, Self-care, Daily Living and Social Skills Training for Mentally Retarded Children, Applied Behavior Analysis, Teaching Concepts and Skills to Individuals with Mental Retardation, Teaching Material Designing and Developing for Individuals with Mental Retardation and Teaching Academic Skills to Children with Mental Retardation.

Table 2: Elective Courses that Students Choose in the Applied Master's Degree Program

Course Code	Course Title	Theoretical	Applied	Credit
8306010084	Elective: Sexual Education and Development in Children with Mental Disabilities	0	3	2
8306010085	Elective: Children with Autism and Their Education	0	3	2
8306010086	Elective: Speech Impairment and Adjustment	0	3	2

The elective courses that special education teacher candidates take in the Applied Master's Program are given in Table 2. Accordingly, the elective courses that students choose are ordered as follows.

1. Sexual Education and Development in Children with Mental Disabilities,
2. Children with Autism and Their Education
3. Speech Impairment and Adjustment

3. 2. Contents of Courses in the Applied Master's Degree Program

1. Children with Special Needs and Special Education

In this course, the issues including the classification of individuals with special needs and groups of disabilities, causes of disabilities, approaches applied in classification, the rate of individuals with special needs in the population, special education practices in the world and in Turkey are studied.

2. Identifying and Evaluating Individuals Needing Special Education

The content of this course consists of assessment and evaluation concepts in special education, the objectives of evaluation, and psychological, medical and educational evaluation approaches. Also the topics of educational and behavioral evaluation practices and interpreting, reporting evaluation data and using them in education, following and evaluating individualized education programs are included in the course content.

3. Parent Education in Special Education

The course titled parent education in special education includes characteristics of children with mental retardation and their parents, parental involvement and its significance, the adaption phases that parents experience, legal rights and responsibilities given to parents, parental involvement in the preparation of Individualized Education Program(IEP), teaching parents teaching skills, practicing and evaluating these skills.

4. Mainstreaming and Integration in Education

The topics in the content of this course include approaches of placement in special education, definition of mainstreaming, the concept of the most restrictive educational environment, mainstream and separate education, mainstreaming in legislation, types of mainstreaming, supportive special education services, duties-responsibilities of institutions and individuals in the process of mainstreaming.

5. Self-care, Daily Living and Social Skills Training for Mentally Retarded Children

The topics including the definition of daily living and social skills, daily living and social skills development in children, deciding on which daily living skills and social skills would be appropriate to teach children with mental retardation are studied in the content of this course. In addition, after the theoretical knowledge, students practice in educational institutions depending on instructions which are prepared in connection with the studies practicing, determine and use appropriate methods-techniques for students with mental retardation, and evaluate.

5. Applied Behavior Analysis

This course includes the history, the definition, the principles and the significance of applied behavior analysis, determining, defining, measuring, recording and evaluating the target behavior, principles of increasing/reducing behaviors and its processes, principles of teaching new behaviors and its processes. Types of reinforcement and their usage, preparing behavioral observation forms in educational institutions depending on instructions which are prepared in connection with practicing are involved in the content of this course. In addition to these, the issues of collecting necessary information based on practice in the field, preparing and applying behavior intervention plans for the target behavior, recording and assessment of the results and reporting the studies are also included in this course's content.

6. Teaching Concepts and Skills to Individuals with Mental Retardation

The content of this course includes definitions and characteristics of skills and concepts, the order of skills and concepts acquisition, preparing assessment tools, determining what students with mental retardation can do by applying assessment tools, goal writing based on performance level, use of different teaching techniques to achieve the goals related to the concepts. Besides this course involves the issues of planning and conducting a practice in educational institutions depending on instructions which are prepared in connection with practices.

7. Developing Individualized Education Programs

The content of this course consists of the components of the teaching program, what individualized education program (IED) is, where and by whom it is developed, evaluation of its legal basis and evaluation of students with mental retardation. In addition to these, this course involves the issues of setting and writing goals in the long and short run, determining special education and supportive services and evaluation of IED.

8. Teaching Material Designing and Developing for Individuals with Mental Retardation

In the content of this course, the key concepts related to the teaching technology, the qualifications of various teaching technologies, selection, evaluation and use of teaching materials for students with mental retardation are studied. Also, this course involves the issues of designing equipment and materials for the mentally retarded, planning sample applications, using teaching technologies and designing materials to teach concepts, using teaching technologies and designing materials to teach social skills and other skills.

9. Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Special Education

Science and key concepts, scientific methods and different opinions on these methods, problem, research model, data collection and data collection methods, recording, analyzing, interpreting and reporting data, preparing research proposal for students with mental retardation are the issues in the content of this course.

10. Legal Regulations and Organizations Concerning People with Special Needs

The students who are going to be special education teachers study the development of special education in the international and national legal regulations, the Constitution, The Statutory Decree on Special Education, regulations and circular letters in this course. Besides the issues concerning the factors affecting law improvement and enforcement, social and educational rights, the problems encountered in the enforcement of laws are studied in this course.

11. Teaching Academic Skills to Children with Mental Retardation I

In this course, the issues concerning the analyses in order to teach reading-writing, Turkish, Maths and other

academic skills to children with mental retardation, statement of student performances and goals, selection of appropriate teaching methods and techniques, preparation of teaching materials are studied. In addition to these, the activities to conduct a practice in educational institutions depending on instructions which have been prepared in connection with practices are included in this course.

12. Teaching Academic Skills to Children with Mental Retardation II

Preparing and implementing individualized and group teaching plans to teach academic skills to children with mental retardations, evaluating students before and after teaching, student involvement in activities, the activities on planning and conducting a practice in educational institutions depending on instructions which have been prepared in connection with practices are the target skills to teach students in this course.

13. Elective: Sexual Education and Development of Children with Mental Retardation

This course includes the issues concerning the development process of children with mental retardation, sexual development of these children and approaches explaining this process, the points to consider in sexual development process, adolescence period, and the changes observed in adolescence period, applications supporting sexual development in adolescence period.

14. Elective: Children with Autism and Their Education

This course includes the issues regarding children with a common developmental retardation, their characteristics in general, their classification, their diagnostic criteria, the tools used for diagnosing, educational evaluation, educational environments, the educational programs employed and teaching approaches.

15. Elective: Speech Impairment and Adjustment

The issues of individuals with language and speech impairments, types of speech impairments, characteristics of speech impairments, diagnosing speech impairments, methods and techniques employed in adjustment of speech impairments, instruments, experts in charge and cooperation are included in this course.

3. 3. The Purposes of the Applied Master's Degree Program

The decisions taken in the scope of "New Reforms in Education" made under the leadership of the Ministry of National Education and the Minister of that period Honorable Professor Doctor Ömer DİNÇER in 2012 in order to increase the quality of teacher training, and radical movements have started many new movements in special education. One of these movements is its effect on teacher training issue. The innovations in special education which began in that period in this context started with the appointment of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hakan SARI, who has been working in the field of special education since 1988 and is an academician. This step has been framed in a new movement with the support of the Honorable Minister; to train special education teachers has two objectives. These objectives are;

1. Putting an end to special education teachers training through short-term courses that graduates teachers not having sufficient competence in the field,
2. Changing the 540-hour program which was applied previously and did not include practice in special education institutions into an applied program by improving it.

Within this framework, through the instruction given by the Honorable Minister of that period, an intensive study was conducted in cooperation with The Head Council of Education and Morality on determining the teacher training courses which would be provided for students selected among those having a Bachelor's degree to work as special education teachers. Besides, a report was prepared as a result of the comparison of Special Education Undergraduate Program with other teaching programs. In the light of this report, the emphasis focused on seven domains of basic skills. These seven domains of basic skills include;

1. General Special Education,
2. Teaching academic skills,
3. Teaching daily living skills,
4. Parent education and Parent Condition,
5. Adaptation of the program,
6. Developing, applying and evaluating IEP,
7. Use of technology and materials.

3. 4. Applied Master's Degree Program Stages for the Student Teachers in the Special Schools

Their activities applied in the schools are written week by week in the development chart and given to the students and the schools which requests what the expectations from the students during their practice are before they go to schools. In addition to this the evaluation forms for the students through the guide teachers in the schools are sent the schools. The school practices with the help of supervisors from the department in the university and guiding teachers are completed in terms of the designated activities.

In the scope of AMDP, according to the activities implemented week by week, in the first week, students meet with teachers and the school management, they get information about the class and the school, they make a plan with the supervising lecturer and guiding teacher to the intended weeks.

In the second week, especially evaluating individual and group plans to the general status of students, reporting by observing student-teacher and student-student interactions and the activities that issues dominated on observing teachers are located in his week.

In the third week, the determination of the student will be worked the next week is completed and the rough assessment about student's concept skills are taken, performance-based IEP is prepared, individual education plan (BOP) is prepared, teaching plan for group activities is prepared and it is discussed with the practice teacher for the next activity and preparations are completed.

In the week that the applications become more active, the results of the concept plan that is prepared before are reported. Individualized Training Plan related to reading and writing skills is prepared by applying about rough assessment form. The problem behaviors are recorded via observation. Teaching plan related to group activities is prepared and adapted. The family interview form is applied prepared in the previous week.

Read-write instruction plan was prepared in advance, the concept teaching plan and group teaching plans are the activities that implemented in the fourth week. Moreover the frequency of the undesirable behavior is determined by determining among the students' behaviors observed in the class. The results are reported by applying the designated teaching programs in the sixth week like the previous weeks. The information of the frequency of unwanted behavior is shown on a chart and ABC registration form is applied. The analysis of needs is done by reporting the results of the family interview form and accordingly a program is prepared. Teaching plans to the designated subjects are applied in the seventh week. In addition, behavior correction plan is prepared according to the results of the unwanted behavior analysis.

From the eight week also including the thirteenth week, besides the conducted teaching program (concept, read-write and group activities), family teaching program is applied. Next week's preparations are made. In the last week that is the fourteenth week, the application is ended by making the overall assessment.

3.5. Admission Process of the Applied Master's Degree Program

This report prepared as a result of intensive studies of Head Council of Education and Morality and The General Director of Special Education was presented to the Prime Minister. The Honorable Minister requested to contact with The Council of Higher Education Chairmanship and to examine the program. In consequence of the effective and intensive studies of Honorable General Director Mr. SARI and Honorable Professor Doctor Şaban ÇALIŞ, who was charged by The Council of Higher Education Chairman, the decisions related to the institutional courses and the content of the applications were taken. Afterwards The General Director informed The Rector of Necmettin Erbakan University Prof. Dr. M. ŞEKER. The admission of the program, which is being applied at present, has been approved by the Council of Higher Education and preparations for the implementation phase started. Two admission conditions were accepted in the first year. These were; (1) being a graduate of Faculty of Education, (2) ranking individuals having pedagogical formations by undergraduate transcript (mark) averages. The program started with 60 students in the first year and continued in the second year with the admission of 60 students. Within this context, the decision numbered 9 for the appointment of Master's degree and Master's Degree Program graduates has been attached according to The Council of Education and Morality decision numbered 80. According to this decision;

"Provisional Article 6 – (1) in case of not meeting the need for teachers in the field of Special Education among graduates of higher education programs, individuals, who are the graduates of teaching departments and graduate from thesis/master's degree or doctorate programs in special education are appointed" statement is involved.

With this program, our students attended a 196-hour practice in special education school in their third semester. In the process of practice, they completed their 15-20 thousand –word theses and began to graduate successfully.

4. Results and Implications for Practice

Undoubtedly, education is very important for each individual. When its deep effect on individuals and significance are taken into consideration, the teachers in special education field must also be equipped and qualified. Especially, in the field of special education to know that each individual is special and should get training the extent of his performance and to apply it can be possible when it is supported with sufficient training. The person who would provide this is the special education teacher.

However, Applied Graduate Program has provided an important solution in the current system, as a result of in-depth investigation of problems and expectations in the field about training special education teacher. While producing solutions to the matter of special education teacher training with short-term programs, delicate issues have become unbalanced. However, AMDP has offered a more qualified and satisfying program including the opportunity of practice in order to solve the teacher shortage problem in special education in Turkey and has graduated students successfully.

In the light of this productive and nice experience obtained in special education teacher training by the

help of AMDP, this program can be suggested for developing countries as an applicable program. Additionally, the practice in this program can be spread into two semesters, not only one. Again, hours of some courses depending on practice, such as Applied Behavior Analysis, can be increased and it is possible to offer it to study as an applied course. In addition to increasing hours of Parent Education course, it can be studied as an applied course too.

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