

THE JOURNEY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS WORKING WITH  
REFUGEE CHILDREN: THEIR EXPERIENCES, STRENGTHS, AND NEEDS

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GÖZDENUR IŞIKCI

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the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Elementary and Early Childhood  
Education, Early Childhood Education, the Graduate School of Social  
Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Sadettin KİRAZCI  
Dean  
Graduate School of Social Sciences

---

Prof. Dr. Feyza TANTEKİN ERDEN  
Head of Department  
Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education

---

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hasibe Özlen DEMİRCAN  
Supervisor  
Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education

---

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif KARSLI ÇALAMAK  
Co-Supervisor  
University of South Carolina  
Department of Teacher Education

---

**Examining Committee Members:**

Prof. Dr. Feyza TANTEKİN ERDEN (Head of the Examining Committee)  
Middle East Technical University  
Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education

---

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hasibe Özlen DEMİRCAN  
(Supervisor)  
Middle East Technical University  
Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education

---

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Serap SEVİMLİ ÇELİK  
Middle East Technical University  
Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education

---

Assist. Prof. Dr. Fatma YALÇIN  
TED University  
Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education

---

Assist. Prof. Dr. Belkıs TEKMEN  
Başkent University  
Department of Preschool Teaching

---



**I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.**

**Name, Last Name:** Gözdenur IŞIKCI

**Signature:**

## ABSTRACT

### THE JOURNEY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS WORKING WITH REFUGEE CHILDREN: THEIR EXPERIENCES, STRENGTHS, AND NEEDS

IŞIKCI, Gözdenur

Ph.D., The Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Early  
Childhood Education

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hasibe Özlen DEMİRCAN

Co-supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif KARSLI ÇALAMAK

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The present study aims to investigate the journey of early childhood teachers working with refugee children regarding their experiences, strengths and needs over the years. Besides, this study investigates the perceptions of educators regarding Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). Employing a phenomenological research approach, qualitative data was collected from 14 early childhood teachers. These teachers are actively engaged in the field, working with refugee children for a minimum of three years, and at least one refugee child is present in their classroom. The research methodology involves a Three-Interview Series. During the first interview, a semi-structured format is employed to elicit essential demographic and background information from the participants. In the second interview, metaphor cards were utilized to understand teachers' experiences, strengths and needs over the year. The third interview was conducted via Educational Journey Mapping as a data collection tool to summarize the process. After coding the data inductively, the findings revealed six major themes explaining teachers' experiences. These themes are *Teachers' Cultural Competency*, *Cultural Diversity in Curriculum*,

*Communication Process with Refugee Children, Building Partnership with Refugee Parents, Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children and Professional Competencies and Development.* To explain teachers' needs and strengths, two themes were identified: *Teachers' Strengths Over the Years* and *Teachers' Needs Over the Years*. Under each theme, teachers' previous and current experiences, strengths and needs and the change in these aspects were identified. Finally, two themes emerged to identify teachers' perceptions of CRT: *Teachers' Initial Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching* and *Last Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching*. The study yielded a few implications for teachers, teacher education programs, and policymakers.

**Keywords:** Preschool Teachers' Experiences, Preschool Teachers' Strengths, Preschool Teachers' Needs, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Education of Refugee Children

## ÖZ

### MÜLTECİ ÇOCUKLARLA ÇALIŞAN OKUL ÖNCESİ ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN YOLCULUĞU: DENEYİMLERİ, GÜÇLÜ YÖNLERİ VE İHTİYAÇLARI

IŞIKCI, Gözdenur

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Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Hasibe Özlen DEMİRCAN

Ortak Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Elif KARSLI ÇALAMAK

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, mülteci çocuklarla çalışan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin yıllar içindeki deneyimlerini, güçlü yönlerini ve ihtiyaçlarını incelemektir. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin Kültüre Duyarlı Öğretime ilişkin algıları da incelenmiştir. Fenomenolojik çalışma kullanılmış ve nitel veriler 14 erken çocukluk öğretmeninden Üçlü Görüşme Serisi aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Katılımcılar, en az üç yıldır mülteci çocuklarla çalışan ve sınıfında en az bir mülteci çocuk bulunan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinden oluşmaktadır. İlk görüşmede, katılımcıların demografik bilgilerini anlamak için yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. İkinci görüşmede öğretmenlerin yıllar içindeki deneyimlerini, güçlü yönlerini ve ihtiyaçlarını anlamak için metafor kartları kullanılmıştır. Üçüncü görüşmede ise süreci özetlemek için veri toplama aracı olarak “Eğitim Yolculuğu Haritalaması” kullanılmıştır. Veriler tümevarımsal olarak kodlanmıştır. Bulgular, öğretmenlerin deneyimlerini açıklayan altı ana temayı ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu temalar; *Öğretmenlerin Kültürel Yeterliliği*, *Müfredatta Kültürel Çeşitlilik*, *Mülteci Çocuklarla İletişim Süreci*, *Mülteci Ebeveynlerle Ortaklık Kurma*, *Yerel ve Mülteci Çocuklar Arasındaki İlişki* ve



*Mesleki Yeterlilikler ve Gelişimdir.* Öğretmenlerin ihtiyaçlarını ve güçlü yönlerini açıklamak için ise iki tema belirlenmiştir: *Öğretmenlerin Yıllar Boyunca Güçlü Yönleri ve Öğretmenlerin Yıllar Boyunca İhtiyaçları.* Her tema altında, öğretmenlerin önceki ve mevcut deneyimleri, güçlü yönleri ve ihtiyaçları ile bu yönlerdeki değişim ele alınmıştır. Son olarak, Öğretmenlerin Kültüre Duyarlı Öğretime ilişkin algılarını belirlemek için Öğretmenlerin *Kültüre Duyarlı Öğretime İlişkin İlk Algıları ve Kültüre Duyarlı Öğretime İlişkin Son Algıları* olmak üzere iki tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışma sonunda öğretmenler, öğretmen eğitimi programları ve politikacılar için bazı öneriler sunulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Deneyimleri, Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Güçlü Yönleri, Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin İhtiyaçları, Kültüre Duyarlı Öğretim, Mülteci Çocukların Eğitimi

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRT	Culturally Responsive Teaching
EJM	Educational Journey Mapping
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
NAEYC	National Association of Education for Young Children
PICTES	Project for Integrating Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System
TEC	Temporary Education Center
UNHCR	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, phenomena such as fears of persecution, globalization, employment opportunities, geopolitical conflicts, and warfare have catalyzed significant migration flows across international borders (Dubey & Mallah, 2015). As conceptualized by Kok (1999), migration entails the crossing of geographical boundaries for resettlement; or alternatively, the permanent relocation of individuals or communities to new locales. Lee (1966) also argues that migration refers to permanent or semipermanent residence relocation. Turkish Language Association Dictionary defines migration as “the movement of individuals or communities from one country to another country, from one settlement to another settlement for economic, social and political reasons.” Migration has long been recognized as a significant economic and social phenomenon, shaping human history across the globe (Massey et al., 1993). It is driven by a confluence of economic, social, and political factors, compelling communities to relocate in pursuit of improved living conditions or in response to societal and political strife (Barışık, 2020).

In the literature, there are many categories or types of migrations depending on their legal status, duration, or borders. For example, migration can happen inside or outside the borders of the country of origin. While internal migration refers to individuals’ changing their living environment within the borders of a country for more than one year, individuals move to another country to change their living environment in external migration (Kırdar & Saraçoğlu, 2012). On the other hand, types of migration, whether legal or not, are also defined by policies. These types of migration are listed as legal/regular, unauthorized/irregular, and refugee migrations. According to Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection enacted by Türkiye, legal migration refers to the foreigners’ legal entry into, stay in and exit from Türkiye. On the other hand, unauthorized migration is accepted as the

foreigners' illegal entry into, stay in, and exit from Türkiye and their unauthorized work in Türkiye. The third type of migration is refugee migration. In daily conversations, the refugee concept is used to identify individuals who run away from conflicts, wars, natural disaster, or food shortage in their country of origin (Barışık, 2020). Indeed, refugees are the ones who are exposed to forced migration due to specific and real fear and whose lives are under threat in their own country. In this regard, refugee migration is the movement of individuals or small groups who experience conflict with the country's political figures or authority into another country (Barışık, 2020). Refugee migrations are among the factors that make the social structure increasingly multicultural. This multicultural structure affects many areas, from education to health, from policy practices to demographic structure. Therefore, this study focuses on teachers' journey in terms of their experiences, strengths and needs while working with refugee children<sup>1</sup> in the Turkish context.

Throughout its history, it can be stated that Türkiye has been one of the hosting countries for migrants and refugees for decades due to its geopolitical position (Akyıldız, 2022). Akyıldız (2022) argued that both internal and external migrations have shaped the demographic characteristics of Türkiye. For example, Türkiye has eight neighboring countries. It means that any migration wave in neighboring countries has potential to make Türkiye a transit and destination country. Examples of this potential in the history of migration are the Türkiye-Greece exchange migration, migration from the Balkans, forced migration movements from Germany, migrants from Iraq and Iran for political reasons, and finally migration movements from Syria and Afghanistan (Akyıldız, 2022). Specifically, migration waves from Syria since 2011 have been evaluated as the most common problem of the last decades (Keskin & Yanarışık, 2021).

In 2011, an internal conflict has broken out in Syria. Soon after, this conflict turned into war and resulted in the migration of thousands of Syrians into Türkiye. Türkiye adopted an "open door policy" for the Syrian people. It means that Türkiye prioritized humanitarian values and accepted everyone who reached the border in the first years of the crisis (Bayır & Aksu, 2020). Both this policy and the geopolitical

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<sup>1</sup> In the current study, refugee children refers to children under temporary protection in Turkey.



position of Türkiye made it a transit and destination country for Syrian and other migrants and refugees. Today, in 2024, there are more than three million foreigners who came from Syria, Afghanistan, and other countries living in Türkiye for migration purposes. This number includes Syrians under temporary protection, those with a residence permit and those under international protection. In terms of regular immigration, in the official statement made by Turkish Minister of Internal Affairs Ali Yerlikaya on December 5, 2023, regular immigration data was expressed as follows:

*"The number of Syrians under temporary protection: 3 million 237 thousand 585. Those staying with a residence permit: 1 million 113 thousand 761. Those staying under international protection are 262 thousand 638. In other words, there are a total of 4 million 613 thousand 984 regular immigrants in our country."*

On the other hand, according to data from the Presidency of Migration Management, as of February 22, 2024, the number of foreigners in our country with a residence permit is 1,114,307. Of these, 79,854 are Syrian and 42,103 are Afghan nationals, while the others are citizens of countries such as Russia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan. When we consider this high number of migrants and refugees, Türkiye has been facing social transformation in every field of society (Akın & Bozbaş, 2020). Specifically, in recent decade, the biggest wave of migration has been from Syria to Türkiye. Therefore, social, and cultural structure have been diversifying due to this wave.

In the first place, Syrian refugees were accepted as guests. Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) was assigned to manage, coordinate, and organize shelter centers in border cities of Türkiye for the accommodation of refugees in 2011. To identify acceptance guidance of refugees, the "Directive on the Acceptance and Accommodation of Syrian Arab Republic Citizens Arriving to Türkiye for Mass Asylum Purposes and Stateless Individuals Residing in the Syrian Arab Republic" was released in 2012. Afterwards, the Law on Foreigners, and International Protection (YUKK) was issued in 2013 and the Presidency of Migration Management was established. In later years, it was generally accepted that Syrian

refugees have become permanent in the country (Akın & Bozbaşı, 2020). This situation requires rearranging policies and regulations in society for the adaptation and integration of refugees. These regulations also arose from the needs of refugees coming to our country. Even though basic needs such as shelter and nutrition come first, it has become imperative to meet the educational needs of refugee children who are considered not to be guests in our country. For this reason, it is accepted that the most important of the policies developed in this sense is in the field of education (Güneş, 2020).

### **1.1. Migration and Education**

Education serves as a potent means to facilitate refugee children's adaptation process in a new cultural environment when it fosters equality and inclusivity. According to the Presidency of Migration Management, the majority of Syrian immigrant children are school-age children. Some of these refugee children might attend school with their past traumas and disadvantages. Therefore, the school environment should be accepted as a place that heals traumas and builds trust (Charles & Denman, 2013). The schooling of refugee children also prevents lost generations (Gencer, 2017). Besides, some refugee children might experience problems while adapting to a new language, society, and culture. Education helps refugee children cope with their traumas and adapt to the host country's society (Kaya, 2019). In this regard, Türkiye made some regulations for the education of refugee children. First of all, education was provided by humanitarian organizations between 2011-2013. In 2013, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) enacted Education and Training Services for Foreigners and Temporary Education Centers (TECs) were established. The main aim of these centers was to prevent the loss of the years in terms of education when refugees return to their own countries. After releasing Law No.6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, international students had a right to enroll in their new schools after recognition procedures in accordance with their diplomas and education. In 2016, the integration process of refugees into the school context became the main issue to cope with prejudice and discrimination. The Project for Integrating Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System (PICTES) was started to support refugee children's access to education and enhance their adaptation and

integration process. Finally, TECs were shut down by a decision made in an official notice titled “Foreign Students” (MoNE, 2017). All these regulations, policies and notices are important to meet the educational needs of refugee children. It also resulted in increasing refugee children in the classroom environment. Therefore, it became inevitable to consider teachers as one of the critical stakeholders in the education of refugee children.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Global Education Strategy stressed that teachers are more important than other factors in the teaching and learning process. Besides, the increasing number of refugee children in the classroom has expanded the roles and responsibilities of teachers in Türkiye (Demir-Başaran, 2021). Teachers have been expected to provide continuity and normality by meeting refugee children’s physical, social and cognitive needs (Kirk & Winthrop, 2007). According to Szente et al. (2006), one of the crucial responsibilities of teachers has become to help refugee children cope with their traumas and build healthy teacher-child relationships. On the other hand, teachers are required to work with refugee parents to build a sense of trust (Manonye, 2012). Finally, the role of teachers has been changed to support the healing and integration process of refugee children. All these responsibilities and roles yielded the idea that teachers’ relationships and interactions with refugee children are as important as educational policies.

These new roles and responsibilities also led to new teaching experiences with refugee children and families and changed classroom dynamics for teachers. Conducted studies yielded that teachers’ new experiences are related to their instructional techniques for diverse groups and their communication process with refugee children. To begin with the communication process, İçduygu and Şimşek (2016) stated that the most challenging experiences of teachers are derived from the language barrier which creates problems in the teaching and learning process. In Günek’s (2020) study conducted with preschool teachers, participants stated that communication-related problems prevented them from implementing the preschool education curriculum. Özoruç and Dikici-Sığirtmaç (2022) also investigate preschool teachers’ challenges in working with refugee children. Their study concluded that the

language barrier is the major problem teachers face when teaching refugee children. These challenging experiences forced teachers to find new solutions, methods, and techniques to overcome the language barrier. For example, some teachers used body language or translation programs to communicate with refugee children (Özoruç & Dikici-Sığırtmaç, 2022) while some teachers got support from bilingual school staff or students (Özer-Aytekin & Sönmez-Ektem, 2019).

Secondly, teachers had to adapt their instructional techniques to meet the educational needs of refugee children. They had to adjust their education programs and teaching techniques for children's adaptation and language learning. For example, preschool teachers more often used play-based activities and songs to enhance refugee children's Turkish comprehension (Yanık-Özger & Akansel, 2019). Besides, some teachers designed culturally reflexive strategies to empower refugee children (Lunneblad, 2017) while other teachers used read-aloud activities to promote peer connection between refugee and local children (Rizzuto & Steiner, 2022). These studies show teachers' experiences dealing with the special challenges and needs that refugee students bring to school. These new experiences created new challenges for teachers.

Another new experience of teachers is related to refugee families. Teachers' work with refugee families has different dynamics compared to their work with local families. Most refugee families have limited or no knowledge of the language of the country of residence. According to Kovacevic et al. (2018), the process of refugee families adapting to the country's new environment, culture, and laws brings some confusion. Even if refugee families want to support their children's education and communicate with the teacher, they face language barriers or do not know how to establish cooperation (Kovacevic et al., 2018). In this situation, teachers acquire new experiences with refugee parents. First of all, they must find new ways to build partnerships with refugee families in this context. According to Gay (2002), this partnership between teachers and refugee parents affects children's academic achievement. It is also associated with refugee children's social and emotional development (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Secondly, refugee families' funds of knowledge plays a critical role in building partnership between two stakeholders.

According to Hedges (2007), funds of knowledge constitutes informal learning chances for children. It includes information, skills, knowledge, strategies, way of thinking and learning related to families' household. Besides, cultural characteristics such as language, traditions, customs, and value of education construct families' unique funds of knowledge (Riojas-Cortez, 2001). Hedges (2007) emphasized that teachers should evaluate funds of knowledge as a framework to be able to focus on children's interest in daily activities. These interests are formed in children's families and cultures (Hedges et al., 2010). Besides, funds of knowledge provides curriculum opportunities for children by organizing learning opportunities around their interest and culture (Moll et al., 1992). Therefore, for the integration and education of refugee children, it is not enough to focus only on teachers' experiences with these children. Teachers' new experiences with refugee families and how teachers utilize families' funds of knowledge should be emphasized.

Thirdly, as classroom structures have become multicultural, re-examining educational pedagogies and teacher education programs have become necessary (Alberton-Gunn et al., 2015). Therefore, teachers have encountered new educational programs and pedagogies that can integrate the culture of refugee children in parallel with developmentally appropriate practices. Because child-centered preschool education programs require that the teaching process does not refer to only providing knowledge to children with various instructional methods but also considering the whole child and his/her family with their socio-cultural backgrounds. In this sense, Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is a pedagogical approach that makes the learning process of diverse students more meaningful and effective when teachers integrate children's cultural references and life experiences into education (Gay, 2010). It is a child-centered approach, and teachers are expected to use cultural references by considering children's funds of knowledge and home-environment (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Children can empower their characteristics, power, attitudes, and capabilities when teachers implement culturally responsive teaching practices. For teachers to implement culturally responsive practices, their perceptions towards CRT plays a role. Perception is defined as being aware of, understanding or knowing something (Davis, 2022). According to Grant (2023), teachers perceptions regarding CRT are highly critical to stimulate their culturally responsive practices. In

addition, teachers' perceptions of CRT have potential to influence their teaching strategies while working with diverse groups (Matthews & Lopez, 2019). For example, in a study by Bonner et al. (2018), it was concluded that teachers with positive perceptions of CRT positively affected their students' learning outcomes. Davis (2022) argues that this situation might have resulted from the fact that when teachers have positive perceptions of CRT, they can comprehend insufficient parts of instruction and curriculum which are not culturally responsive. Therefore, while focusing on teachers' new experiences in the last decades, it is also important to take into account their perceptions of CRT because these perceptions are related to CRT practices that can make the learning process effective for teachers and refugee children.

These new roles and expectations of teachers have led to new needs for teachers in many refugee-hosting countries. While the education of refugee children is a new challenge for teachers in the Turkish context due to the ongoing influx of refugees since 2011, it is also a global issue. For example, a study conducted in the United Kingdom yielded that teachers who have not faced refugee children before needed knowledge and skills in this sense (Richardson et al., 2018). Besides, in another study conducted in the United Arab Emirates, Jalbout and Bullard (2021) stressed that training teachers in the refugee context requires practical and theoretical attention. However, according to Richardson et al. (2018), only a few countries put the training of teachers on their agenda. Conducted studies on the needs of teachers in working with refugee children yielded those teachers needed education about refugee children's cultural and social background (Mogli et al., 2020) and multicultural experiences during preservice years (Tanış & Özgün, 2022; Leavy, 2005). On the other hand, as mentioned before, language is still the main problem for teachers therefore teachers explained their needs for a bilingual assistant teacher (Shriberg et al., 2010), and new language training in preservice programs (Özel & Erdur-Baker, 2023).

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Although teachers in Türkiye have been acquiring new experiences such as teaching refugee children and working with refugee parents since 2011 and there has been a

growing number of refugees in classrooms, it seems that policies in most of the hosting countries are not sufficient to provide quality in-service and pre-service training and support system for teachers for many years before the start of the conflict in Syria (Mcbrien, 2005). Instead, teachers had to learn from their personal experiences with refugee children and parents (Mcbrien, 2005). Specifically, in the Turkish context, this has been on the agenda since 2011. Especially after enacting Law No.6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, refugee children started to enroll in public schools to be trained with their local friends. Therefore, teachers began to encounter refugee children in their classrooms every year. This situation provides them with continuous experience each year. According to Beard and Wilson (2013), learning and experience are not separated from each other. This means that each experience teachers gain every year contributes to their teaching practices with refugee children and families. For example, preschool teachers narrated that their past experiences changed their intercultural sensitivity throughout the year (Strekaloca-Hughesa & Wangb, 2017). So, it can be evaluated that this situation led teachers to find themselves on a journey of education for refugee children. According to Kottler and Kottler (2012), teachers' journey refers to their continuous learning process, not just acquiring knowledge in their subject area or grade level but acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to become more professional. It was also stressed that in teachers' journeys, teachers make developmental progressions because they gain even a little bit of skills, knowledge, and experiences, but they also encounter many challenges to overcome. In addition, based on Dewey's theory of the experiential continuum (Dewey, 1938), teachers learn from their previous experiences and shaped their future experiences.

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

The present study aims to investigate the journey of early childhood teachers in terms of their experiences, strengths, and needs while working with refugee children throughout the years. As the second purpose, this study investigates teachers' perceptions about Culturally Responsive Teaching. Within the context of this study, the journey represents a process that shows how teachers navigate through all the positive and negative experiences while working with refugee children and families,

and how their strengths and needs were shaped throughout the years accordingly. The current study accepts teaching experience as teachers' practices while working with refugee children and their parents. Participant teachers were expected to convey their experiences, strengths, and needs; therefore, teachers who had at least three years or more of experience were selected for the scope of this study. To reach the purpose of this study, the following research questions were investigated:

1. How do early childhood teachers describe their teaching experiences<sup>2</sup> with refugee children?
  - a. What are the previous teaching experiences of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - b. What are the current teaching experiences of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - c. If there is change, in what ways have teachers' teaching practices changed?
2. How do early childhood teachers describe their strengths and needs in working with refugee children?
  - a. What are the previous strengths and needs of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - b. What are the current strengths and needs of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - c. If there is change, in what ways have teachers' strengths and needs changed?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers who have experience in working with refugee children about culturally responsive teaching?

#### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

Refugee children are a part of the education system at all levels of education, from preschool to high school. This situation has made teachers, the other stakeholders of education, the focal point of the studies. In this regard, the current study is designed

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<sup>2</sup> For the current study, experiences of teachers cover teachers' practices while teaching refugee children and working with refugee parents.



to investigate the journey of early childhood teachers in terms of their experiences, strengths, and needs while working with refugee children throughout the years. This study has some significance for the literature.

First of all, numerous studies have demonstrated the teachers' experiences in the education of refugee children (Erden, 2017; Gömleksiz & Aslan, 2018; Şahin & Doğan, 2018; Kılıç-Özmen, 2020; Günek, 2020). These studies have mostly focused on the experiences of primary school teachers and teachers of subjects such as science or mathematics. Nevertheless, preschool education has unique curriculum, assessment methods, teaching strategies, and age group. It provides play-based learning and support children's holistic development. Therefore, preschool teachers are expected to have different experiences when working with refugees. Reviewed literature showed that several studies conducted on the sample of early childhood teachers while working with refugee preschoolers (Günek, 2020; Mercan-Uzun & Bütün, 2016; Özoruç & Dikici-Sığırtmaç, 2022; Gerokosta, 2017; Megalonidou & Vitoulis, 2022). However, these researchers focused on the challenges of early childhood teachers in the teaching process. For example, Günek (2020) aimed to identify difficulties experienced by preschool teachers working with refugee children. Similarly, Özoruç and Dikici-Sığırtmaç (2022) designed a study to investigate problems experienced by preschool teachers in teaching refugee children. In Gerokosta's (2017) study, preschool teachers' views on the integration of refugee children were investigated, and teachers identified some challenges. However, the current study was not limited to the challenges faced by the teachers but aimed to reveal all the teachers' positive/negative experiences, needs, and strengths. Moreover, the decision to initiate the current study with preschool educators holds significance, as the process of integrating refugee children into the educational system and broader society often commences within preschool settings (Gerokosta, 2017). By focusing on this particular demographic, the study aims to capture firsthand insights from the frontline individuals who engage with refugee children at the earliest stages of their educational journey. This approach facilitates the identification of actionable strategies to enhance teaching methodologies, reinforce existing competencies, cater to specific needs, and facilitate the seamless integration of refugee children into educational environments.

On the other hand, the studies on preschool teachers' experiences focused on over a limited period of time and did not emphasize how and under what conditions the nature of teachers' experiences changed over time (Güneş, 2020; Mercan-Uzun & Bütün, 2016; Özoruç & Dikici-Sığırtmaç, 2022; Gerokosta, 2017; Megalonidou & Vitoulis, 2022). The current study focuses on teachers' journeys over the years while working with refugee children. It provides historical and current data about teachers' experiences, needs and strengths by depicting a 13-year situation. Therefore, this study is valuable in revealing the change in teachers' experiences and the factors affecting change.

Furthermore, the influx of refugees began in 2011, with the subsequent granting of enrollment rights in public schools occurring several years later. By 2024, it is probable that kindergarten students of refugee backgrounds have been born and raised within Türkiye. This demographic shift implies a transformation in the profiles of refugee children encountered by educators over time. Whereas initially, teachers probably engaged with refugee children who had fled conflict zones, lacked proficiency in Turkish, and were deeply impacted by war in first years of the migration waves, the current landscape sees them instructing a cohort of refugee children born and bred in Türkiye. This may lead to a differentiation in teachers' needs over the years. Therefore, in addition to the abovementioned studies, the current study focused on teachers' needs while working with refugee children over the years. Investigating the needs of teachers in the process can improve education quality by ensuring that these needs are met. Besides, the data from the current study will provide a needs analysis on teacher competencies and working with refugee children. In this way, in-service and pre-service training programs that may be prepared in line with the needs of teachers can help minimize the negative experiences of teachers.

On the other hand, another focal point of this study is to investigate teachers' strengths over the years. While working with refugee children, teachers used or acquired some competencies to overcome difficulties or empower their teaching practices. For example, creating a safe and healthy environment and interacting with refugee children were found to be critical competencies of teachers of refugees

(Namro, 2016). Another study (Biasutti et al., 2020) concluded that creativity was one of the teachers' challenges because they had to find creative ways to empower social interaction in the classroom. These studies related to teachers' strength in working with refugee children generally focused on the context of foreign countries. Each country has different teacher training programs, different agendas in promoting teachers' professional development and different educational context for refugee children. Therefore, teachers' strengths might change based on the context. When I reviewed the literature, I could not find any study focusing on the previous and current strengths of early childhood teachers working with refugee children in the Turkish context, to the author's knowledge. The prevailing research in Türkiye predominantly examines the challenges, experiences, and requirements encountered by teachers in this context. Nonetheless, elucidating the strengths of educators holds intrinsic value in nurturing and augmenting their proficiencies and competencies. These identified strengths can also play a role in shaping teacher education programs. Courses or educational outcomes can be determined to support these strengths of teachers who will work in diverse contexts such as the refugee context.

Fourthly, another critical point is that this study will reflect the experiences, strengths and needs of preschool teachers in the regions where this study was conducted. Although there are studies on teachers' experiences with refugee children in the literature (Erden, 2017; Gömleksiz & Aslan, 2018; Şahin & Doğan, 2018; Kılıç-Özmen, 2020), the region where each study was conducted reflects a different socio-cultural situation. The diversity of differences in the classroom also affects teachers' practices, experiences, strengths, and needs. The current study was conducted in schools in the four of the most immigrant-receiving districts of Istanbul province. According to data from the Presidency of Migration Management, these districts, namely Sultanbeyli, Pendik, Çekmeköy, and Sancaktepe, reflected the highest number of people under temporary protection. Besides, İstanbul is one of the cities which is affected most by external and internal migration. Therefore, reflecting on the experiences, strengths, and needs of preschool teachers in these districts would be valuable.

This study employed two unconventional data collection techniques: metaphor cards and Educational Journey Mappings, which are infrequently utilized in the literature

but have demonstrated efficacy in generating rich and insightful data. It is posited that verbal articulation alone may not always suffice in effectively conveying complex experiences. Participants may not express their narratives in detail, especially when the research topic is hard-to-discuss or sensitive. In these situations, other techniques, rather than verbal interviews, are found to be useful. One is metaphor cards researchers have used in educational settings in recent years (Karnielli-Miller, 2017). These cards are used to enhance communication and encourage participants' expression. In the current study, teachers used metaphor cards to express their changing experiences, strengths and needs over the years. They narrated their stories by showing metaphor cards one by one. This technique provided more participatory method for them. On the other hand, I used Educational Journey Mapping (EJM) which is another data collection technique. Through EJM, participants were able to represent various dimensions of their experiences by drawing their years of teaching refugee children. Since the topic of the current study is the experiences, strengths, and needs related to refugee children, EJM provides participants with teachers' ways in which people encounter and construct racial, ethnic, and political boundaries (Annamma, 2017). In conclusion, offering new data collection techniques to the literature is valuable, especially while working with special and sensitive groups on sensitive topics.

Finally, since 2011, Türkiye has been taking some steps for the education of refugee children. This process, which started with Temporary Education Centers, continues with the right of refugee children to enroll in public schools and the implementation of projects such as PICTES. Therefore, it is essential to consider the experiences, needs and strengths of teachers in the process of creating projects and policies that are constantly updated and renewed. The current study can offer some implications for policymakers to address teachers' needs and support their strengths through in-service and pre-service teacher education programs.

### **1.5. My Motivation for the Study**

In 2018, I received my master's degree from the Middle East Technical University (METU). In my thesis, I investigated the effects of the Parent Education/Involvement

course on pre-service early childhood education teachers' working with families self-efficacy. I collected data from 223 participants before and after they took a 14-week Parent Education/Involvement course throughout the semester. This study showed that although a Parent Education/Involvement course increased pre-service early childhood teachers' self-efficacy in communicating with parents and taking roles while working with them, it did not increase their self-efficacy in working with families from diverse backgrounds. This was the first study in which I was interested in diversity (Işıkcı, 2018). Then, I was involved in another study examining the diversity-related perspectives of early childhood teachers, their diversity-related activities they practiced in the classroom and their family involvement practices with multicultural families (Işıkcı-Başkaya et al., 2020). With this study, my interest in this subject increased even more.

When I wrote my master's thesis and started my doctorate, I was working as a lecturer in the child development department of a private university. Associate degree child development students were going to intern 2 days a week in their second year, and we started to talk about the difficulties they experienced with children who "do not speak Turkish", "are not Turkish" or "with special needs" in the kindergarten at some times during the internship course. Upon this, I started to cover some topics about diversity issues in the courses I gave. These lessons increased my interest in areas such as diversity and multiculturalism. Another reason for my motivation to focus on refugee children is my readings related to children's rights. One of the courses in the program at the university where I worked was Introduction to Children's Rights. In order to prepare for this course, I did a literature review on the subject. We also discussed the rights of refugee children in areas such as education, health, and protection. Therefore, my experiences during research studies and with child development students in the university motivated me to focus on teachers' experiences in the field while working with children from diverse backgrounds. Before focusing on refugee children, I would like to focus on early childhood teachers' experiences in the field because it is acknowledged that teachers' practices are influenced by their beliefs, and their experiences play a certain role in shaping their beliefs. Also, I believe that although each child has a unique socio-cultural background and funds of knowledge, teachers working with refugee children have

different experiences since these children come from a different country, do not speak Turkish, and have other socio-cultural difficulties. That is my motivation to focus on teachers' journey throughout the years of working with refugee children.

## **1.6. Definitions of Key Terms**

**Teachers' Journey:** The process of acquiring necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences, not only related to the subject area but also the whole process of becoming more professional (Kottler & Kottler, 2012).

**Experience:** A representation of the interactions of the living organism and the surrounding environment (Dewey, 1938). In the current study, experience refers to teachers' practices while working with refugee children over the years.

**Refugee Children:** A term used to identify children who are required for special basis for protection due to their specific circumstances such as war experience. (Lawrance et al., 2019).

**Migration:** Permanent or temporary movement of individuals due to some reasons such as war, conflict, education, or job opportunities. Migration completely changes demographic structures of hosting countries (Nizamoğlu, 2022).

**Culture:** The beliefs systems, traditions, customs, and behaviors of specific communities. It is an inseparable part of human development (NAEYC, 2019).

**Culturally Responsive Teaching:** A pedagogical approach to make the learning process of diverse students more meaningful and effective by integrating their cultural references and life experiences into education (Gay, 2010).

**Strengths:** Teachers' strengths are a set of positive characteristics revealed through feelings, thoughts, and behaviours (Park et al., 2004). In the context of this study, strengths refer to the characteristics of teachers that help them when working with refugee children.

**Needs:** In the context of this study, teachers' needs refer to the requirements of teachers during their work with refugee children.

**Teachers' Perceptions:** According to Maba (2017), it refers to professional teacher's reaction to what is experienced during teaching process of children. In the current study, perception refers to early childhood teachers' opinions about Culturally Responsive Teaching.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study aims to investigate the journey of early childhood teachers in terms of their experiences, needs and strengths while working with refugee children over the years. This chapter includes relevant literature related to this topic. The literature review consists of three parts. In the first part, the theoretical framework of the study is presented. The second part clarifies the relationship between migration, culture and education and describes the situation of education of refugee children in the Turkish context. Finally, the last part provides review of related literature regarding teachers' experiences, strengths, and needs. It also presents studies on teachers' perceptions and practices on culturally responsive teaching.

#### **2.1. Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The theoretical framework of the current study is threefold: Practical Theory (Handal & Lauvas, 1987), Experiential Continuum (Dewey, 1938) and Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2010). Practical theory helps me to understand teachers' unique experiences and how they constructed their individualistic practical theory based on their ever-changing experiences over the years. Further, the current study focused on teachers' experiences spanning across years. Therefore, the experiential continuum enabled me to understand how teachers' previous experiences shaped their future practices. It stressed the continuation of teachers' experiences in diverse settings.

Finally, I used Culturally Responsive Teaching as a framework of the study in the analysis procedure. It helped me to conceptualize teachers' practices based on its components. The detailed information on the theories, within the scope of the study, are presented below.



### **2.1.1. Practical Theory**

Theory followed in the current study is practical theory to explain teachers' unique practices. Teaching is described as a complex task that is affected by numerous factors and that includes specific activities, materials, skills, and practices (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986). Teachers are required to adapt to new conditions, backgrounds, and other learner-related factors to provide effective teaching for a group of learners. In this process, they develop their own practical theory. Handal and Lauvas (1987) described practical theory as a "person's private, integrated but everchanging system of knowledge, experience and values which is relevant to a teaching practice at any particular time." It is a theory constructed from teachers' own experiences and practices (Munir, 2023). Pitkaniemi (2010) asserted that practical theory refers to teachers' understanding which they continuously use to structure and lead their teaching. It provides teachers with specific reasons for their behaviors or teachers rationalize why they chose specific curriculum content or course materials by depending on their practical theory. Pitkaniemi (2010) also focused on the relationship between practical theory and teaching practices. He argues that practical theories provide a basis and rationale for teaching practices. That is why practical theory is accepted as unique and personal because each teacher constructs and follows their own practical theory (Dorovolomo, 2004). Besides, it depends on the context in which teaching occurs. For example, two teachers working in the same school but in different classrooms develop different practical theories.

A specific process of developing practical theory is defined by Sanders and McCutcheon (1986). This process is known as practice-centered inquiry. When teachers experience something new or they face a new idea, they tend to test it conceptually in the first place. If it becomes reasonable for teachers, they desire to apply this new idea in the classroom. After the first practices, teachers re-evaluate their experiences and decide whether they use it, change it, or not use it for their teaching practices (Fieldman, 1994). For example, when a teacher encounters a foreign child who does not speak Turkish at all, she looks for solutions or ways to overcome this communication barrier. Then, she produces an idea to apply in a classroom context and decides to use body language in communicating with this

foreign child. If the body language works, the teacher continues to use it for their future practices, even if the child changes. If the body language does not work, the teacher can modify it or prefer not to use it. This reflects teachers' practical theory.

According to Dorovolomo (2004), practical theory has some characteristics. First of all, practical theory is developed based on teachers' lived experiences and teachers continue to develop their own practical theories while gaining experience in teaching. In other words, teachers' diverse and unique teaching experiences shape their practical theories in time. Another feature is the constantly changing structure of practical theories. Teachers' practical theories are affected by their formal and personal knowledge, teaching experiences, classroom contexts and other related factors. These changes put teachers in the position of theory developers because they constantly develop their own theories by changing them based on these factors. For example, when teachers encounter a diverse learner, they alter their selection of curriculum content, course materials or act of teaching. The final feature is that teachers' practices are guided by their own practical theories. These theories provide teachers with specific guidelines for how to teach, how to communicate, or how to act in the teaching process (Fieldman, 1994). Teachers rely on their own practical theories in the process of planning teaching (Pitkäniemi, 2010).

To illustrate the ever-changing nature of practical theory, Choy and Wärvik (2018) conducted a study with vocational education and training teachers to understand their current practices for refugee and migrant students. One of the aims was to show how practice theory provides a rationale for understanding teachers' practices. Interviews focused on teachers' practices and strategies to integrate refugee and migrant students into the school system. The researchers evaluated teachers' practices from a practical theory lens. Participant teachers narrate their daily teaching practices in terms of cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements. The results of the study yielded that teachers developed and expanded their practical theory by finding new solutions and strategies to integrate refugee/migrant students into the school system and to meet the needs of these diverse learners.

In addition to features, practical theory also has some components, namely teachers' values, beliefs, metaphors, and pedagogical content knowledge. Dorovolomo (2004)

argued that teachers' values are the inevitable component of their practical theories. Teachers' values are shaped by their teacher education, family values, cultural backgrounds, or ethnicity. Another integral part of practical theory is teachers' beliefs. Similar to values, teachers' beliefs also vary among teachers. Metaphors are the third component, which reflects teachers' latent meanings. Another component which constitutes teachers' practical theory is their pedagogical content knowledge. Teachers consider their content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and characteristics of the learner to decide their teaching process and to set guidelines on how to teach.

For the current study, the notion of practical theory helps me to understand and discuss teachers' experiences with refugee children over the years. From their first-year experiences to the current experiences, I aimed to investigate how teachers develop strategies and practices to communicate and to instruct these children from diverse backgrounds. These practices might include teachers' classroom interactions with refugee children, their instruction methods, curriculum decisions and communication strategies. All these elements construct each teacher' unique and individualistic practical theory.

### **2.1.2. Experiential Continuum**

The second theoretical framework of the current study is the experiential continuum. It is one of the principles of Dewey's Transactional Theory. According to Dewey (1938), experiential continuum reflects the idea that every experience of individuals is affected by previous ones and changes in somehow the quality of future ones. It is called "experiential" because this notion highlighted the role of experience in the learning process (Kolb, 2015). Besides, it is stressed that for their professional growth, newly trained teachers must be aware of the continuation of their experiences in the setting in which they teach (Dewey, 1938). Within the scope of this current study, it can be stated that teachers learn from their previous experiences in working with refugee children and families and these experiences shape in some way their future experiences in the teaching process. Besides, learning and experience are almost inseparable from one another (Beard & Wilson, 2013). In

other words, there is a dynamic interaction between active and passive reactions of individuals during gaining experience. In this process, individuals interact with other individuals and learn required skills and knowledge to handle future events. Adapting this knowledge for the current study, teachers establish relationships with refugee children and their families. Each interaction teaches something to teachers to use in their future experiences. Also, future experiences take up something from the past experiences, so teachers continue to learn by building on those experiences. These experiences happen in social contexts including refugee and local children, families, colleagues, and other individuals who are part of teachers' life. Dewey (1938) also highlighted that experiences are part of social interactions of individuals.

Some researchers and scholars listed the characteristics of experience (Connell, 1994; Kolb, 2015). To begin with, Connell (1994) identified some characteristics of experience. These characteristics are listed as experience as biological concept, experience as method, experience as a precondition for acquiring knowledge. Firstly, experience is a biological concept because these characteristic approaches experience as living organisms' interaction with their surroundings. The second one stresses that experience is a method because it modifies actions. On the other hand, experience is accepted as a precondition for acquiring knowledge. According to Dewey (1960), knowing begins with what is experienced. Finally, it is overly critical for individuals to recognize the continuity of their experiences because it works as a motivator that causes growth (Dewey, 1938). Secondly, Kolb (2015) also explains some characteristics of experiential learning. To begin with, learning is best concerned as a process, not outcome. Secondly, learning is accepted as a continuous process based on experience. Kolb (2015) emphasized that individuals acquire knowledge from their experiences and test this knowledge in experiences. Thirdly, learning is an integrated approach to adapting to the world. It is not handled as an educational model. Instead, it is the way individuals' learning process to understand the world. Fourthly, learning happens as a result of transactions between the individuals and their environment. It means that experience does not happen inside the individuals. Instead, it is affected from outside. Additionally, learning happens as a result of the process of creating knowledge.

In the literature, some studies investigate the influences of previous experiences on teaching experiences of diverse samples such as in-service teachers and pre-service teachers (Cosgun-Ögeyik, 2016; Strekaloca-Hughesa & Wangb, 2017; Lake et al., 2015). The study conducted on early childhood teachers working with refugee children shows the impacts of intercultural experiential continuum (Strekaloca-Hughesa & Wangb, 2017). Intercultural experiences are identified as diverse coursework, direct experience with diverse students or having a friend from diverse backgrounds. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand intercultural development of early childhood teachers working with refugee children. They applied constant comparative analysis. Early childhood teachers stated their narratives on how their past experiences may have changed their intercultural sensitivity and future choices in teaching refugee children. By considering the principle of experiential continuum, researchers yielded that every experience changes individuals and these changes also affect their future experiences. These changes resulted from transactions between individuals and environments. The conclusions from this study implied the importance of pre-experience worldview and motivation of teachers in the quality of intercultural experiences, grounded in Dewey's principles experiential continuum. Further, teachers' intercultural sensitivity is also shaped by the qualities of experiences.

On the other hand, in another study Lake et al. (2015) explored the reconceptualizing teacher education programs for pre-service early childhood education teachers, grounded Dewey's theories. The study lasted a 5-year period in a teacher education program. Pre-service teachers' narratives revealed that their pre-service experiences had contributed to their pedagogical skills and social-moral development (Lake et al., 2015). In Cosgun-Ögeyik's (2015) study, ex post facto research was used to understand previous learning experiences of pre-service teachers. The findings yielded that along with teacher cognitions of pre-service teachers, their previous learning experiences had some influences on their teaching perceptions.

To summarize, the current study aims to investigate teachers' previous and current experiences. This situation reflects the experiential continuum of teachers because over the years they have gained a certain amount of experience working with refugee

children. Experiential continuum refers to how an individual's previous experiences alter the quality of their future experiences. This principle may be a useful means to explain and discuss teachers' learning experiences in working with refugee children over the years in the current study. Grounded in experiential continuum, teachers' experiences with refugee children and parents may be conceptualized by exploring how teachers' first-year experiences differ from their current experiences.

### **2.1.3. Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is a student-centered approach for teaching which uses references to cultures and composes of students' funds of knowledge, cultural background, family knowledge and experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Gay (2010) describes CRT as a pedagogical approach to make culturally diverse students' learning more meaningful and effective by integrating their cultural knowledge and life experiences into the education process. In addition to making learning meaningful, the goal of CRT is defined as providing empowerment of diverse students and ensuring social justice in education (Gay, 2013). On the other hand, supporting academic achievement of students from culturally diverse backgrounds is the fundamental aim of CRT. This approach is acknowledged as a means to ensure enrichment in students' learning because it recognizes cultural diversity (Howard, 2003). By welcoming a richness of diversity and promoting students' cultural heritage, CRT aims to support students' involvement, growth, and accomplishments (Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

**History of CRT.** Culturally Responsive Teaching was first expressed at a time when the incompatibility between the culture children encountered at school and the culture they experienced at home began to attract attention (Sarıdaş, 2023). Especially in the United States, new steps were taken to cope with academic achievement gaps between different cultural groups and to prevent discrimination, inequality, and racism among these groups in the 1960s (Kotluk, 2018). According to Ladson-Billings (1992), it was discussed to establish a bridge between children's cultural values, daily lives, and school system at that time. Ladson-Billing started to develop a theory to cope with racism. According to Villegas & Lucas (2002), in the

1960s, the fact that one out of every three children in classrooms is from a different culture has made the importance of culture in education a focal point of debate. Therefore, educators, anthropologists and social scientists discussed ways to integrate children from different cultures more effectively into the education system. Over the years, various concepts have been discussed, focusing on culture and cultural differences in education. These terms are “culturally appropriate” (Au & Jordan, 1998), “cultural synchronization” (Irvine, 1990), “culturally compatible” (Jordan, 1985), “culturally responsive teaching” (Gay, 2010), “culturally relevant pedagogy” (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In recent decades, “culturally sustaining pedagogy” (Paris, 2012) and “culturally relevant and responsive education” (Dover, 2013) are other theories which has been discussed as well. Gay (2010) asserted that although the theory/pedagogy or education is called by different names such as culturally sensitive, relevant, congruent, or sustaining, the core idea behind these concepts is identical: making teaching strategies suitable for the cultural background of diverse students. Siwatu (2007) also stressed that although these terms are used interchangeably, the components, core idea and goals are the same for each term.

In 1975, Geneva Gay has put forward this idea to focus on diverse teaching and instruction techniques for students from culturally diverse backgrounds. (Pehlivan-Yılmaz, 2019). CRT is accepted as an educational reform that developed alongside multicultural education and the civil rights movement (Güzelergene, 2023). According to Gay (2014), CRT is not only for the benefits of diverse children but also for the benefits of society because CRT aims to establish a society which respects and welcomes diversities. In addition to being grounded in fundamental beliefs about teaching, learning, students, families, and communities, culturally responsive pedagogy represents a professional, political, cultural, ethical, and ideological mindset that transcends common teaching acts (Howard, 2020).

**Characteristics of CRT.** Gay (2010) described five descriptive characteristics to introduce Culturally Responsive Teaching, namely validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, and transformative. The first characteristic states that CRT is validating. During culturally responsive teaching, teachers are expected to use children’s funds of knowledge, previous experiences, cultural heritages to

make their learning more meaningful and relevant. That is why CRT is accepted as validating and affirming (Gay, 2010). It accepts children's cultural knowledge as valuable to include in the education process and establish bridges between home and school. The second characteristic states that CRT is comprehensive. According to Ladson-Billings (1992), teachers help all children to develop their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical abilities by using their cultural knowledge in the educational process. In other words, the focal point is the whole child. In addition to the development of the child, teachers promote children's abilities and knowledge to make connections with their cultural groups, develop a sense of community and reach academic success (Gay, 2010). Besides, children are also responsible for not only their own learning process but also their classmates' learning process (Kahraman Vangölü, 2022). The third characteristic is that CRT is multidimensional. This means that CRT does not only encompass curriculum content or teaching strategies. It also covers teacher-student relationships, classroom environment, and evaluation process. In terms of subject area, each teacher can integrate culturally responsive teaching into their curriculum. For example, literature teachers can discuss how poets reflect in their poems the discrimination experiences which their ethnic group experience throughout the years. The fourth characteristic is that CRT is empowering. Teachers are expected to support children's confidence about who they are as an ethnic group, to teach them how to value their own beings. This reflects the empowerment side of culturally responsive teaching. The teacher supports all children to succeed. The fifth characteristic is that CRT is transformative. Culturally responsive practices convert traditional education practices into more meaningful and respectful practices for children with diverse backgrounds. On the other hand, CRT empowers diverse children to be more confident to cope with discrimination and to have critical thinking skills. The last characteristic is that CRT is emancipatory. It states that it allows students from different cultures to learn in ways that are appropriate to their own culture and compatible with their cultural values, rather than in ways that are assumed to be uniform and unchanging. Besides, according to Gay (2010), cooperation, connectedness and community are major concepts in CRT. Teachers design learning environments for students to work together and contribute to each other's success.



In addition to Gay (2010)'s descriptive characteristics of culturally responsive teaching, other researchers also defined some fundamental features (Conage, 2014). According to Lattimore (2005), having high expectations for academic success is one of the core characteristics of CRT. Culturally responsive teachers are expected to use meaningful communication strategies and provide relevant scaffolding strategies for diverse students for learning. It is believed that children already have some certain amounts of knowledge to be explored in the school context (Dallavis, 2013). This knowledge encompasses children's home cultures and daily life experiences. Therefore, teachers possess high expectations for each child's achievement regardless of their cultural background and use their existing knowledge to empower them. On the other hand, Stairs (2007) perceives CRT as an asset-based approach by emphasizing its characteristics enriching children's learning. Based on this approach, teachers are expected to use diversity as an asset to empower and emphasize the uniqueness of ethnic groups.

**Components of CRT.** According to Gay (2010), when children's cultural references are integrated into curriculum, their academic knowledge and skills become more meaningful. Therefore, culturally responsive teachers are expected to establish a connection between children's funds of knowledge and school context. To prepare and help teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching, Gay (2010) indicated five components. These components of culturally responsive teaching are dynamic, interactive, and interconnected. There is no ranking according to importance. Major (2010) described these components as five key pillars of culturally responsive teaching. These are cultural self-awareness, culturally responsive curriculum, demonstrating cultural caring and building learning community, cross-cultural communication, cultural congruity in instruction.

***Cultural Self-Awareness.*** It was recommended for teachers to have a great amount of pedagogical knowledge and curriculum content if they want to become a culturally responsive teacher (Gay, 2010). Nevertheless, Gay (2010) pointed out that having pedagogical knowledge is not enough. Instead, teachers should make a self-analysis on their beliefs about ethnicity and culture, on their expectations from diverse students and how these expectations and beliefs play a role on teachers'

instruction and students' academic achievement. In addition to self-analysis, culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to have knowledge on cultural characteristics of different ethnic groups and their contributions to society (Güzelergene, 2023). The focus here is on the need for teachers to combine cultural values with different disciplines. Integrating different cultural and ethnic groups with different disciplinary areas such as music, art and literature make students' learning more meaningful and relevant. In order to effectively incorporate cultural diversity in the classroom and in the curriculum, teachers need to be knowledgeable about cultural diversity. Gay (2000) also stressed that having cultural self-awareness is not sufficient without action. Teachers are also expected to show non-discriminatory behaviors considering their cultural self-awareness. One strategy to achieve this is to investigate why culture benefits some students' success while preventing others.'

***Culturally Responsive Curriculum.*** The second component is designing and implementing a culturally responsive curriculum. Gay (2010) pointed out that one of the major aims of CRT is to foster ethnically and culturally diverse students' academic achievement, self-efficacy, and cultural affiliation. Using cultural knowledge and references in the curriculum content is the fundamental tool to achieve this. By implementing a culturally responsive curriculum, students have opportunities to empower their characteristics, power, attitudes, and capabilities. Teachers utilize the cultural backgrounds of students in designing curriculum content (Richards et al., 2007). Furthermore, it motivates students to achieve when they encounter their cultural references in the learning process (Brown, 2007). The curriculum can contain information about diverse groups' past experiences, cultures, important figures, contributions to different disciplines such as science and art. Gay (2010) suggested two sources of curriculum content for CRT. The first one is textbooks and books. Teachers are expected to be aware that storybooks and other written resources should reflect ethnic and cultural diversity in a correct and adequate manner. There should be balance across diverse ethnic and cultural groups. The second resource is images. Teachers should utilize images which reflects ethnic and cultural diversity in a correct manner in curriculum content (Gay, 2010).

***Demonstrating Cultural Caring and Building Learning Community.*** According to Gay (2014), the heart of the learning process is the relationship between children and

teachers. Living and learning in a caring community connect students to their society and each other (Gay, 2010). Caring exists in teachers' expectations from ethnically and culturally diverse students, teachers' attitudes, and behaviors. Teachers show caring by holding high expectations from students, using meaningful learning experiences for their success, and supporting children's self-esteem. It is critical to design a learning environment which supports all children's learning regardless of their cultural background (Kahraman-Vangölü, 2022). Gay (2014) identified some assumptions for a caring learning community. First of all, caring is a concern for a person and performance. In a caring community, teachers show concern for children's overall development and support their development in a meaningful way. Secondly, caring is action-provoking (Gay, 2014). A caring teacher acts and takes practical steps for children to learn. The third one is that caring prompts effort and achievement. Teachers expect high achievements from all children and facilitate their diverse ways of learning. The last one states that caring is multidimensional responsiveness. Caring teachers understand cultural diversity and act on it.

***Cross-cultural Communication.*** Gay (2002) also argued that cross-cultural communication is a critical component of CRT because culture has an impact on the forms of communication used by individuals (Paksoy, 2017). Culture determines how individuals communicate (Porter & Samovar, 1991). Communication is about writing or speaking. It also covers discourse dynamics because of the reciprocal relationship between culture and communication. It is critical to communicate effectively with children from diverse backgrounds for teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2014) pointed out that communication styles can be multidimensional due to various influences such as ethnicity and culture. Teachers are expected to figure out cultural codes in children's communication styles based on their culture. Learning communication styles of different cultures empowers teachers' instructions and foster teacher-child interaction.

***Cultural Congruity in Instruction.*** According to Gay (2014), culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to realize how children from diverse ethnic groups learn. This is acknowledged as a critical step because diverse children's learning processes are affected by their cultural background. Cultural congruity in instruction has three

qualities. The first one is the learning styles baseline. Learning styles are multidimensional which means that cultural groups may have different learning styles (Gay, 2014). The second one is cooperative learning. Gay (2014) stressed that working in cooperation is critical for the majority of ethnic groups. Therefore, teachers are expected to design cooperative learning opportunities for instruction. The last one is active and effective engagement. For some cultural groups, being active and using emotions and senses are critical for learning and for showing what they understand and learn. So, teachers are suggested to realize how various groups display active participation or use their senses and emotions in the learning process. To summarize, instead of using a single method during instruction, different teaching methods and techniques should be used to ensure that all children participate in the knowledge production and learning processes. For this, the teacher needs to learn about and observe the different teaching methods used by diverse groups so that active participation can be ensured.

As stated above, CRT provides a conceptual framework to be used in the teaching and learning process while adapting children's cultural backgrounds into education. Besides, it facilitates teachers' instructional practices to reach each child by considering their cultural norms, design curriculum based on this awareness. Conceptually, CRT emphasizes that teachers should understand and respect the cultural identity of children, appreciate their cultural diversity, and adapt their instructional and assessment strategies within this framework. Therefore, while exploring the experiences, needs and strengths of early childhood teachers working with refugee children for more than three years, CRT guided me on how to understand teacher experiences and on what basis to evaluate them.

A vast body of literature categorized teachers' experiences in working with refugee children in terms of communication process and instructional strategies (Paksoy, 2017; Pehlivan-Yılmaz & Günel, 2022; Tanış, 2021; Gaias, 2019; Alaca, 2017; Kennedy, 2018; Bowe, 2022; Long, 2021; Hill, 2022; Arnette, 2022; Cohen, 2013; Durden et al., 2015; Bertone, 2020). The implications drawn from these studies yielded that teachers' experiences related to communication and instructional strategies were highly emphasized in their narratives. Within this scope, components

of CRT are also effective tools to conceptually explain teachers' these experiences in the current study. For example, CRT emphasizes cultural congruity in instruction, using cultural content in curriculum and cross-cultural communication within the classroom. Therefore, teacher experiences can be evaluated from this perspective. I used these components of CRT to explain teachers' experiences, needs and strengths over the years.

**Culturally Responsive Teachers.** In the literature, some researchers identified the qualities and characteristics of culturally responsive teachers (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Banks, 1991; Sleeter, 2011; Figuerido, 2012; Sarıdaş & Nayir, 2021; Kotluk & Kocakaya, 2018). To begin with Gay (2010), she described six dimensions of how to be a culturally responsive teacher. First of all, these teachers determine high expectations and high academic achievement for all children regardless of their cultural background. Secondly, they have a multidimensional perspective because they acquire knowledge about diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences. Besides, these teachers utilize children's cultural background and establish a connection between home and school. They are also inclusive and focus on children's all developmental domains as well. Culturally responsive teachers consider children's cultural background in each step of education, from designing curriculum to determining assessment strategies. Finally, they are emancipatory which means that they perceive education free from ideologies.

Ladson-Billings (2001) also identified three assumptions for culturally responsive teachers. These teachers are culturally competent and facilitate their own students' cultural development. They are socio-politically aware. Furthermore, they focus on each child's academic success. On the other hand, Banks (1991) examines characteristics of culturally responsive teachers at three levels. The first level is the personal level and teachers investigate their own cultural identity. The second level is classroom level and teachers embrace a non-discriminatory perspective for all children. Teachers are also aware of how culture influences education and design curriculum with this awareness. Furthermore, teachers are expected to communicate with all children and have a facilitator role in the communication process among children. The last level is school level. At this level, teachers take an active role in

the policy-making process for multicultural societies. They are also responsible for taking on duties based on multiculturalism.

According to Sleeter (2011), culturally responsible teachers should consider three points in their workings. Firstly, they need to know the right practices and definitions of culturally responsive teaching. Teachers are expected to be aware of superficial and faulty practices in the classrooms. Secondly, teachers need to support research on the relationship between students' learning and culturally responsive pedagogy. Finally, Sleeter (2011) stated that teachers need to consider minority groups in their practices. In addition to Sleeter (2011), Figuerido (2012) emphasized that culturally responsive teachers are respectful of their students' differences and needs. These teachers are expected to be role models and resources for their students' learning process. Teachers need to believe that all children can learn regardless of their cultural background and consider this belief while designing curriculum and during instruction.

While these researchers (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Banks, 1991; Sleeter, 2011) theoretically defined the characteristics of culturally responsive teachers, teachers in the field have some characteristics parallel to or different from the theory. In 2021, Sarıdaş and Nayir conducted research to describe culturally responsive teacher characteristics. As a result of this study, they stated that culturally responsive teachers lead a democratic life, realize students are different from each other, continue the education process patiently, consider students' past experiences, be open to innovations, give importance to their professional career, stay away from prejudices, and adopt universal values. These characteristics are compatible with culturally responsive teacher characteristics defined by Ladson-Billing (2001). Besides, Kotluk and Kocakaya (2018) highlighted that culturally responsive teachers know how culture affects students' learning process. They perceive themselves and their students positively and stay away from discrimination. They hold high expectations for all students. These findings from the fields are also supported by theoretical definitions of Banks (1991) and Sleeter (2011).

**Teachers' Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching.** Culturally Responsive Teaching is acknowledged as a means to promote children to be aware of their own

cultural strengths and experiences (Love, 2015). It also helps teachers to understand children's cultural background (Cole et al., 2016). According to Dreyfus (2019), when teachers comprehend cultural diversities among children, they can implement effective and powerful learning process for them. Therefore, their perceptions of CRT is critical because teachers' perceptions of what CRT is and how it is implemented shape their practices to support the learning of children from different cultures (Dreyfus, 2019). In other words, teachers' culturally responsive practices might be structured based on their views and perceptions regarding CRT. For example, some researchers investigated teachers' views on culturally responsive education and education of refugee students (Karataş, 2020; Kotluk, 2018; Babur, 2021; Aydın, 2016; Alanay & Aydın, 2016). Karataş and Oral (2015) investigated the views of teachers on culturally responsive education. They collected data from 25 teachers. Teachers highlighted that education should be based on the cultural values of children. However, the teachers also stressed that they do not have enough self-efficacy for culturally responsive practices. Similarly, Alanay and Aydın (2016) examined the views of undergraduate students on multicultural education. Researchers found that participants have positive perceptions about multicultural education. Specifically, in terms of participants' ethnic identity, participants with Kurdish and Arab backgrounds have more positive perceptions. The study of Başbay and Bektaş (2009) focused on investigating different perspectives on culture and determining basic characteristics of multiculturalism and identifying the competences of teachers. They concluded that teachers need to be aware of cultural values of students, have knowledge about these values and not perceive diverse students as problems to overcome. Instead, teachers should design culturally rich instruction environments by considering students' cultural background.

In addition to teachers' perceptions towards CRT, their self-efficacy perceptions towards implementing culturally responsive practices also affect their CRT practices. Teachers' self-efficacy is related to their beliefs in their ability to succeed in some accomplishments. Therefore, teachers' level of self-efficacy determines their culturally responsive practices. In this regard, Larson (2015) investigated the relationship between teachers' use of culturally responsive practices and their culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Results indicated no relationship

between the two variables although some studies (Siwatu et al., 2009) showed the association. Larson's (2015) explanation for this discrepancy is that teachers may not employ culturally responsive strategies, despite their belief in their ability to implement these skills if they perceive that their efforts will not impact student outcomes. Finally, Kotluk (2018) conducted another study to investigate teachers' level of self-efficacy related to culturally responsive teaching. He designed mixed method research and collected quantitative data from 1302 teachers and qualitative data from 28 teachers. According to the findings, teachers' self-efficacy perceptions towards CRT were found to be high.

## **2.2. Culture and Migration**

This second part provides information about the concepts of culture and migration. Further, the relationship between culture and education, and migration and education is discussed. Afterwards, the situation of refugees in Turkish contexts and legal regulations regarding their education are presented.

### **2.2.1. Culture**

When the origin of culture is analyzed in terms of linguistics, it is thought that its origin comes from the Latin word "edere-cultura", which means Earth (Mejuyev, 1987). Supporting this idea, another view argues that the word culture comes from the Latin word "colere," which means to dwell and protect (Özlem, 2000). Today, the word "culture" has a lot of meaning in various disciplines. These various definitions stem from the differences in the approach of different disciplines to the structure, content, and constituent elements of culture. For example, Güvenç (1994) categorized the meaning of culture into four disciplines: *civilization* in the field of science, *education* in the field of human sciences, *aesthetics* in the field of art and *reproduction and agriculture* in the field of biology. Turkish Language Association defines culture as "the entirety of thoughts and artistic works specific to a community or people." Güvenç (1994) explains that culture is a combination of variables such as society, human beings, and educational process and besides, culture is function of the complex relationships between them." Kongar (2005), on the other hand, accepts culture all of man's creation. According to Zamfir and Vlăsceanu



(1993), culture means set of symbols and acts which carry socially inherited meanings of a society. These meanings are transmitted to the next generations through various practices. They also defined culture as a way of representing people's communication styles, construction of knowledge and attitudes. Göçer (2012) also approaches culture as a memory including codes of lifestyles of individuals over many years. Since, lifestyles, traditions, perceptions, behaviors, and all values of humans have been culturally transmitted in many decades. In brief, it can be stated that various authors, researchers, and disciplines describe the meaning of culture in different ways.

The formation and importance of culture is also one of the issues that researchers focus on. According to Göçer (2012), culture is a work of interaction in this process. In order for a new cultural phenomenon to emerge, an event or situation must be accepted and shared among people through interaction. In this way, culture emerges as accumulation. Boyacı (2023) defines the importance of culture for individuals, societies, and institutions. In terms of individuals, while individuals continue their lives, they consider the features of the culture in which they exist. Culture also shapes the moral development of humans. Individuals decide what is bad, good, or moral by considering their cultural norms. In terms of society, culture also provides social unity because individuals holding the same cultural norms agree to protect these norms (Güney, 2020). This also meets the social and psychological needs of individuals. Secondly, culture is critical for societies. Boyacı (2023) argues that culture and society are two complementary elements. While culture has a determining impact on the regulation of lives in society, society shapes and transmits culture. Finally, institutions are affected by cultures. For example, each institution has goals and to reach these goals, they have to consider the culture in which they live. Also, workers reflect on the cultures in which they live.

Different researchers and authors attributed different characteristics to culture. First of all, culture has impacts on people's behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes (Basarab, 2015). According to Basarab (2015), Acculturation is one way for people who tend to react to historical, environmental, and socioeconomic challenges. The degree of acculturation is determined by an individual's years of experience in school, work, or

communication with other cultures. Güvenç (2002) defines some characteristics of culture:

1. Culture is learned. It includes learned behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge.
2. Culture is transmitted through language to the next generations.
3. Aspects of culture vary from society to society.
4. While culture is an element formed in social life, individual attitudes and behaviors also have an important place in the culture.
5. Culture is a functional element that meets vital social needs.
6. Culture has the power to differentiate as well as integrate
7. The concept of culture is an abstract concept related to life.

Furthermore, Çelikkaya (1993) listed some characteristics for culture.

1. Culture belongs to humankind.
2. Culture is a social norm. It has social attributes.
3. Culture is national.
4. Culture is a way of living in a society.

Göçer (2012) outlined several characteristics of culture as well. Firstly, culture is unifying and integrative. It unites people who share the same culture around a phenomenon. Secondly, culture is specific to societies. It means that culture distinguishes societies from each other. Thirdly, culture is open to change. It has a dynamic structure. Finally, culture is a resource contributing to the formation of civilizations. On the other hand, Balaban (2023) states some attributes for culture. Culture is not genetically transmitted. Instead, it is learned. Besides, culture is a set of rules because there are rules that people must follow in order to live together. Culture also meets the needs of individuals psychologically. Culture reflects the values of the society.

### **2.2.2. Culture and Education**

According to Ocak (2004), there is a concrete relationship between education and culture. Education and culture cannot be considered independent of each other.

Veronika (2021) described education as a process by which individuals are civilized, socialized, and learned to become a member of a society and acquire values of a specific culture. Inherently, education is defined as a process of intentional acculturation (Ertürk, 1994). Ocak (2004) argues that education and culture need the existence of each other. The culture of a specific society includes many contents for educational programs. Based on cultural norms, it is determined what is taught to students. In other words, culture provides a framework for designing educational programs and curriculum. Besides, education has two responsibilities. One of them is to provide social unity by transmitting culture to the next generations. The other one is to develop societies with scientific and technological development. For both ones, it is possible to argue the impacts of culture (Ocak, 2004).

On the other hand, education is a tool for formally transmitting cultural norms, values, and behaviors to the next generations. School is one of the means for students to integrate into society in a healthy way and to acquire the skills to live with society. Adapting to society means adapting to its values, rules, and behaviors. All these factors constitute culture as well. Therefore, culture shapes education programs and there is a reciprocal relationship between them. Schools empower and develop individuals so that they can transmit culture. In this process, Ocak (2004) stressed that not all members of society benefit equally from culture and education. Some groups are differentiated from the main culture for reasons such as religion, language, and ethnicity. In order for these groups to live in peace with society, there are some adjustments that need to be made in education. For example, teachers should be encouraged to learn two languages and the cultural characteristics of children from different cultural backgrounds should be carefully analyzed.

Basarab (2015) argues that the former step of accepting other cultures is to get knowledge about them. This is where the relationship between culture and education emerges. Even if culture is first shaped in the family and close social environment of individuals, the school process is an important institution where children encounter different cultural backgrounds. School also is a place for cultural transmission. According to Özbay (2002), the main responsibility of education is to transmit culture.

Bisong and Ekanem (2020) discussed the powerful impact of culture on education in the African context. They stressed that beliefs, customs, languages, values, and other aspects of culture shape the educational process of individuals. They identified three major impacts of culture on education. The first one holds the notion that culture determines the direction of education. The worldview of a community influences the type and success of education in that particular area. Secondly, culture determines the distribution of education. For example, although the quality of education has increased today, the education of women in some parts of the societies are still restricted because of cultural norms in that society (Bisong & Ekanem, 2020). Finally, culture determines the quality of education. This is also related to funding that is available for education. The funding is determined by how much a culture gives value to education.

Matusov and Marjanovic-Shane (2017) acknowledges education as a means for celebration of cultural diversity, social justice, tolerance, and contact. Students can only exist in the school environment with their cultures and funds of knowledge. In other words, education and culture are two broad terms which are influential on the development of individuals and societies. While education contributes to transmission of culture and learning of cultural norms, culture determines the quality and distribution of cultures (Bisong & Ekanem, 2020). It may be stated these two terms are highly interrelated with each other. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a bridge between two terms to understand how they shape and affect each other.

When considering today's multicultural societies due to various reasons such as globalization or migration, this multiculturalization requires a reform in education programs. This change is required to emphasize and integrate children's cultural backgrounds in education. Because today's classrooms include diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Besides, education has a responsibility for empowering individuals' intercultural interactions, knowledge, and skills. At this point, Culturally Responsive Teaching can help teachers to reconceptualize their curriculum, teaching strategies and classroom environment to welcome and reach all students from diverse backgrounds.

### **2.2.3. Migration**

Societies have continuously migrated from one place to another in history due to economic, social, and political reasons. According to the United Nations (2015), migration is defined as the relocation of an individual from their place of residence to live permanently in another place. The Turkish Language Association also describes migration as the movement of individuals and communities from one country to another country, from one settlement to another settlement for economic, social, or political reasons. Similarly, Faist (2003) addresses migration as permanent or temporary movement from one political or social phenomenon to another and highlights that it is not only a change of location. This act of migration can be voluntarily due to job or education opportunities. In voluntary migration, people relocate to meet their expectations without being under pressure (Kurt, 2022). On the other hand, some migration movements can be compulsory movement due to hard conditions such as war, conflicts, natural disasters, or terrorism (Yüceşahin & Özgür, 2016). In both ways, migration is a movement which completely changes the demographic structures of hosting countries (Nizamoğlu, 2022).

### **2.2.4. Migration and Education**

Migration is an exceedingly difficult situation for both migrants and host countries. Children are the most affected by this situation due to their vulnerability (Kurt, 2022). Children, who are exposed to many cultural and social diversities in their new country of destination, continue to experience problems in different areas and are deprived of their rights. One of the areas which is critical for both the refugee population and hosting countries is education. Although their education plays a critical role especially for integration processes including employment, housing, health, social rights, cultural aspects, and security (Ager & Strang, 2004), it is not always easy for them to access education. Considering the psychological problems caused by war, trauma and migration, migrant children experience negative issues such as child labor, early marriage and dropping out of school in hosting countries (UNICEF, 2017). Besides, not only is education a human right, but it also aids in the healing process for refugee children, which makes it essential in emergency

situations (UNHCR, 2000). School provides a social context for refugee children's social and psychological healing process (McBrien, 2005). Accessing education in crisis situations helps refugee children in various ways. First of all, refugee children feel not traumatized when they continue their education (Sinclair, 2007). For example, if schools design social activities or protection for at-risk groups, it promotes children's healing process from their traumas. Secondly, school provides a knowledge-based context for refugee children to learn social and cultural norms of the society in which they moved to. For this reason, children's right to education should be considered as an issue that needs to be emphasized (Alemin & Çavuş-Bekce, 2021).

On the other hand, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, education is one of the rights which must be provided regardless of their socio-cultural background. The right to education is guaranteed not only by the Convention on the Rights of the Child but also by many international conventions. Some of these conventions are the "Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees", "Geneva Convention", "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" and the "European Convention on Human Rights" (Dere & Demirci-Dölek, 2023). According to the conventions, states contracting parties are obliged to recognize the child's right to education, ensure equality of opportunity and provide access to education (Kurt, 2022).

### **2.2.5. Migration in Turkish Context**

Türkiye has a geopolitical position that serves as a bridge between Asia and Europe. This has made it the subject of many waves of migration throughout its history (Akyıldız, 2022). Having eight neighboring countries has also made Türkiye both a transit and destination country. These internal and external migrations have shaped Türkiye's demographic structure over time. Among all these migration movements, migration from Syria is accepted as the common problem of the last decades in the international area (Keskin & Yanarışık, 2021). In 2011, the protests that started in Syria quickly turned into a country-wide conflict. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives in these conflicts and many people had to leave their homes and

migrate to different countries. This migration movement has started a trend that will change the demographic, political, economic, and social structure of both Syria and the countries to which its people have migrated. This situation led to protracted refugee situations in Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan (UNHCR, 2018). The protracted refugee situation explains that 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in prolonged exile in a particular country of asylum for five consecutive years or more.

In this process, Türkiye's decision is to adopt an "open door policy" for Syrian people coming into our country. With this "open door policy," Türkiye declared that it would accept all asylum seekers, would not force them to return to their home countries and would accommodate them in camps and meet their basic needs (Ihlamur-Öner, 2014). This policy, together with Türkiye's location on the migration routes to Europe, has led many migrants to turn to Türkiye for migration.

Since 2011, when the Syrian crisis began and Türkiye started accepting refugees, various steps have been taken to meet the needs of refugees. First of all, shelter centers were established for the basic accommodation needs of migrant families. These shelters were established primarily in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Mardin, Hatay, Adana, Adıyaman, Osmaniye and Malatya and AFAD was assigned to manage, coordinate, and organize them. In this way, Syrians entering Türkiye were registered (AFAD, 2013). In March, 2012, "Directive on the Acceptance and Accommodation of Syrian Arab Republic Citizens Arriving to Türkiye for Mass Asylum Purposes and Stateless Individuals Residing in the Syrian Arab Republic" was issued and migrants were admitted according to this directive. Due to the increasing number of incoming migrants, the Law on Foreigners, and International Protection (YUKK) was enacted in 2013 and the General Directorate of Migration Management was established, and the management of migration was taken from AFAD.

Since 2011, refugees coming to our country have needed support in many areas from health to education. Especially for children from Syria and other countries, the education process has been interrupted, leading to the risk of lost years when they

return home. As stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to education, regardless of cultural background. In this regard, Türkiye is one of the contracting countries, ensuring the education to all children. In the light of this information, some steps were taken to provide education for refugee children. In the proceeding parts, after explaining the concept of refugee, the steps taken in the education process of refugees in our country will be mentioned.

#### **2.2.5.1. The Concept of Refugee**

Refugee is a concept which is politically defined. According to the 1951 Geneva Convention, refugee is defined as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” This convention gave certain obligations to the contracting countries. According to the Convention, refugees have the opportunity to enter other countries where they can seek protection and asylum. After the legal processes are completed, they will have refugee status. UNHCR (2019) stressed that refugee people are protected by international law because these people have to leave their own country due to fear of death, violence, and other life-threatening circumstances.

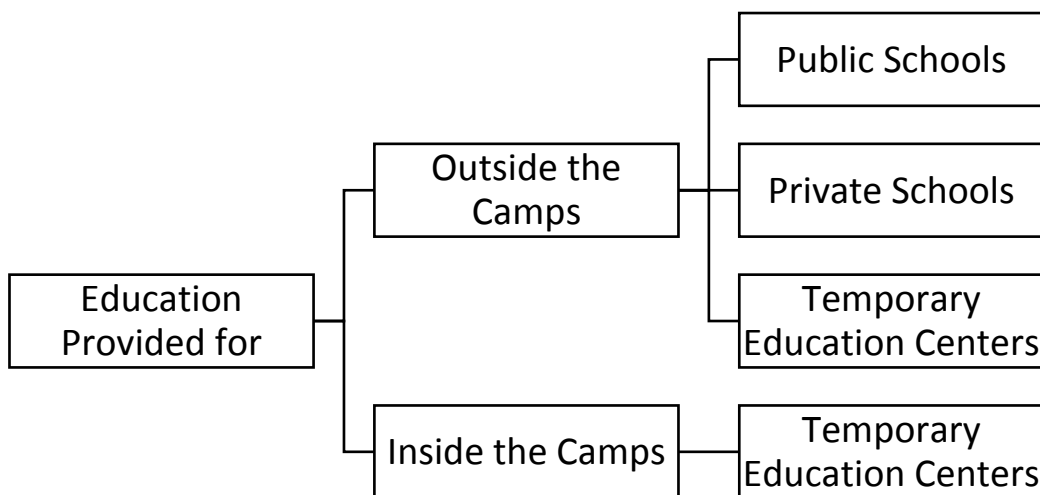
The concept of refugee is sometimes used interchangeably with the concept of migrant (Ersoy & Turan, 2019). Further, the concept of migrant is used as an umbrella term which includes refugees as well. However, UNHCR (2019) declared that this usage of the terms in public disclosure might have negative outcomes for the protection and lives of refugees. There is no internationally accepted definition for the concept of migrant (Fansa, 2021). However, migrants are highly perceived as a voluntary process due to educational or economic reasons. Referring to refugees as “migrants” distracts the attention of authorities and the public from the needs of refugees (UNHCR, 2019).

#### **2.2.5.2. Education of Refugee Children in Türkiye**

Since 2011, the government, local governments and municipalities have taken some measures and implemented some practices to prevent the interruption of refugee



children's education. Along with the aim of integration of refugees, the goal of educational attempts is to prevent the lost generation of Syrians (Özdemir & Aypay, 2022). Türkiye has reacted to the educational needs of refugee children differently in different terms. Between 2011-2013, education was provided by humanitarian organizations with the idea that refugees would return to their home countries in a short time. Short-term education programs were established and focused more on the education of children inside the camps. Therefore, the language of instruction was Arabic, and they were given education in line with their own curricula so that they would not experience an educational gap when they returned home (Gencer, 2017). This period was accepted as the acute period. In 2014-2015 was considered as the transition period because it was understood that refugees' residency will last longer than expected. Finally, 2016 and onwards are the normalization period (UNICEF Türkiye, 2022).



**Figure 2. 1.** Education Provided for Syrian Children Under Temporary Protection (UNICEF, 2023)

In 2013, it was understood that the situation of refugees was not temporary due to the increasing violence in Syria. Although educational problems were not highly on the agenda in 2011, as time passes, the risk of future problems and other social problems of the uneducated generation has increased (Seydi, 2014). Therefore, in 2013, MoNE enacted its first circular on the education of Syrian migrant children titled “Precautions for Syrian Citizens Hosted Outside Camps in Our Country”. This

circular focused on the educational institutions which are eligible for the education of migrant children outside the camps.

In September, 2013, a meeting was arranged in Gaziantep to discuss the educational problems of migrant children outside and inside the camps. It was stressed to meet the needs of volunteer Syrian teachers working inside the camps (Canpolat, 2020). A "Training of Trainer Seminar" was organized in cooperation with MoNE, AFAD and UNICEF to determine the responsibilities of teachers and provide training on the psycho-social conditions of refugee children (Seydi, 2014).

In 2014, April, Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection was released. Afterwards, in September, a Regulation on Protection of Foreigners was released. With this regulation, refugees received temporary protection status. Therefore, the way has been paved for Syrians inside and outside the camps to benefit from services such as education, health, and social assistance (Canpolat, 2020). For example, foreign students were enrolled in their new schools after recognition procedures in accordance with their diplomas and education. Besides, MoNe has also extended to refugee children the right to study in public schools alongside local children.

Besides, the Ministry of National Education enacted a new circular titled "Education and Training Services for Foreigners" (MoNE, 2013). In this circular, these issues were addressed:

- Establishment of Ministerial Commissions and Provincial Commissions that will carry out the necessary activities for foreigners to benefit from educational services.
- Establishment of Temporary Education Centers
- Requirements for the registration of foreigners to educational institutions affiliated with the ministry
- Entry of documents related to education for foreigners and e-school transactions.

- For Syrians who want to learn Turkish, Turkish language courses will be provided.

This circular was accepted as a critical attempt to meet the educational needs of migrant children (Nur-Emin, 2016). This circular delegated the responsibility for the education of refugee children to the ministry and provincial commissions. If the refugees have a foreign ID number, their data entry will be made through e-school and their school enrollment will be realized. If they do not have a foreign ID number, the relevant institutions will register them by issuing a foreigner identification document. These students will be registered through the Foreign Students Information Operating System (YÖBİS).

Temporary Education Centers (TECs) were established outside and inside the camps. The main goal of TECs is to ensure that migrants continue their education from where they left off and to prevent the loss of years when they return to their countries. In these centers, instead of the Turkish curriculum, the Syrian curriculum was followed through the course schedules determined by the Ministry and education was provided in Arabic. Education services were provided from preschool to senior high school. On the other hand, non-governmental organizations took the leading role in the establishment and management of TECs. Aksoy (2020) evaluated this model as the first in the world in this respect. The education activities were financed by Türkiye, the EU, UNICEF, and NGOs (Canpolat, 2020).

In 2015, MoNE announced its 2015-2019 Strategic Plan in relation to education of Syrian migrants. It is stressed that efforts will be made to promote integration of children under temporary protection status (MoNE, 2015). Also, it was decided to implement strategies for their social harmonization in the long term. These strategic plans also focused on the challenges in the education process, recognition procedures and access to education.

In 2016, Project for Integrating Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System (PICTES), jointly funded by the Ministry of National Education and the European

Union, aims to support the access to education and integration of foreign children. In the scope of this project, attempts were made to provide Turkish language acquisition, compensatory education, additional security to schools, programs of social integration, teaching materials, school guidance activities, stationery, textbooks, and other educational materials (UNICEF, 2022). The goals of the project is to contribute to educational access of Syrian children under temporary education and support MoNE in the process of integration of these children to the Turkish Education System ( Nizamoğlu, 2022).

In 2016, it was decided to focus on problems in the integration process of migrants in school contexts and cope with discrimination and prejudices. Therefore, in-service seminars were provided for teachers. Besides, it was planned to enroll Syrian students in public and private schools for the 2016-2017 academic year. It was also agreed that every child's right to education would be protected without any discrimination, that children in kindergarten and 1st grade would be enrolled in schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education and would be taught according to the curriculum of the Ministry of National Education, and that refugee students would be distributed evenly in classes so that they could learn Turkish by experiencing it (Canpolat, 2020). This period after 2016 is defined as the planned harmonization period because integration of Syrian migrants in the Turkish education system was mentioned.

In 2017, another circular was enacted by MoNe titled “Foreign Students”. It was decided to gradual shutdown of TECs and promote the transition of migrant children to schools affiliated by the ministry (MoNE, 2017). The main reason for closing TECs is the idea that migrants are not temporary in Türkiye and TECs could not meet the educational needs of migrant students (Saraç, 2022). Saraç (2022) evaluated this decision as a positive progress to create integrative school climates. In this context, as of the 2017-2018 academic year, it was decided that students who have passed kindergarten, 1st, 5th, and 9th grade in TECs must be enrolled in public schools". Today, refugee children continue their education with their local friends in public and private schools affiliated with MoNE.

As of November 2021, 65 percent of school-age refugee children were attending public schools, while 400,000 children were not enrolled in school (UNICEF, 2023). Currently, according to data published on January 25, 2024 by the Directorate of Migration Management, there are 3,186,561 Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye. The number of children between the ages of 0-4 is 393,894, while the number of the population between the ages of 5-18, known as school age, is 1,145,760.

### **2.3. Related Literature on Culturally Responsive Teaching, Teachers' Experiences, Needs and Strengths**

This third part of the literature review provides information about the related literature on teachers' experiences, needs and strengths while working with refugee children. Further, studies conducted on Culturally Responsive Teaching are presented.

#### **2.3.1. Studies on Teachers' Experiences in Working with Refugee Children**

Not only in Türkiye but also in many host countries, there has been an increasing number of refugee children in classrooms in recent decades. Refugee children are a special group who have to live in a culture different from their own, some of whom have traumatic migration experiences and language differences. This situation leads to new experiences for teachers. Teachers are expected to be creative in using their knowledge, skills, and experience to work with this special group to support children's adaptation process and to use methods and techniques to work with cultural and language differences. In this context, the study of teachers' experiences has been the focus of many researchers. The implications of these studies shed light on many issues such as strengthening educational policies, the adaptation of refugee children, and increasing teachers' knowledge and skills. For example, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) stated that schools play a critical role in empowering refugee children's sense of belongingness and their adaptation to new countries.

A review of the literature reveals that studies focusing on teachers' experiences in working with refugee children are grouped under certain research subjects. These

studies focused on challenges experienced by teachers and refugee children, language barriers (Mercan-Uzun & Bütün, 2016; Erçakır-Kozan, 2019; Savaşkan, 2019; Kara, 2020; Bucak, 2021; Garan, 2022; Çelik-Doğu, 2021; Günek, 2020; Dikici-Sığırtmaç, 2022; Özger & Akansel, 2019; Kardeş & Kozikoğlu, 2021; Özer-Aytekin & Sönmez-Ektem, 2019) and teachers' instructional techniques (Bucak, 2021, Gelir, 2022; Özger & Akansel, 2019; Culha & Yılmaz, 2023; Lunneblad, 2017; Rizzuto & Steiner, 2022; Karsli-Çalamak & Kılınç, 2021).

One of the most remarkable experiences of teachers working with refugee children is related to language diversity (Erçakır-Kozan, 2019; Savaşkan, 2019). This situation is twofold for both refugee children and their teachers. In terms of teachers, İçduygu and Şimşek (2016) asserted that language diversity is a critical problem in the teaching and learning process. Kılıç-Özmen (2020) also found that the most significant challenge faced by teachers is language. Yaşar and Amaç (2018) and Toker-Gokce and Acar (2018) pointed out that language barrier is the main challenge for teachers. Therefore, teachers' language-related challenges and problems are focal points of some researchers in the literature (Günek, 2020; Dikici-Sığırtmaç, 2022; Özger & Akansel, 2019; Kardeş & Kozikoğlu, 2021; Özer-Aytekin & Sönmez-Ektem, 2019).

Günek (2020) focused on the problems experienced by preschool teachers who teach refugee children. The researchers collected data from 61 participants. Teachers' narratives were gathered around their challenges related to language problems, communication process, and inability to communicate with the family. Teachers pointed to language barriers as an example of the difficulties they faced in implementing the pre-school curriculum and refugee children's difficulties with time management in activities due to the language barrier. Another study with similar findings was conducted by Özoruç and Dikici-Sığırtmaç (2022). They aimed to explore the problems experienced by early childhood teachers in teaching refugee children. As a result, they found that early childhood teachers' major problem was the language barrier. Teachers experienced difficulties in communicating with refugee children and parents. Further, Mercan-Uzun and Bütün (2016) conducted a study to identify challenges faced by preschool teachers who have Syrian refugee

children in their classrooms. Data was collected from 16 preschool teachers through semi-structured interviews. According to findings, the majority of teachers expressed their challenging experiences with refugee children who do not know Turkish. Similarly, Erçakır-Kozan (2019) also conducted a study to investigate experiences of educational stakeholders in working with refugee children. She collected data through semi-structured interviews from school administrators, teachers, parents, and children. Teachers accepted language diversity as one of the major challenges while working with both refugee children. and parents. Finally, Bucak (2021) conducted a case study to evaluate the administration of schools attended by refugee children from the perspectives of teachers. The findings showed that language is still a problem for both teachers and refugee children. Teachers emphasized that the presence of refugee children in their classrooms has a negative impact on the education process, due to language differences.

Some studies implied that teachers do not have necessary skills and knowledge to manage language diversity in the classroom. In the study of Bulut et al. (2018), challenges faced by teachers during refugee children's Turkish learning process was investigated. It was discussed that teachers did not have enough knowledge and skills to solve problems arising from language diversity. Besides, teachers complained about their lack of educational background to work effectively with refugee children (Erçakır-Kozan, 2019).

Although the abovementioned studies showed teachers' challenges related to language diversity, it appears that teachers developed some strategies to communicate with refugee children. For example, teachers stated that they preferred to use body language, translation programs, support from bilingual children and school staff who know Arabic to communicate with refugee children (Özoruç & Dikici-Sığırtmaç, 2022). Özer-Aytekin and Sönmez-Ektem (2019) also conducted a study to investigate the views of early childhood teachers who have refugee children in their classroom. The findings yielded that teachers' communication strategies with refugee children are divided into two categories: by speaking Arabic or by getting support from bilingual school staff or students. Çelik-Doğu (2021) conducted a study with preschool teachers to explore the status of refugee children who do not know

speak Turkish. She collected data from 14 preschool teachers through semi-structured interviews. The findings showed that refugee children used body language to communicate with their teachers and local friends. Bucak (2021) also found that teachers received support from other refugee children of the same nationality who speak both Turkish and Arabic. In Kara's (2020) study, teachers stated that they used bilingual students or translators to communicate with refugee children.

As mentioned before, language diversity has twofold effects. In addition to teachers' experience with language diversity, as stated by Mercan-Uzun and Bütün (2016), language diversity is also accepted as the first and most critical problem faced by refugee children coming to our country. For instance, refugee children also experience difficulties with their local peers due to the low level of Turkish. Specifically, it was argued that language is also a determining factor in friendships with local children (Çelik-Doğu, 2021). The findings implied that refugee children mostly preferred to play with children with whom they spoke the same language or alone (Çelik-Doğu, 2021). Özger and Akansel (2019) also designed an ethnographic case study on refugee children and parents in preschool classrooms. It was concluded that language diversity is a determining factor in establishing peer culture in the classroom. Refugee children's level of Turkish determined the quality of their relationship with local children. As the Turkish language skills of refugee children increased, they started to make friends with local children. Similar to these findings, Kardeş and Kozikoğlu (2021) explored the relationship between local and refugee preschool children and concluded that language diversity and lack of skills in speaking Turkish is a great barrier for these children's interaction. Mercan-Uzun and Bütün (2016) stressed that language barrier is not only affecting teachers' relationship with refugee children, it also negatively affects the relationship between local and refugee children.

The third party in educating refugee children is refugee families. Teachers' experiences related to language-diversity are also evolving around refugee families. Özger and Akansel's (2019) study pointed out that the role of the family and social environment in children's learning Turkish and their easy adaptation to school has been of great importance. When refugee families supported their children's Turkish



language learning, children's adaptation to school became easier. However, studies yielded that teachers have difficulties in communicating with refugee families at the desired level due to language diversity. Related to refugee parents' interaction with school and teacher, Dicle's (2020) study found that the language problem prevents the family from being involved in the school. For this reason, it was suggested that language training should be given to families, and they should speak Turkish at home. Karsli-Çalamak et al. (2020) also conducted a study for the investigation of how teachers' understanding of refugee families' engagement evolved. Participant teachers involved in two-year professional learning in a project. The results yielded that when a shared multicultural context was created to come together with refugee families, teachers realized these parents' diverse forms of capitals. For example, teachers acquired knowledge about family-related barriers for engagement in their children's education. In brief, While Dicle's (2020) study suggests the need for language training for better quality parent-teacher communication, Karslı-Çalamak et al. (2020)'s study shows the importance of bringing parents and teachers together in meaningful contexts.

In addition to the difficulties experienced by teachers, the fact that refugee families do not learn the language negatively affects the Turkish language learning process of refugee children. For instance, Savaşkan (2019) also interviewed three Turkish teachers to explore their perceptions, needs and challenges in working with Syrian refugee children. Teachers expressed that refugee children still are not good at speaking Turkish because of parents speaking Arabic at home. Just as they develop strategies for communicating with refugee children, they also use some strategies when communicating with refugee families. For example, in Bucak's (2021) study, teachers narrated that as methods of communicating with refugee families, they preferred methods such as having another child act as a translator, sending voice recordings, and using google translate.

In addition to the language differences and the challenges arising from these differences, the presence of a child from another culture in the classroom has led teachers to reconsider their teaching methods and techniques. In this regard, some researchers focused on teachers' instructional strategies in working with refugee

children (Bucak, 2021, Gelir, 2022; Özger & Akansel, 2019; Culha & Yılmaz, 2023; Lunneblad, 2017; Rizzuto & Steiner, 2022; Karsli-Çalamak & Kılınc, 2021).

Importantly, education is the biggest help for refugee children to adapt to society. UNHCR (2000) emphasized the healing effect of education on refugee children and mentioned the contribution of education to the adaptation process. Therefore, teachers have a facilitator role in the refugee children's adaptation process. In this regard, the results of some studies pointed out teachers' instructional techniques for helping refugee children's adaptation. For example, in Özger and Akansel's (2019) study, preschool teachers with refugee children in their classrooms mentioned that they used some methods to support children's adaptation to school and Turkish language learning. Furthermore, according to a study conducted by Bucak (2021), the teachers mentioned some of the strategies they use for the integration of refugee children in the classroom. These include giving language courses, seating refugees and local children together, mentoring children, ensuring that children spend time together and preparing the ground for group work. Besides, in Kara's (2020) study, teachers stated that they planned group games and activities to facilitate the adaptation process of refugee children. Lunneblad (2017) investigated teachers' strategies in the integration process of refugee children and families into preschool environments. Teachers preferred to use culturally reflexive and flexible strategies to empower refugee parents and children. Besides, teachers highly value building a relationship of trust with parents and children. In Çelik-Doğu (2021)'s study, it was revealed that teachers make educational preparations to support the educational process of refugee children. Otherwise, the use of traditional methods used for local students while teaching refugee students causes refugee students to fall behind in activities and negatively affects their learning. This indirectly leads to behavioral problems (Kılıç-Özmen, 2020). Finally, Karsli-Çalamak and Kılınc (2021) explored the evolving experiences of teachers of refugee children within the scope of inclusive education. The data was collected from teachers of refugee children in a public school in a disadvantaged neighborhood in the Turkish capital, home to a large number of Syrian refugee students. The findings revealed that when it comes to teachers' conceptual and practical aspects related to education of refugee children, social justice issues are a major component.

Learning Turkish is another step for refugee children's adaptation process. Some researchers focused on language activities with refugee children (Gelir, 2022; Rizzuto & Steiner, 2022). Gelir (2022) examined teachers' flexible language strategies in a monolingual preschool classroom. The classroom in which study was conducted included a higher number of Syrian children. Data was collected through observations and semi-structured interviews. It was observed that although Preschool Education Curriculum does not contain bilingual practices, teachers allowed children to change their language between home language and Turkish. In another study conducted by Rizzuto and Steiner in 2022, it was aimed to understand how teachers' instruction can be enhanced through transformative read-alouds. Transformative read-aloud means that there is a shift in the dialogue between children and teachers. During read-alouds, refugee children found opportunity for peer connections and equitable instructions. This process promotes children to reflect on their experiences.

In summary, conclusions from these studies yielded that language is still a major factor affecting teachers' practices and relationship between refugee and local children. The language barrier remains an unresolved and insurmountable problem for teachers (Mercan-Uzun & Bütün, 2016; İçduygu & Şimşek, 2016). This result is common to many studies (Özger & Akansel, 2019; Kardeş & Kozikoğlu, 2021; Özer-Aytekin & Sönmez-Ektem, 2019). Teachers generally reported difficulties in communicating with refugee children. On the other hand, there were teachers who found strategies to communicate and tried new methods such as body language. The difference in language affects not only teacher practices but also refugee children's relationship with local children (Çelik-Doğu, 2021; Özger & Akansel, 2019).

On the other hand, studies showed that teachers use diverse instructional techniques in teaching refugee children. Specifically, they designed these activities to facilitate refugee children's adaptation process. For example, while some teachers designed play-based activities and songs (Özger & Akansel, 2019), some teachers designed group games and activities for adaptation of refugee children (Kara, 2020). On the other hand, some teachers still have problems implementing activities (Culha & Yılmaz, 2023).

### **2.3.2. Studies on Teachers' Strengths in Working with Refugee Children**

Strengths means the emphatic and powerful parts of the conditions (Şensin & Yılmaz, 2021). Considering the difficulties that teachers experience when working with refugee children, the strengths they have in overcoming these difficulties matter in working with refugee children. In the literature, some studies focused on teachers' qualities in working in a refugee context. For example, with the work of Kirk and Winthrop (2007), their follow up interviews with teachers revealed the characteristics of "alternatively qualified teachers' ". These qualified teachers have powerful qualities compared to unqualified teachers. They know how to protect children's well-being, provide extra course content for children's learning, and focus on social integration.

Additionally, Namro (2016) conducted a qualitative study with teachers in Sweden to figure out their competencies in working in a refugee context. The findings revealed four competencies of teachers. These are social skills, planning and prioritization, flexibility, and didactics. Social skills theme represents teachers' interest and understanding and effort to build relationships and humility. The majority of teachers believed that showing genuine interest in refugee students and being sensitive to their interests is an important part of working with them. They also stated that it is important to have information about where refugees come from during the education process. One remarkable finding under this theme stated that creating a safe and healthy environment and relationship is critical for students who are in a culturally and linguistically new environment. The second theme, planning and prioritization, highlights teachers' concern for the planning process in teaching refugee children. The flexibility theme includes teachers' flexibility in working with traumatized refugee children. Besides, some teachers used their flexibility and competence as a strategy in cohesion. These teachers in Sweden stated the importance of having cultural understanding and language development as well. The final theme, didactics, describes teachers' patience and clarity. The teachers explained their strengths as being patient, having good communication skills and being open to them. According to Namro (2016), recognizing diversities and paying attention to them is one of the critical competencies of teachers. An effective way of working with refugee children

is to establish a continuous close relationship with them. In this case, the teacher is expected to be able to use the ability to be aware of their own shortcomings and strengths (self-awareness) in the relationship. Besides, it was stressed that teachers should have the ability to express their emotions and recognize children's emotions in working with refugee children.

Biasutti et al. (2020) also worked with Italian teachers to understand teachers' practices. They collected data from 29 teachers. The data revealed two important features of teachers: creativity and flexibility. Teachers explained that they had to find new and creative ways to facilitate social interaction inside the classroom and promote attendance at schools.

### **2.3.3. Studies on Teachers' Needs in Working with Refugee Children**

The conflict that erupted in Syria in 2011 led to a massive influx of refugees to Türkiye. Since then, the steps taken for the education of refugee children have resulted in multicultural and multilingual classrooms in the Turkish context. This situation has increased the need for some requirements for teachers in the education process. Therefore, some researchers focused on teachers' needs in teaching refugee children. While some studies examine the needs are related to teachers' knowledge and skills (Richardson et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2022; Roxas, 2010; Kanu, 2008; Culha & Yılmaz, 2023; Hoot, 2011), other needs are related to language diversity (Richardson et al., 2018; Özel and Erdur-Baker, 2023; Tanış and Özgün, 2022; Tarım, 2015; Taş & Minaz, 2021; Atasoy-Çiçek, 2017; Korkmaz, 2019; Erdem, 2017; Youn, 2016, Saritaş et al., 2016). Besides, teachers mentioned their needs for materials, support mechanisms and teaching resources.

Importantly, training of teachers in the refugee context is the key area in which requires practical and theoretical attention (Jalbout and Bullard, 2021). Supporting this argument, several studies yielded teachers' need for knowledge and skills required to work effectively with refugee children (Richardson et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2022; Roxas, 2010; Kanu, 2008; Culha & Yılmaz, 2023; Hoot, 2011). Given that the education of refugees is a crucial issue that needs to be considered, the reshaping of

teacher education programs is a global issue. However, despite the critical effect of teacher training to work effectively with refugee children, a literature review on teachers of refugees (Richardson et al., 2018) stated that only a few countries focus on professional development of teachers of refugee children and provide them with enough skills and knowledge. In other words, teachers are inadequately prepared to work with refugee children (UNICEF, 2022; Roxas, 2010; Kanu, 2008). For instance, Mogli (2020)'s study showed that teachers evaluated the pre- and in-service teacher training as insufficient. Teachers reported that they need education about cultural background and information about different cultural and linguistic systems. In addition to cultural systems, providing information about refugee children's religion and psychological situation is another need of teachers. They stated their desire of training to provide psychological support and interact with traumatized refugee families (Mogli et al., 2020). Kolegija (2020) also highlighted in her focus group study that teachers needed to know multicultural contexts, experiences, and perspectives. They also needed training to recognize traumatized refugee parents and children. Additionally, Shriberg et al. (2010) highlighted teachers' concerns about dealing with refugee children' psychological and educational needs. In a study conducted by Kovinthan-Levi (2019) with pre-service teachers, teachers stated that although they were aware of the needs of refugees, they did not see a course on how to meet these needs in teacher training programs.

This is also the case for Türkiye. The Ministry of National Education has a duty to organize in-service training for in-service teachers. Besides, the Council of Higher Education is responsible for the content of teacher training programs in universities for pre-service teachers. However, studies conducted in Türkiye showed that teachers do not feel well prepared to work in a refugee context. For example, in one study, teachers stated that they did not know how to work with traumatized refugee children (Özel and Erdur-Baker, 2023). On the other hand, it is not enough to be aware of the traumas, needs and psychological conditions of refugee families and children. Specifically, it is known that providing training on multiculturalism from the undergraduate level will improve their perceptions and practices of multicultural competence (Çapçı & Durmuşoğlu, 2022).

In addition to in-service training of teachers, preparation of pre-service teachers before graduation empower their skills and knowledge to work with refugee children. One of the effective ways to achieve this is to provide multicultural and intercultural opportunities for pre-service teachers. Kovinthan (2016) asserted that providing intercultural experiences to preservice teachers is a need in today's multicultural society. Intercultural experiences is defined as establishing direct contact and interaction with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Garmon, 2005). However, Leavy (2005) argued that their exposure to and experiences with diversity is limited. Nevertheless, it is also recognized that the experience provided contributes to pre-service teachers' development of positive student-teacher relationships and helps them understand the experiences of refugee children (Ferfolja, 2009). Therefore, it is recommended that multicultural experiences should be provided for pre-service teachers before graduation (Tanış & Özgün, 2022). Besides, these experiences and training should be long-term because single course or single-session field experience is insufficient to change teachers' attitude towards diversity (Garmon, 2005).

Preschool education is different from other levels of education with its play-based approach and unique curriculum. In preschool education, the teacher's approach to the child and the activities planned by the teacher are different. For this reason, it is normal for teachers to have more differentiated needs in the preschool period. For this reason, preparation of preschool teachers is found to be critical because they are the main responsible for refugee children's development and education in school context. Culha and Yılmaz (2023) suggested that in-service training such as seminars can be beneficial to help preschool teachers. Besides, Hoot (2011) conducted a study to explore teachers who assist young refugee children in school. Their study revealed some challenges faced by teachers. For example, teachers had a lack of information on children's cultural and social background. Teachers also needed professional development to understand how appropriate academic assessment can be for refugee children. Hoot (2011) recommended that teachers need to be prepared to work successfully with refugee children.

The needs of preschool teachers are also similar across countries. For example, some studies on preschool teachers in the neighboring countries of Greece and Türkiye

reveal this situation. Primarily, Greece is one of the countries hosting refugees. Therefore, the International Step by Step Association (2020) published a guidebook for preschool teachers working in refugee camps. In this guidebook, they conducted a need assessment to figure out teachers' competences and needs in working with refugee children. It revealed that both in-service and pre-service teacher education, preschool teachers are not efficiently prepared to work in diverse settings. Also, teachers complained about their loneliness and lack of enough support in working with refugee children. In this need assessment, teachers' needs were identified under five themes: they need better understanding of diverse structures of school setting, cultural background of refugees, knowledge on providing psychosocial support to refugees, knowledge on hands-on activities and getting peer support. For Türkiye, Tanış and Özgün (2022) recommended that needs assessments should be conducted in schools and schools should be provided with interpreter support. In addition to Turkish teachers, Syrian teachers working in other countries have some professional needs. A study was conducted by El Ghali and Riggall (2019) to understand skills of Syrian teachers in Lebanon. They discussed that Syrian teachers needed additional training to know how to deal with socio-emotional issues. Teachers also wanted to get informed in detail about emergency-specific problems.

The abovementioned studies stressed that although teachers need new knowledge and skills to be able to work with refugee children, both in-service and pre-service teacher training programs are not qualified enough in meeting these needs of teachers (Kovinthan-Levi, 2019). This implication might be related with teachers' language-related experiences in diverse settings. As Richardson et al. (2018) emphasized, language is the subject in which teachers most need help and support and would like to receive additional training. However, studies in the field reveal that teachers receive inadequate training (Özel and Erdur-Baker, 2023). Teachers who faced language problems along with inadequate training stated that they felt helpless. In this regard, teachers seek solutions to their needs by referring to other resources to help them with communication. For instance, teachers stated that they need assistants in the classroom to help them communicate with refugee children (Shriberg et al., 2010). Similarly, Save the Children in Uganda published a report (2018) and stressed



that teachers need assistant teachers who can speak both languages to help main teachers during instructions.

While collecting data, teachers were using The 2013 Turkish Preschool Education Program. After data was collected, Preschool Education Program was revised. In this program, one of the principles of preschool education is described as *"The preschool education program is sensitive to differences and multiculturalism. Children should be supported to recognize individual, social and cultural differences and respect others."* In addition, it was suggested that development and learning take place in a cultural environment, so teachers should take into account that children's family life has an impact on their learning. An "Inclusive" feature was added as one of the main features of the program and it was taken as a basis that all children learn together in the same classroom with their differences. In this context, differentiated practices have been proposed in the preschool education program to cover the individual and cultural differences of children. In addition to the principles and features of the program, updates were also made to objectives and indicators. For example, in the explanation of the outcome *"Uses language for communication"* in the language development area, the statement *"In order for children to gain awareness of communication styles, gestures and mimics in different cultures in order to understand differences, qualified children's books, videos, visuals, etc. containing the lifestyles of different cultures can be used."* was added. In addition, the indicators of the outcome *"Examines different cultural characteristics"* in the Social-Emotional Development Area were expanded and indicators were added for children to protect different cultural heritage and assets and to compare their own culture with other cultures. As a suggestion for activities, the teachers were advised to do a variety of activities. Children could be exposed to different aspects of their own and other countries' cultures such as different languages, architectural structures, holidays, food, clothing, music, toys, traditional games and dances, money. Teachers can also talk about the cultures of people living in other countries, listen to local songs, read children's books reflecting different cultures and choose toys to reflect different cultures (MoNE, 2024). Besides, in activities such as games, science and art, children need to understand the instructions in Turkish, act in accordance with the instructions and complete the activity. Like the 2013 program, the new program includes many

language-based activities such as music, drama and early literacy. However, due to language diversity, studies yielded that teachers have difficulties in communicating with refugee children. For example, in Günek's (2020) study, preschool teachers stated that they have the most difficulties in implementing the curriculum due to language barriers. The language barrier prevents refugee children from receiving instructions. On the other hand, teachers' language-related challenges were attributed to the teachers' lack of language training on the subject. For example, Tanış and Özgün (2022) investigated the experiences of preschool teachers working with refugee children. Participants expressed their challenges in communicating with refugee children in the adaptation process. It was recommended that teachers training programs should be rearranged by considering the multicultural structure of Türkiye. This suggestion was supported by Tarım (2015). She conducted a study with preschool education preservice teachers' to learn their views on multilingual education. The teachers were asked which training and internship they had received so far had influenced their views on the education of multilingual children. 14 out of 15 teachers reported that they had no professional experience or educational background in multilingual education. In addition, teachers stated that they did not feel prepared to teach in a classroom with a majority of children whose native language was not Turkish. Therefore, Tarım (2015) suggested that there is a need for courses to increase the awareness of pre-service teachers and to teach methods and techniques related to multilingualism. Teachers also stated that they would like elective courses on multilingual education to be included in the education program. Finally, Atasoy-Çiçek (2017) collected data from preschool teachers to explore problems they face while working with children who do not know Turkish. Teachers' narratives put forward that they need conferences, seminars, and in-service training to solve language-related problems. They expected the support of the ministry to develop and implement a multicultural education program.

Megalondou and Vitoulis (2022) emphasized that teachers' professional competence play a critical role in coping with language diversity in diverse settings. However, their study revealed that in-service teachers' lack of self-confidence in meeting needs of refugee children and coping with language barriers. As a solution to this situation, teachers in different studies reached a common suggestion (Korkmaz, 2019; Erdem,

2017; Günek, 2020; Sarıtaş et al., 2016). In Erdem's (2017) study, teachers recommended to the Ministry of National Education that refugee students should first learn to read and write in the Latin alphabet with a teacher who knows Arabic and learn Turkish at the same time. Similarly, Korkmaz (2019) interviewed preschool teachers to understand their views on solutions to problems faced by refugee preschoolers. Preschool teachers stated that refugee children should receive Turkish language training before starting school and that they expect families to be included in this training. Günek (2020) also found that teachers need additional Turkish language training for their refugee children. Teachers stated that language training could be provided to teachers, refugee families or refugee children before they start school. Finally, Sarıtaş et al. (2016) interviewed teachers and administrators to reveal problems at schools where foreign students enrolled. In this study, participants suggested that language training should be provided to foreign students before they start school and during their schooling.

Apart from the need for training and language support, teachers need materials, support, and teaching resources to promote refugee children's learning. Support mechanism is critical because a prerequisite for providing refugee children with a quality education is to provide teachers with adequate resources and support (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). However, a common point of several studies showed that teachers do not get enough support from authorities in working with refugee children. For example, in a study conducted by Sarıtaş et al. (2016) school administrators emphasized that they could not cooperate with the MoNE in solving the problems with foreign students in their schools and that they did not receive support. The administrators' suggestion on this issue was to create a special unit in national education and an orientation program for adaptation of foreign students. Further, Korkmaz (2019) also pointed out that preschool teachers need support for inter-institutional cooperation such as the Presidency of Migration Management.

According to Youn (2016), early childhood teachers stated that they need culturally responsive additional resources to be beneficial for children and families from diverse backgrounds. In the Turkish context, Günek (2020) also concluded that preschool teachers need psychological, educational, motivational, or material

support. These findings support Roxas's (2010) study implying that teachers do not have enough support in terms of material and in-service training. These conclusions implied that there is a need for teachers to receive adequate support when working with refugee children and to work in cooperation with the authorities in terms of their teaching experience.

In summary, conclusions from these studies show the importance of teacher education for teachers' competences in working with refugee children. Seminars (Culha & Yılmaz, 2023), multicultural experiences (Tanış & Özgün, 2022) and intercultural experiences (Kovinthan, 2016) were found beneficial to empower teachers' capabilities in teaching refugee children. Considering the content of teacher education programs, teachers need to learn knowledge on providing psychological support to traumatized refugee children (Mogli et al., 2020), their educational need (Shriberg et al., 2010) and multicultural contexts (Kolegija, 2020). Their lack of knowledge and skills also negatively affect their experiences with language diversity and requires new needs (Özel & Erdur-Baker, 2023). For example, while some teachers need assistant teachers to communicate with refugee children (Shriberg et al., 2010), other teachers need related courses to learn teaching methods and techniques in multilingual classrooms (Tarım, 2015). Finally, culturally responsive material is a need for teachers to work with refugee children (Youn, 2016) more effectively. Besides, teachers need cooperation with authorities such as MoNe in solving problems with refugee children (Saritaş et al., 2016).

#### **2.3.4. International Literature on Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is acknowledged as a student-centered approach to be used in diverse settings (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Gay (2000) stated that CRT is a pedagogical approach used by teachers to provide more meaningful and effective learning experience for diverse groups. CRT enriches students' learning by using cultural references and students' funds of knowledge. The multicultural nature of classrooms due to migration, globalization, etc. has led researchers to focus on teachers' CRT practices in recent years. These studies were related to teachers' culturally responsive self-efficacy (Evans, 2017; Siwatu, 2011;

Siwatu, 2007; Siwatu et al., 2009; Meka, 2015), teachers' culturally responsive practices (Gaias, 2019; Alaca, 2017; Kennedy, 2018; Bowe, 2022; Long, 2021; Hill, 2022; Arnette, 2022; Cohen, 2013; Durden et al., 2015; Bertone, 2020) and impacts of teacher trainings on culturally responsive practices (Ebersole et al., 2015; Skepple, 2011; Matkins, 2021; Alhanachi et al., 2021).

Teaching is regarded as a complex and fluid process because exposing new students, contexts and circumstances change teachers' teaching self-efficacy (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). Having a child from a diverse background might be a new challenge or situation for a teacher. Therefore, it was suggested to consider teachers' culturally responsive self-efficacy (Young et al., 2019). Several scholarly works conducted with in-service and pre-service teachers to investigate their self-efficacy beliefs while working with diverse contexts or gaining experience through diversity-related contents (Evans, 2017; Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu, 2007; Polydore, 2009; Meka, 2015). Some of the research concluded that teachers' culturally responsive self-efficacy varies based on different aspects of working with diverse groups (Siwatu, 2011; Polydore, 2009). For example, Siwatu (2011) designed an explanatory mixed method research to investigate preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. Based on the data obtained, the findings showed that preservice teachers were more competent in developing a good relationship with diverse students, building a sense of trust, using diverse instructional techniques, and promoting cooperative learning activities. On the other hand, they felt less competent to identify communication differences between home and school, get information about home culture of students and communicate with diverse parents. Siwatu et al. (2009) also assessed pre-service teachers' culturally responsive self-efficacy beliefs by using the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale. They collected quantitative data from 104 pre-service teachers. The findings revealed that preservice teachers' self-efficacy is higher in terms of designing various instructional methods, communicating with diverse parents, and establishing positive relationships with diverse students. On the other hand, teachers' self-efficacy is found to be low when they need to minimize the effects of cultural mismatch and integrate the culture of diverse students into teaching. The common results of two research suggested that teachers' level of self-efficacy is higher when they designed diverse instructional

techniques but lower in considering home culture of diverse students (Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu et al., 2009).

Teachers' culturally responsive self-efficacy is also determined by how they are prepared to work with diverse groups. Meka (2015) investigated early childhood teachers' self-efficacy in implementing culturally responsive teaching. The findings suggested that teachers' self-efficacy varied in implementing CRT. Meka (2015) discussed that teachers' scores of self-efficacies were correlated with their preparation to work with culturally diverse students. Evan (2017) also achieved similar results. Evans (2017) explored the culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy of preservice teachers. In this mixed method study, quantitative data was collected from 175 preservice teachers and afterwards, the researchers interviewed nine teachers. The results revealed that as the class level of the participant increases, their self-efficacy levels also increase. One of the reasons for this result might be that they found more opportunities to interact with diverse students. During interviews, teachers narrated that when they interact more with diverse students, they feel more prepared to work with them. Implications of the findings suggest that culturally responsive teacher training and having practical experience with diverse students play major roles in increasing teachers' culturally responsive self-efficacy (Evans, 2017).

As the abovementioned studies stressed, teachers' level of self-efficacy is related to teachers' culturally responsive practices. A wide array of literature investigated the culturally responsive practices of teachers (Gaias, 2019; Alaca, 2017; Kennedy, 2018; Bove, 2022; Long, 2021; Hill, 2022; Arnette, 2022; Cohen, 2013; Durden et al., 2015; Bertone, 2020). Various studies highlighted that teachers made efforts to integrate diverse cultural backgrounds into instructions and curriculum (Alaca, 2017; Durden et al., 2015). Alaca (2017) explored early childhood teachers' experiences of culturally responsive education. She collected data from six teachers in Toronto through interviews. Teachers expressed that they used both structured and unstructured activities while working with diverse children. They mostly incorporated celebrations of cultures into their educational plans. Correspondingly, Durden et al. (2015) conducted an ethnographic case study to understand how

preschool teachers understand CRT and implement related practices. Findings implied that teachers used more than one strategy to empower diverse children's socio-cultural growth and foster their integration. For example, teachers utilized cultural references in the teaching process by using books, family pictures or art works.

In terms of culturally responsive teaching practices, some researchers associated CRT with early literacy skills (Kennedy, 2018; Bowe, 2022). Bowe (2022) focused on how to increase early literacy skills by designing culturally responsive pedagogy. The researcher applied home visits, literacy coaching in native language, and used diverse libraries and promoted equity in parent engagement. This intervention program resulted in growth in children's early literacy skills when culturally responsive teaching was practiced. Additionally, Kennedy (2018) conducted a study to examine the effects of a culturally responsive reading curriculum on preschooler's literacy and phonemic skills. Researchers followed a case study approach and collected data from 4- and 5-year-old children. Findings showed that preschoolers' skills increased after they attended culturally responsive literacy activities.

A number of literatures stressed the importance of teachers' level of theoretical and practical knowledge to practice Culturally Responsive Teaching (Matteis, 2022; Long, 2021; Hill, 2021). Matteis (2022) argued in her study that although teachers have theoretical knowledge on culturally responsive practices, their implementations in the field varies. She aimed to explore teachers' knowledge on CRT practices to provide equitable curriculum and instruction for diverse students. Data were collected from teachers in grades K-5. The analyses yielded the following results: while teachers had some level of knowledge on CRT, they did not implement culturally responsive practices in the classroom environment. Although teachers expressed their perspectives on culturally responsive practices and gave examples of the use of modeling, embracing all culture in content, Matteis (2022) argued that she observed on the contrary during observations. It is recommended that teacher education programs need to be redesigned to support teachers' practical knowledge on CRT. Supporting this finding, Hill (2022) worked with high school teachers to understand their culturally responsive practices. Researchers collected data through

questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Based on Critical Race Theory, data was analyzed, and results showed that teachers think they do more culturally responsive practices than they actually do.

Long (2021) argued that teachers' culturally responsive practices and teaching techniques were insufficient. Based on this argument and conclusions drawn from other studies showing the relationship between teachers' preparation and their culturally responsive self-efficacy (Meka, 2015; Evan, 2017), it can be stated that in-service and pre-service training affects teachers' CRT practices (Ebersole et al., 2015; Skepple, 2011; Matkins, 2021; Alhanachi et al., 2021). The study of Ebersole et al. (2015) indicated how a graduate level course on ethnicity empowers teachers' activities that focus on teaching diverse ethnic groups. In that study, they designed a course that lasted two weeks for teachers to develop a perspective. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. Teachers were assigned to design culturally responsive teaching plans. Data analyses revealed teachers' activities focused on teaching diverse ethnic groups.

As mentioned before, Matteis (2022) suggested that teacher education programs should support teachers' practical knowledge. Correspondingly, studies of Skepple (2011), Tschida (2009) and Kidd (2008) stressed the importance and contributions of field experience or practical experience in terms of culturally responsive practices. Skepple (2011) conducted a study to understand the influence of teacher education programs on pre-service teachers' level of knowledge about CRT and their in-class practices. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers' pre-service training has an influence on their readiness to instruct diverse students. Also, having practical experience with diverse students increased pre-service teachers' preparation. Furthermore, Kidd et al. (2008) explored pre-service teachers' perceptions of which pre-service teaching experiences contributed to their culturally responsive practices. 19 early childhood teachers were involved in the study. Some teachers stated that having internships with diverse students had a significant impact on their culturally responsive practices. Tschida (2009) designed an ethnographic study to understand how elementary preservice teachers construct their conceptions of culturally responsive teaching and impacts of course and internship in this process. The



findings showed that courses provided opportunities to understand different perspectives of culture, race, and ethnicity. Besides, participants' level of knowledge and understanding regarding CRT were enhanced through internship because they had a chance to implement what they learned theoretically in the courses. Supporting this finding, Gorham (2013) investigated elementary teachers' strengths and needs to work with diverse students. One of the findings of the study implied that the more teachers have multicultural backgrounds during pre-service training, the more they respect cultural diversity.

Although teacher education programs have potential to empower teachers' culturally responsive practices, there are still some insufficient parts of the teachers' training (Bartow-Jacobs, 2019; Barksdale et al., 2002; Premier & Miller, 2010). Bartow-Jacobs (2019) explored how pre-service teachers discussed their field experiences. Participants expressed some difficulties in understanding and implementing culturally responsive teaching. For example, insufficiency in understanding culture, coping with personal prejudices, and having narrow views on cultural appreciation are some of the challenges. Similarly, Barksdale et al. (2002) investigated pre-service teachers' level of preparedness for literacy instruction with diverse students. The findings implies that preservice teachers did not perceive themselves as well-prepared to work with children from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, although there were multicultural topics in course contents in teacher education programs, pre-service teachers did not have enough knowledge about multicultural education. Premier and Miller (2010) also investigated how teacher training programs prepare pre-service teachers to work with children from diverse backgrounds. They designed this as qualitative research. Findings showed that teacher education programs are not enough to introduce cultural and linguistic diversity in schools. The researchers implicated that teacher education programs should be redesigned in terms of culturally responsive teaching. The implications of the findings suggest that teachers need more quality education at CRT.

In addition to pre-service teacher education programs, some researchers designed training programs for in-service teachers (Alhanachi, 2021; Matkins, 2021). Alhanachi et al. (2021) designed a study to improve teachers' culturally responsive

practices through professional learning communities (PLCs). In PLCs, participants worked on teaching practices on cultural diversity and designed a culturally responsive curriculum. The results showed that although PLCs changed the beliefs of all teachers toward culturally responsive teaching, they only changed knowledge and skills of some teachers. Also, Matkins (2021) designed action research to help novice teachers to understand the role of culture in teaching and learning. Participant teachers were involved in Community Learning Exchanges to understand diverse cultures. The findings revealed that if teachers were successful in implementing culturally diverse practices, they were better at understanding cultural influences. Besides, they were capable of designing culturally responsive classroom environments.

In summary, preservice, and in-service teachers had some level of self-efficacy for culturally responsive teaching. While they feel themselves more component in some practices of culturally responsive teaching, they need support in others. For example, the results of different studies (Siwatu, 2011; Siwatu et al., 2009) show that teachers' self-efficacy in designing diverse instructional methods is higher than other practices. On the other hand, conclusions drawn from some of these studies revealed that teachers integrated children's culture into the education process in some studies conducted with preschool teachers (Alaca, 2017; Durden et al. 2015). Besides, the association between CRT and literacy skills of preschoolers are focal points of some studies (Kennedy, 2018; Bowe, 2022). On the other hand, in light of some findings drawn from the studies (Matteis, 2022; Long, 2021), it can be concluded that teachers still need additional support to obtain required skills and knowledge on CRT because their culturally responsive practices were found to be low.

Finally, it was understood that preservice and in-service training had impacts on teachers' culturally responsive practices. Some results indicated that teachers need more practical knowledge and training to work with diverse students (Skepple 2011; Tschida 2009; Kidd, 2008). However, teacher education programs have some challenges and insufficient parts in preparing teachers for diverse classroom settings (Bartow-Jacobs, 2019; Barksdale et al., 2002; Premier & Miller, 2010).

### **2.3.5. Culturally Responsive Education Studies Conducted in Türkiye**

The wave of migration that started due to the unrest in Syria in 2011 has led to a more multicultural and multilingual classroom structure since then. For this reason, the focus of some researchers in Türkiye has been on teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices. The main goals of these studies were to investigate the effects of in-service and pre-service teacher trainings on teachers' level of readiness in CRT (Karataş, 2018; Özüdođru, 2018; Altunova & Kalender, 2022), teachers' culturally responsive practices, experiences, and needs (Paksoy, 2017; Pehlivan-Yılmaz & Günel, 2022; Tanış; 2021) and scale development studies to measure whether teachers have culturally responsive teacher competencies or their readiness for culturally responsive teaching (Karataş & Oral, 2017; Karataş, 2020).

Teachers, one of the most critical stakeholders of education, have an inevitable role and responsibilities in empowering societies by training individuals. From this point of view, providing a quality teacher training is a necessity to reach the desired purposes in education (Aslan & Sađlam, 2018). Considering today's multicultural and diverse structures of classrooms, teachers' training process has undeniable effects on teachers by preparing them to work in diverse contexts. Teachers should be provided with both practical and theoretical knowledge, skills, and experiences to be prepared to instruct diverse groups. In this regard, some researchers investigated the effects of in-service and pre-service training on teachers' level of readiness in culturally responsive practices and perceptions (Karataş, 2018; Özüdođru, 2018; Altunova & Kalender, 2022). Karataş (2018) evaluated primary education teaching undergraduate programs in terms of culturally responsive teaching. In the scope of this aim, he investigated knowledge, skills, and awareness of pre-service teachers about CRT and views of academics on undergraduate programs to raise culturally responsive teachers. The findings yielded that contents related to CRT were not included in the courses at sufficient level. On the other hand, pre-service teachers' level of personal readiness was found to be high while their professional readiness was not enough in terms of culturally responsive teaching. In brief, Karataş (2018) concluded that the teacher training program is insufficient to gain knowledge and

skills related to CRT to pre-service teachers. Correspondingly, Özüdođru (2018) investigated readiness level of preservice teachers for CRT and influences of pre-service training on preservice teachers' readiness for culturally responsive teaching. This study was designed as mixed method research. Data collected through Culturally Responsive Teaching Readiness Scale and semi-structured interviews. Özüdođru (2018) found that pre-service teachers felt highly ready for CRT. However, similar to the findings of Karataş (2018), pre-service teachers' level of personal readiness was higher than their professional readiness. The researcher discussed that the pre-service training program lacks practical implementations to prepare pre-service teachers for CRT.

Besides, Altunova and Kalender (2022) also conducted similar research to understand pre-service teachers' level of readiness for CRT. They used a Culturally Responsive Teaching Readiness Scale. As a result of the study, it was determined that pre-service teachers had high levels of readiness for CRT. Specifically, they had a remarkably high level of personal readiness while they had only high professional readiness. Conclusions drawn from these studies (Karataş, 2018; Özüdođru, 2018; Altunova & Kalender, 2022) yielded that teachers' personal level of preparation is higher than professional level of preparation for culturally responsive practices. This result can be evaluated that teacher education programs may be insufficient in offering quality professional skills to work with diverse groups.

To provide meaningful learning opportunities and empower students' achievement, it is suggested to integrate their cultural background into the curriculum (Gay, 2010). In this sense, teachers are expected to use culturally responsive practices in diverse settings such as context in Türkiye. A number of studies focused on teachers' culturally responsive practices and experiences (Paksoy, 2017; Pehlivan-Yılmaz & Günel, 2022; Tanış; 2021). Paksoy (2017) designed a study to understand how teachers incorporate the cultural values of students into the education process. She designed phenomenological research and collected data from 15 teachers through interviews. Paksoy (2017) concluded that although teachers have awareness of multiculturalism, multicultural education, and culturally responsive education, they showed superficial and limited attention towards diverse students. However, teachers

put effort into incorporating cultural references of students into education. For example, when course materials did not reflect cultural diversity, teachers concretized the content by using storytelling, visual materials, and exemplification during instruction. On the other hand, while teachers used music and local motifs to increase students' learning, they did not approach these techniques as an educational approach. Pehlivan-Yılmaz and Günel (2022) also investigated teachers' culturally responsive practices. Researchers used action research design and collected data from 30 participants by using semi-structured interviews and observations. The results yielded that participants have difficulties in implementing culturally responsive practices due to language barrier and lack of quality relationships between teachers and students.

Sarıdaş (2023) also conducted a study to identify culturally responsive school culture and design a roadmap to develop a culturally responsive school culture. He used mixed method research design and collected quantitative and qualitative data from teachers. At the end of research, he stated that culturally responsive school culture has three dimensions. These are technical, institutional, and managerial. Besides, teachers stated that they are aware of diversities and this awareness was shaped by in-service training. During interviews, it was understood that teachers' perceptions of diverse students includes students with disabilities, students with discipline problems and Syrian students. On the other hand, Sarıdaş (2023) investigated teachers' in-class practices and participants stated that they did not extra practices for diverse students because of rigid curriculum. Finally, according to teachers' narratives, they behaved lovingly towards diverse students and that they should pay special attention to them.

Finally, there are some scale development studies to measure whether teachers have culturally responsive teacher competencies or their readiness for culturally responsive teaching (Karataş & Oral, 2017; Karataş, 2020). First of all, Karataş and Oral (2017) developed a scale to measure the level of readiness for CRT. The data was collected from pre-service teachers. After Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis, it was concluded that the goodness of fit indices obtained were found to be high. In addition, as a result of the reliability measurements, it was found that the reliability coefficients were high. Karataş (2020) also developed the Culturally

Responsive Teacher Scale. He collected data from 481 teachers. After Exploratory Factor Analysis, it was found that scale has three sub-scales: pedagogical, sensitivity, awareness.

In summary, today's classrooms are multicultural and multilingual because of the migration influx from Syria and other countries in recent decades. This has led some researchers to investigate the CRT practices of teachers in Türkiye. In particular, the extent to which teacher education programs and teachers' professional development prepare them for CRT practices has been the subject of research (Karataş, 2018; Özüdoğru, 2018; Altunova & Kalender, 2022). For example, Özüdoğru's (2018) study with participants including pre-service early childhood teachers revealed that while teachers were personally prepared for CRT, they were less prepared professionally. On the other hand, conclusions from the studies (Tanış, 2021; Paksoy, 2017) examining teachers' views on CRT revealed that teachers have some challenges in experiencing culturally responsive practices. Specifically, results showed that communication is the major challenge for teachers (Pehlivan-Yılmaz & Günel, 2022; Tanış, 2021). On the other hand, specified curriculum guidelines prevented teachers from implementing extra activities for diverse students (Sarıdaş, 2023). On the other hand, when teachers' CRT practices are examined, it is seen that teachers use in-class and out-of-class teaching techniques (Tanış, 2021) and incorporate cultural elements into the curriculum (Paksoy, 2017). Finally, while teachers think that culture should be a part of education, they also express that they lack the self-efficacy to implement it (Karataş & Oral, 2015). Some of the aforementioned studies were conducted with teachers teaching at the primary school level and above, while others were conducted with mixed groups including in-service and pre-service preschool teachers. Although pre-school education is a group that needs to be addressed separately due to the age group and curriculum it deals with, to the author's knowledge, a study directly related to preschool teachers' views, experiences, and practices about CRT was not found in the reviewed literature.

#### **2.4. Summary of the Literature Review**

Culture is a word which has various meanings in different disciplines. In one definition, Zamfir and Vlăsceanu (1993) defined culture as a means to define

individuals' construction of knowledge and attitudes and set of symbols and act to be transmitted to the next generation. Culture includes the characteristics that form the identity of a society and distinguish it from others. Another concept that is closely related to culture is migration. Migration is defined as the process of moving or relocating people from one place to another for war, education, or economic reasons. At this point, people who migrate both take their own culture with them and meet the new culture of the country they migrate to and try to adapt to this situation. This dual situation leads to new cultural interactions. Both cultural and economic factors make migration a difficult situation for both migrants and host countries. Especially in forced migration caused by wars and conflicts, such as the wave of migration that started in Syria in 2011, the demographic structure of the host countries is also changing (Nizamoglu, 2022). This situation leads the host country to make arrangements in many areas from education to health.

As a bridge between Asia and Europe, Türkiye is one of the countries hosting migrants. The influx of refugees from Syria has become one of the serious issues to be addressed (Keskin & Yanarışık, 2021). In 2011, Türkiye adopted an open-door policy in the face of the migration wave caused by the conflicts that started in 2011 and took the necessary steps for the basic needs of migrants (Ihlamur-Öner, 2014). In 2013, it was realized that migrants were not short-term guests and regulations were made for the educational needs of refugee children. For example, in April 2014, Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection was released, which gave foreign students the right to enroll in public schools. In 2016, the PICTES project was launched, aiming to integrate refugee children into education. All these steps have led to changes in the demographic and cultural composition of classrooms and have contributed to teachers having new experiences, needs and strengths.

Although Türkiye has been exposed to an intense wave of migration from the Middle East in recent years, migration is a universal phenomenon, and for this reason, teachers' experiences have become a frequently examined topic in international literature. Especially the difficulties teachers experience with refugee children and their teaching methods are the focus of the studies (Bucak, 2021, Gelir, 2022; Özger & Akansel, 2019; Culha & Yılmaz, 2023; Lunneblad, 2017; Rizzuto & Steiner,

2022). Considering all these studies, it is seen that teachers have difficulties especially due to language differences. For example, teachers mentioned the difficulties they experienced while implementing the preschool curriculum due to the language barrier (Güneş, 2020). On the other hand, language barrier has influence on not only teacher practices but also refugee children's relationship with local children. It was found to be a determining factor in the relationship between refugee children and local children (Çelik-Doğu, 2021).

At this point, teachers' strengths and needs in working with refugee children also come to the fore. For example, Namro (2016) emphasized that one of the strengths of teachers is to pay attention to differences. In terms of teacher needs, one of the most important needs is the provision of knowledge and skills to teachers. This issue is found not only in national but also in international literature (Richardson et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2022; Roxas, 2010; Kanu, 2008; Culha & Yılmaz, 2023; Hoot, 2011). The common point of these studies is that teachers are not professionally prepared to work in diverse settings. For example, according to Hoot (2011), teachers lack knowledge about the cultural background of the children they work with. Another need emphasized by teachers is related to communication. The Turkish Preschool Education Program includes a number of language-based activities such as drama and music. This situation brings to the forefront the language problems experienced when working with refugee children. For example, Tanış and Özgün (2022) found that participants expressed their challenges in communicating with refugee children in the adaptation process.

The studies mentioned in this section of the study focus on teachers' experiences, needs and strengths in a specific time period. To the author's knowledge, there is no study in the literature that focuses on teachers' experiences over time by learning from their own experiences, while literature points out the need for a study in this scope. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to focus on the journey of preschool teachers who have been working with refugee children for at least three years in terms of their experiences, strengths, and needs.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the procedures and methodological considerations employed throughout the study. It encompasses the research questions, research design, participants, context of the study, researcher's role, data collection instruments, pilot study, procedures for data collection and analysis, considerations of trustworthiness and ethics, as well as limitations inherent to the study.

#### 3.1. Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the journey of teachers working with refugee children in terms of their experiences, strengths and needs over the years. Secondly, teachers' perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching was examined. For these purposes, the following research questions were investigated in the current study:

1. How do early childhood teachers describe their teaching experiences with refugee children?
  - a. What are the previous teaching experiences of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - b. What are the current teaching experiences of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - c. If there is change, in what ways have teachers' teaching practices changed?
2. How do early childhood teachers describe their strengths and needs in working with refugee children?

- a. What are the previous strengths and needs of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - b. What are the current strengths and needs of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - c. If there is change, in what ways have teachers' strengths and needs changed?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers who have experience in working with refugee children about culturally responsive teaching?

### **3.2. Research Design**

Fraenkel et al. (2023) state that qualitative research studies investigate the quality of situations, relationships, materials, or activities. In contrast to quantitative studies, qualitative studies focus on holistic and detailed descriptions. In other words, researchers aim to describe situations, relationships, or phenomena in detail. One of the approaches to qualitative research is phenomenological research. Researchers' main goal is to investigate participants' perceptions of or reactions to specific phenomena (Fraenkel et al., 2023). In addition, according to Creswell (2007), phenomenological research describes common meanings for individuals who share lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon. Participants' life experiences are carefully described and analyzed to make the meaning and understand their life (Flick, 2009). It is considered that individuals who experience the same phenomenon share an essence or essences (Merriam, 2009). The essence is the fundamental meanings people commonly experience through a widespread phenomenon (Merriam, 2015). The researcher aims to focus on individuals' common experiences, describe the essence of the experiences, and reduce these experiences with a phenomenon (Hatch, 2017). For this aim, researchers are expected to define different people's experiences, collect them, and analyze them. At the end of the research, the experiences of various individuals are analyzed (Merriam, 2009), and a phenomenon is described (Creswell, 2007).

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, seeking to delve deeply into the experiences of teachers with a minimum of three years' experience working with

refugee children. Specifically, the methodology aligns with phenomenological research, a widely utilized approach in the field of education (Hatch, 2017), aiming to elucidate the lived experiences and perspectives of educators in this context. Fraenkel et al. (2023) stated that in phenomenological research, data is collected through in-depth interviews. I used a three-interview series to conduct interviews with participants to learn about their past and current experiences, needs and strengths. The three-interview series is also known as phenomenological interviewing (Seidman, 2006). Seidman (2006) stressed that phenomenological interviewing is a tool to understand similar conditions of participants by powering their stories.

### **3.3. Context of the Study**

According to Moustakas (1994), comprehending the associated relations hidden in the experience in the context of a given circumstance is the critical aspect of phenomenological study. Providing a “thick description” related to the context of the study provides meaningful information about the context in which participants’ experiences happen. Additionally, defining settings is helpful in determining the boundaries of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I presented the context of the study by explaining in detail the characteristics of the districts, and the physical and administrative structures of the schools.

This study involved visiting preschools located in four districts on the Anatolian side of Istanbul: Sultanbeyli, Pendik, Çekmeköy, and Sancaktepe, with the aim of identifying teachers meeting the specified inclusion criteria. These criteria included a minimum of three years' experience working with refugee children and the presence of at least one refugee child in the classroom. The selection of these districts was guided by predetermined criteria tailored to the study's objectives.

First of all, based on the data provided by the Presidency of Migration Management, Sultanbeyli, Sancaktepe, and Pendik are the districts on the Anatolian side of Istanbul where a high number of people under temporary protection live (Özaslan, 2019). In addition to these three districts, Çekmeköy was included. The General

Directorate of Development Agency researched the socio-economic development ranking of districts of Istanbul (2021). When we look at the development ranking of Istanbul districts, it is seen that Çekmeköy is in the last ten in the development ranking together with the other three districts included in the study. For this reason, Çekmeköy district was also included in the study due to its immigrant population and similar socio-economic level.

I preferred to select a district that has similar socio-economic status because in a study on the urban preferences of refugees living in Istanbul (Özaslan, 2019), an inverse relationship was found between the number of refugees living in districts they preferred and the socio-economic status of the districts where Syrians lived. These people tend to prefer living in districts with low socio-economic status. Considering these factors, I visited preschools in four districts, recruited 14 early childhood teachers who met the inclusion criteria and volunteered to participate in the study.

When we look at the context of the preschools, all preschools are affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. They have a dedicated area and separate entrance on the bottom floor of a primary school. They are all regular preschool classrooms with typical learning centers, toys, and materials. All of the schools were dual- education schools. Children spend four and a half hours in the classrooms either in the morning shift or afternoon shifts. In morning shifts, they started their daily routine at 08:30 a.m. In afternoon shifts, schools start at 1:30 p.m. Preschools implement the National Preschool Education Program. All groups of children in the classroom of the participant teacher were 5–6-year-old children. Parents of children in the preschools have low or middle socio-economic level.

The number of local children and refugee children in classrooms varies and is presented in Table 3.1. When we look at the number of refugee students in the classes, it is seen that there are a maximum of three refugee children. While T3, T13 and T14 have three refugee children in their classes, T2, T4, T6 and T11 have two refugee children. The remaining teachers (T1,T5,T7,T7,T8,T9,T10,T12) have one refugee child in their class.

**Table 3. 1.** Number of Local and Refugee Children in Classrooms

School	Teachers	Number of Local Children	Number of Refugee Children
A	T1	30	1
B	T2	26	2
C	T3	26	3
C	T4	19	2
D	T5	26	1
D	T6	26	2
D	T7	28	1
E	T8	26	1
F	T9	22	1
G	T10	24	1
H	T11	25	2
I	T12	25	1
J	T13	22	3
J	T14	30	3

### 3.4. Participants

Purposive sampling is used when a researcher selects participants based on the specific purpose of the research by using their personal judgement (Fraenkel et al., 2023). The aim of the current study is to investigate teachers' journeys in terms of their experiences, needs, and strengths while working with refugee children. To reach this goal, it is necessary to reach teachers with certain characteristics. So, in order to reach the teachers who have experience in working with refugee children in these preschools, the purposive sampling method was chosen.

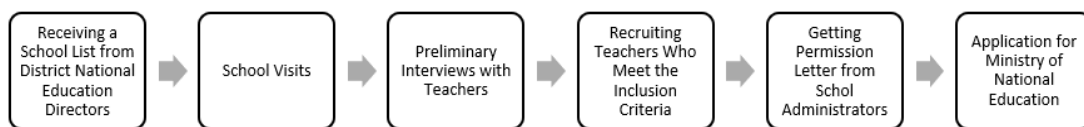
While selecting participants appropriate for the purpose of the study, it is necessary to set some inclusion criteria. For the current study, two inclusion criteria were set before selecting the participants. The first inclusion criterion is to have three or more years of working with refugee children. Related academic studies indicate various years referring to experienced teachers. The range is between 2 and 33 years (Caspari-Sadeghi & König, 2018). According to Jensen et al. (2012), experienced teachers are defined as having more than two years of teaching experience. Given the study's focus on exploring the journey of teachers, it was essential to recruit participants with sufficient experience working with refugee children, enabling them to articulate their experiences, needs, strengths, and observed changes over time.

Therefore, a minimum of three years' experience was established as a criterion for inclusion in the study. This duration was deemed necessary to ensure participants' depth of insight into the complexities of their interactions with refugee children. The second inclusion criterion is having at least one refugee child in the classroom because the current study also focuses on teachers' experiences, needs, and strengths.

### 3.4.1. Participant Selection Process

After determining inclusion criteria, a list of schools with refugee children was obtained from the District Directorates of National Education and visits were carried out according to this list. I visited preschools in Sancaktepe, Sultanbeyli, Çekmeköy and Pendik. A pre-interview was held with the teachers with refugee children in their class. In the pre-interview, the teachers were asked how many years they had been teaching in total, how many years they had been teaching refugee children, the provinces where they had worked before Istanbul, and how many refugee children were currently in their classrooms. The study included preschool educators with a minimum of three years of experience working directly with refugee children, with at least one refugee child present in their classrooms. A total of fourteen preschool teachers meeting these criteria were identified for participation. Subsequently, permission letters were obtained from the school principals of the participating teachers to apply to the Ministry of National Education for research permission.

Figure 3.1 presents the procedure of the participant selection process from the beginning to the application of the Ministry of National Education.



**Figure 3. 1.** Procedure of participant selection process

All teachers graduated from early childhood education departments of universities in Türkiye. Only one teacher is male. Their total years of experience vary from 3 to 20 years. Table 3.2 presents teachers' years of total experience and years of teaching

experience with refugee children. The teacher with the most experience working with refugee children has seven years of experience, while the teachers with the least experience have been working with refugee children for three years.

**Table 3. 2.** Teachers' Years of Teaching Experience

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Years of Teaching Experience in Total</b>	<b>Years of Teaching Experience with Refugee Children</b>
T1	11	5
T2	15	6
T3	15	5
T4	8	3
T5	9	7
T6	3	3
T7	15	4
T8	11	5
T9	14	3
T10	9	3
T11	8	3
T12	12	3
T13	20	3
T14	12	5

The number of refugee children in the teachers' class is presented in Table 3.3 below. The majority of early childhood teachers have only one refugee child in their classroom. On the other hand, three teachers currently have three refugee children.

**Table 3. 3.** The number of refugee children in the teachers' class

<b>The Number of Refugee Children</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1	7
2	4
3	3
Total	14

### **3.4.2. Characteristics of Participants**

The following section presents detailed information about teachers and their characteristics. T1 is the first teacher included in the study. She is 32 years old and has been working as a preschool teacher for eleven years in total. She has been working in Sultanbeyli for the last nine years. She had no experience working with

refugee children in the regions where she worked before. She said she decided to become a teacher because she loves children very much. Her favorite thing to do in the classroom is to play educational games. She says she feels like she belongs when instructing a preschool group. She has a basic level of English as a foreign language. Apart from in-service training, she has attended training such as Montessori, robotic coding, org, and drama to improve herself. She did not receive any training in working with refugee children. Her class size is 30 and she has one refugee student. She has been working with refugee children for five years in total.

T2 is the second interviewee and is 43 years old. She has been working as a preschool teacher for fifteen years in total. She has been working in Sancaktepe for one and a half years. Before İstanbul, she worked in Balıkesir, Çanakkale and Samsun. She said she had experience working with refugee children in these cities. As a teacher, she said she liked playing games in the classroom the most. She does not know any foreign languages. She attended children's games and drama courses to improve herself. She stated that she did not take a course on refugee education. While the class size was 26, two of them were refugee children. She has been working with refugee children for six years in total.

T3 is 40 years old and has 15 years of teaching experience. She has been working in the same school for eight years. Before Sancaktepe, she worked in Adıyaman and had no experience in working with refugee children there. She said she preferred to be a preschool teacher because she loves and cares for children. She said that she liked doing experiments and art activities the most in class. She does not know any foreign languages. She stated that she attended courses such as first aid and storytelling throughout her professional life to improve herself. She said that she received inclusion training from the Ministry of National Education on working with refugee children. Her class size is 26, and three of them are refugee children. She has five years of experience working with refugee children.

T4 is an 8-year teacher and 31 years old. She has been working in the same school for three years. Before Pendik, she worked in Şanlıurfa and gained experience working with both refugee and local children who do not speak Turkish. She said



that she chose pre-school because she loves children and enjoys routine conversations with children the most. She speaks English at a basic level. She stated that she attended many courses to improve herself (Ukulele, French cuisine, trekking). She stated that she did not attend a course related to the education of refugee children. Her class size is 19 and two of them are refugee children. She has a total of 3 years of experience working with refugee children.

T5 is another interviewee. She is 33 years old and a 9-year teacher. She worked in Bitlis and other districts of İstanbul before working in Sancaktepe. It is my first year in Sancaktepe. She stated that she gained experience working with refugee children in Ümraniye and Zeytinburnu, two districts of İstanbul. She stated that being a preschool teacher was her dream when she was a little girl and that her favorite thing to do with children is to play games. She knows English at a basic level. She has attended training such as family counselling, play therapy, and storytelling therapy. She did not take any course on the education of refugee children. While the class size was 26, one was a refugee child. She has a total of 7 years of experience working with refugee children.

T6 is a 26-year-old and three-year teacher. She has been working in the same school in Sancaktepe since the beginning of her career. She decided to be a teacher because she thinks she works very well with children. She said that she likes playing educational games the most in the classroom. She speaks Arabic at A1 level. She said that she did not attend any courses or receive any training related to refugee children. The class size is 26 and 2 of them are refugee children. She has a total of 3 years of experience working with refugee children.

T7 is another interviewee. She is 41 years old and has 15 years of teaching experience. She stated that she had worked in Kars before Sancaktepe. However, she said she had her first experience with refugee children at the school where she works. She said she chose teaching because she loves children very much and likes movement plays the most. She does not know another language. She said that she attended Montessori training to improve herself. Nevertheless, she did not attend the

course on the education of refugee children. Her class size is 28, and she has one refugee student. She has been working with refugee children for four years in total.

T8 is a 35-year-old teacher. She has 11 years of experience in total. She said that she worked in Şanlıurfa before Sultanbeyli and had her first refugee students there. She stated that she chose teaching because she thought it was the ideal profession for a woman. She said that she enjoys doing activities and playing games the most. She speaks basic English. She said that she did not attend any professional courses to improve herself. In addition, she stated that she did not receive any training for refugee children. The class size is 26 children and one of them is a refugee child. She has been working with refugee children for five years in total.

T9 is 38 years old and has been working as a preschool teacher for 14 years. She has been working in the same school for seven years. Before Sultanbeyli, she worked in Erzurum but had no refugee experience there. She said she became a teacher because she took her own teacher as a role model and enjoyed painting with children the most. She said that she started to learn a little Arabic. She said that she did not participate in any training to improve herself except in-service training and that she did not receive any training to work with refugee children. There are 22 locals and one refugee child in her classroom. She has been working with refugee children for three years in total.

T10 is the only male teacher in the study. He is 31 years old, and he has a total of 9 years of teaching experience. Before Sancaktepe, he worked in Şanlıurfa and gained experience working with children who do not speak Turkish. He said he works with the younger age group because he thinks this group is more innocent. He said that he liked playing games with children the most. He speaks English close to a native level. He said that he had not attended any courses other than in-service training. The class size is 24, and there is one refugee child. He stated that he received online training in Urfa to work with refugee children. They learned how to overcome the language barrier and treat these children. In total, he has three years of experience working with refugee children.

T11 is another interviewee. She is 30-years old and has a total of 8 years of teaching experience. Before Sancaktepe, she worked in Ağrı and gained experience working with refugee children in Ağrı. For seven years, she has been working in the same school. She stated that she became a teacher because she liked teaching and her teacher very much. She liked art activities the most. She stated that she did not participate in any training other than in-service training. Her class size is 25 and two of them are refugee children. She attended inclusive training to work with refugee children. She has been working with refugee children for three years in total.

T12 has 12 years of teaching experience in total. She is 33 years old. She has been working in the same school for eight years. Before Çekmeköy, she worked in Esenyurt which is another district of İstanbul. She started teaching refugee children in Sancaktepe. She does not know any foreign languages. She said she reads articles and attends university seminars to improve herself. However, she said there are no courses on the education of refugee children. Her class size is 25, and she has one refugee student. She has a total of three years of experience working with refugee children.

T13 is another teacher included in the study. She is 40 years old and has 20 years of total experience. Before Pendik, she worked in Yalova for the first time. She is currently working in Pendik for 13 years. She faced refugee children in her current school. She said that she became a preschool teacher because she believes children should receive preschool education early. Her favorite thing to do in the classroom is experiments. She said she participates in public education courses and sports activities to improve herself. The class size is 22, and there are three refugee children. She said that she did not take any courses on the education of refugee children. She has been working with refugee children for three years in total.

T14 is the last interviewee. She is 34 years old and has 12 years of total experience. Before Sancaktepe, she worked in Hakkari and Samsun. Although there were no refugee children in these cities, she said there were some children who did not know Turkish. She said that she enjoys doing drama with children the most. She speaks English at a basic level. She said that she could not attend courses other than in-

service training due to the intensity of the training. She said she did not receive training in working with refugee children. The class size is 30, and there are three refugee children in total. She has been working with refugee children for five years in total.

**3.5. Data Collection Instruments**

According to Moustakas (1994), the primary data collection strategy in qualitative studies is interviewing the participants. The researcher is expected to conduct in-depth interviews with individuals with similar experiences (Patton, 2002). In phenomenological studies, interviews take place as an interactive process and include open-ended questions. During the interviews, researchers and participants take part in a conversation directed by questions related to the purpose of the study. Also, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stressed that interviewing becomes a necessary step when the researcher cannot observe the situation or phenomenon. This study centers on exploring the journey of teachers in relation to their experiences, needs, and strengths in working with refugee children. Data collection employed three interview series following Seidman's (2006) framework. Table 3.4 provides an overview of the data collection instruments utilized to address the research questions systematically.

**Table 3. 4.** Data Collection Instrument and the Corresponding Research Question

<b>Data Collection Instrument</b>	<b>Corresponding Research Question</b>
Three-Interview Series (The first, the second and the third interviews)	How do early childhood teachers describe their teaching experiences with refugee children?
Three-Interview Series (The first, the second and the third interviews)	How do early childhood teachers describe their strengths and needs in working with refugee children?
Three-Interview Series (The first and the third interviews)	What are the perceptions of teachers who have experience in working with refugee children about culturally responsive teaching?

### **3.5.1. Three-Interview Series**

The study employed a series of three interviews, following the approach of phenomenological interviewing methods, to gather insights from participants who have shared experiences. According to Seidman (2006), phenomenological interviewing is applied to individuals who experience similar conditions so that this situation strengthens the power of the story. A three-interview series is a method to gather in-depth information from participants. Therefore, three interviews were conducted with each early childhood teacher during the semester.

The study comprised three interview series, with each interview serving a distinct purpose. In the initial interview, following Seidman's (2006) guidelines, participants' experiences pertaining to the study's context and objectives were explored. The primary aim of this first interview was to gather information regarding participants' backgrounds and life experiences leading up to the present moment. For the current study, the data was collected through face-to-face interviews for this aim in the first interview. For instance, I asked teachers questions about their teaching philosophy, how many refugee children there are in their classrooms, their memories of their first-year teaching refugee children, and their thoughts on including children's cultures in the education process. The second interview phase is dedicated to delving into the specific experiences of participants in their interactions with refugee children. Interview questions were formulated to aid participants in reconstructing the nuanced details of their experiences. Rather than soliciting participants' opinions, this interview aimed to elicit rich descriptions of their encounters and interactions with refugee children. For the current study, I collected in-depth data about teachers' experiences while working with refugee children over the years. The data was collected through metaphor cards in the second interview. For example, I asked teachers questions such as “When you think about the X years you have been teaching refugee children, has there been a change in how you communicate with refugee children?”

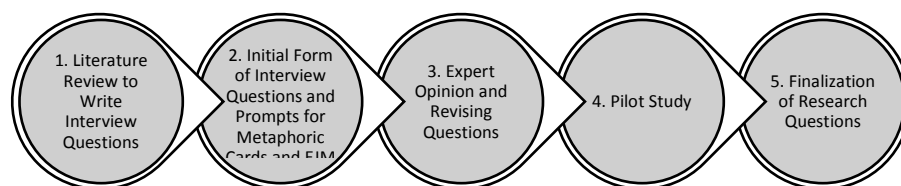
As a second example, I asked, “ “When you think about the X years you have been teaching refugee children, has there been a change in the relationship between local

children and refugee children?” This is a semi-structured interview, so I asked teachers some sub-questions. I asked them how they communicated with refugee children in their first years, how they are currently communicating with refugee children, what are the communication difficulties they experienced during this process. For the third interview, the researcher is expected to ask the participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences (Seidman, 2006). The data for the last interview was collected through Educational Journey Mapping. I asked teachers to draw on their years of teaching refugee children by considering their communication methods, relationship with refugee parents, relationship between local and refugee children, needs, and strengths. Then we talked about their drawings, I asked the teachers about the most prominent place among the drawings, what the drawing conveyed, who that person was if they drew a person in the drawing, why they drew that person and so on. In addition to the drawing, I asked the teachers additional questions, such as how they assessed their competencies in teaching refugee children and what they needed to become more professional.

In summary, in order to answer the research questions about teachers' teaching experiences, needs and strengths over the years, I focused on teachers' experiences, needs and strengths in all three interviews. By collecting data from three different sources, I aimed to get more in-depth data on this topic.

#### **3.5.1.1. Development of Three-Interview Series Schedule.**

Before conducting interviews with early childhood teachers, I conducted a literature review to write interview questions. I have searched articles and academic books related to refugee children, the education of refugee children and teacher experiences. Then, I formed the initial questions in accordance with the purpose of each interview and data collection technique during the interview process. Figure 3.2 presents the steps of the development of three interview schedules. Each step is explained in detail.



**Figure 3. 2.** The Steps of Development of Three Interview Schedule

### **3.5.1.1.1. First Interview**

In the first interview, the participants and I had a face-to-face interview to learn the background of the participants. Therefore, interview questions were designed to gather information about the context of teachers who have experience working with refugee children. Besides, demographic information questions such as total years of experience, graduation, and educational background were included. Additionally, the initial interview functioned as an icebreaker, fostering rapport between the participants and the researcher. This facilitated participants' comprehension of the study's subject matter, enabling them to recollect their experiences with refugee children and their families in preparation for the subsequent interview.

### **3.5.1.1.2. Second Interview**

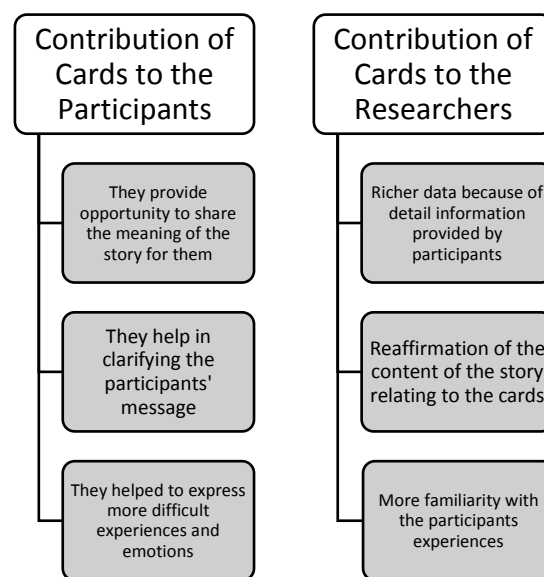
In the second interview, I used metaphor cards to understand early childhood teachers' experiences, needs, and strengths while working with refugee children and their families. Teachers were asked about changes, if any, in their communication methods with refugee children and their families, their observations on the relationship between local and refugee children, the teaching methods and techniques they use while working with refugee children, their needs in this process and the strengths they see in themselves. Detail information related to metaphor cards is presented below.

In social studies, the research topic can sometimes be abstract or sensitive to discuss due to ethnic and cultural issues and diversities. In this situation, conveying experiences, ideas, and thoughts may not always be verbally sufficient (Karnieli-

Miller et al., 2017). Participants may have difficulties expressing their story due to the research topic. Therefore, techniques such as metaphor cards are accepted as effective means for participants to express their stories (Karnieli-Miller, 2017). These cards are also recognized as projective tools because they are helpful techniques for understanding participants' experiences and thoughts that are hard to reach through direct questioning techniques (Catterall & Ibbotson, 2000).

Metaphor cards also enable researchers to conduct studies in multicultural settings because they allow participants to express themselves more deeply about the experiences narrated through the cards. They also adapt to diverse ethnic and cultural groups (Lee Ping, 2012). They can be used as a collaborative activity during interviews designed to stimulate the imagination with various comments that enhance communication and encourage expression. Cards expand researchers' and participants' capacity to listen, respond, and truly hear each other without judging or competing. By using metaphor cards in the interviews, researchers can understand the stories of interviewee's more deeply, and interviewees can express their stories in a meaningful way. On the other hand, participants can express their stories more clearly and comprehensively by referencing the cards (Karnieli-Miller, 2017).

In Figure 3.3, I present the potential benefits of metaphoric cards for researchers and participants, adapted from Karnieli-Miller et al. (2017).



**Figure 3. 3.** Benefits of metaphoric cards, adapted from Karnieli-Miller et al. (2017).



Metaphor cards have been used by social workers, storytellers, teachers, and researchers for many years to investigate participants' narratives. Lugina et al. (2004) conducted a study employing card-sorting techniques to examine the transition process of motherhood. Their findings indicated that this method facilitated greater participant engagement and yielded more comprehensive insights into participants' experiences. In another study, Karnieli-Miller et al. (2017) investigated metaphor cards' contribution to understanding the stories or messages in the interviews. They conducted interviews with 25 participants. As a result of the study, it was revealed that metaphor cards facilitate participants' expression and help them to tell more comprehensive stories about themselves. This study implied that metaphor cards enrich the data collection procedures of researchers.

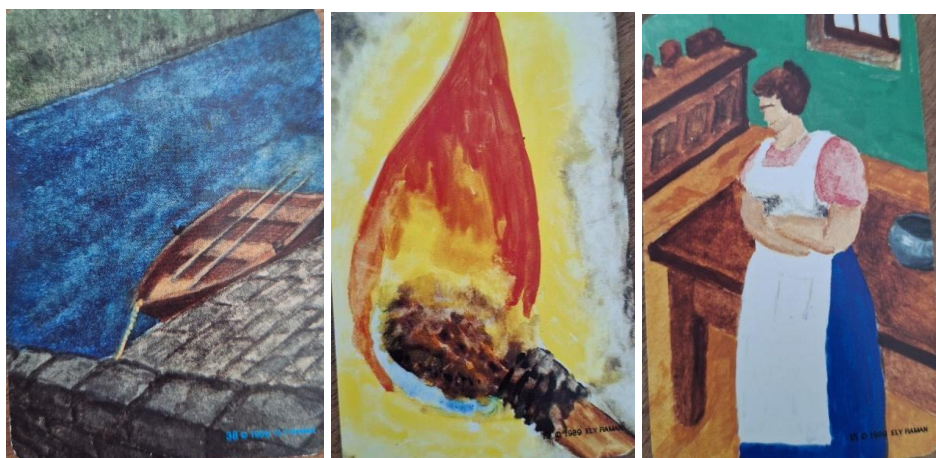
I selected to use metaphor cards in the current study because I aimed to investigate teachers' stories working with refugee children. The topic includes cultural and ethnic issues, which might have made it hard to discuss with teachers about their experiences over the years. This technique encourages individuals to give more information about their experiences (Barton, 2015). In this regard, metaphor cards helped the present study enrich narrative interview with teachers (Karnieli-Miller, 2017).

The current study has no predetermined meanings for the metaphor cards. According to Stockton (2018), participants' narratives are created based on their own experiences; therefore, there are no true answers or interpretations for the cards. Instead, teachers' ideas that are conveyed through metaphor cards were evaluated. Besides, there are a number of techniques to use metaphor cards. They can be used as a choice or ordering technique. Participants can choose from decks of cards or order cards in a specific manner (Levin-Rozalis, 2006). In the current study, these cards were used as both chosen and ordering techniques. Teachers chose cards that were appropriate to their stories and sorted them chronologically if there was a change in their experiences.

To summarize, I used metaphor cards as a tool to talk about details of teachers' experiences, needs and strengths while working with refugee children over the years.

I selected a set of metaphor cards published by Oh-Publishing because they are more objective, reliable, and valid (Lahad, 2000). Oh-Publishing prints many decks for use by researchers and various groups. Among the many types, the SAGA deck was selected to be used in this study. The SAGA deck is a deck that provides the drawings necessary for participants to tell their stories. As mentioned, metaphor cards have no specified meanings or evaluation criteria (Popova & Miloradova, 2014). According to Lahad (2000), researchers can make their own set of cards by using images in journals and postcards. What matters in interviews with metaphor cards is the participants' stories instead of the cards they selected.

Some examples are presented below of metaphoric cards in the card set:



**Figure 3. 4.** Examples of Metaphor Cards

Before the beginning of the interview process, a prompt is read to give participants information about the second interview's aim and what is expected from teachers using metaphor cards. The prompt states that

*“In this meeting, data will be collected through cards. After a conversation about the questions, you are expected to select at least three and at most five cards that evoke associations with the question. When choosing a card or cards for the questions in our interview, I want you to consider the change, if any, in your teaching experience over the years. Changes, developments, positive or negative points and all your experiences, if any, in terms of teaching and education over the years constitute the focus of this meeting. If there has been a change in your experience, I expect you to sort the cards you*

*have chosen chronologically. After card selection, there will be a question-answer and discussion section about why you select these cards.”*

To conduct an interview with the facilitator role of metaphor cards, researchers put the metaphor cards on the table in front of the teachers. Then, the researcher asks the teacher questions about their experiences with refugee children, their needs and strengths in this process, and their journeys over the years. After each question, the researcher first waits for the teacher to answer the questions verbally. Then the researcher asks them to choose at least three and at most five cards that matched their answers and evoked a connotation of the topic. If the teacher talks about a change in teaching experience over the years, the researcher asks them to sort the cards chronologically by year. Afterward, they discuss why they choose which card and what it evokes in them. In this way, all questions are completed.

#### **3.5.1.1.3. Third Interview**

In the third interview, data was collected through "Educational Journey Mapping (EJM)" to end the study and summarize the process. Interview questions were designed accordingly.

EJM is a technique that represents various dimensions of the human experience, which are then explained through text and conversation. According to Annamma (2017), maps show how people encounter and construct racial, ethnic, and political boundaries. EJMs are used in research because they humanize research through interaction. Besides, Barton (2015) highlighted that drawing is a valuable data collection technique because it causes in-depth conversations between participants and teachers.

Educational Journey Mapping has been used as a data collection tool in some studies in the field of education. For example, Wagner (2019) conducted research to understand stories of students with disabilities from diverse races, class, and gender groups. As the main data collection tool, Wagner (2019) used semi-structured interviews and EJM to collect data. He involved five special education students in

the study. In the first meeting, he gave them a written prompt about drawings. students in the study. In the first meeting, he gave them a written prompt about drawings. Then, he gave participants enough time to draw their educational journey chronologically. Participants drew a map to describe their school experiences from the start to the present.

In the third interview for the current study, I asked teachers to draw and visualize their journey throughout the year by giving the teachers colored pencils and A3 size paper. Before starting, a prompt was given to teachers explaining the aim of the third interview and what is expected to be drawn in their drawings. The prompt states that

*“I would like you to chronologically draw your educational journey from the first time you started teaching refugee children to the present. Take the year the refugee child first came to your class as a starting point. Make your drawing by thinking about your process until the last year. The points I want you to include in your educational journey drawing are people who influence you while teaching refugee children (colleagues, families, children, other people, etc.), your needs in your teaching process, your strengths as a teacher, teaching methods and techniques that are useful/not useful for you in the process, your communication methods with refugee children and their families.”*

Participants are expected to draw an educational journey mapping of their years working with refugee children. After the drawing part is finished, there is an interview about teachers' drawings.

Considering the aims of the interviews mentioned above and the methods used, I formed the initial form of interview questions. Experts in the early childhood education field sought an opinion regarding the quality and content of the questions. Experts include a professor and research assistant working in early childhood education, a Ministry of National Education specialist with a doctorate degree in early childhood education, and two preschool teachers with experience working with refugee children. Interview questions in the first, second, and third interviews were finalized based on expert opinions. Data will also be collected through metaphor cards for the second interview. Therefore, another expert opinion was obtained from a psychologist who also worked with metaphor cards. According to this expert's

opinion, feedback was received on the format in which the questions were asked to the participant and the content of the questions in accordance with the purpose of the research. Thus, the questions of the second interview were revised again according to expert opinions. Finally, the content and questions of the interviews to be used in the pilot study and the main study were determined this way. For the initial interview protocol, there were 25 questions in the first interview including demographic information questions, nine questions in the second interview and 11 questions in the third interview.

### 3.5.2. Pilot Study

Before the main study, a pilot study was conducted with four early childhood educators who had experience in working with refugee children. The pilot study had two main aims. First, it tested whether the interview questions were understood by teachers as intended by me as the researcher. Secondly, during the second interview, all data was collected via metaphor cards. The pilot study gave us a chance to practice the use of metaphor cards. Teachers work in the two districts where the main study was carried out. These districts are Sancaktepe and Çekmeköy. The teacher with the most experience working with refugee children has six years of experience while the least experienced teacher has three years of experience. The teaching experience information is presented in Table 3.5.

**Table 3. 5.** Experience of Teachers

<b>Name</b>	<b>Total Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Experience Years with Refugee Children</b>	<b>Number of Refugee Child in the Classroom</b>
A.	5	5	2
S.	15	5	1
Ş.	11	6	1
Z.	9	3	2

During the pilot study, the data collection procedures mirrored those of the main study. Prior to each interview segment, participants received concise explanations regarding the study's objectives and the interview process. Given that the interviews were audio recorded, participants were asked to provide consent for recording

purposes. Interviews were scheduled according to teachers' availability. Each interview was carried out in the school environment. Unlike the main study, a 3-day gap was left between the interviews.

After the pilot study, clarity of interview questions and prompts for the second and third interviews were evaluated. Some interview questions were rewritten to provide clarity. For example, I asked teachers that “Do you think it is important which cultural background children come from in the education process? Why not? Why not?” in the pilot study. After the evaluation, this question was revised. Instead, I asked teachers that “What are your thoughts about including children's cultures in education?” Then, all interview questions were revised and finalized. On the other hand, in the third interview, teachers are expected to draw their educational journeys. In the main study, the goal is to make this drawing during the third interview side by side with the researcher. In the pilot study, the first two teachers were asked to make this drawing at home and bring it to the third interview. The last two teachers were expected to draw this drawing during the third interview. The reason is to look at which method they focus more on as teachers are expected to think about and write down all their experiences with refugee children while drawing. As a result of the pilot study, it was decided to make the EJM drawings with the researcher in the third interview. Besides, prompts were prepared for metaphor cards and educational journey mappings and these prompts were revised after pilot studies. For the final interview protocol, there were 23 questions, including demographic information questions in the first interview, seven in the second interview, and 11 in the third interview.

### **3.6. The Role of the Researcher**

In phenomenological research, participants' experiences are collected and analyzed to understand the essence of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, it is highlighted that the role of the researcher is to identify the common or shared experiences of participants or essences (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2023). Essence is defined as commonalities of participants' perceptions towards the experience. In this study, my role as a researcher is to identify the essence of early childhood teachers

with experience working with refugee children. For this identification, I interviewed each teacher three times and collected data from fourteen teachers. In this way, I aimed to gain insight into different people's experiences and describe commonalities in these experiences.

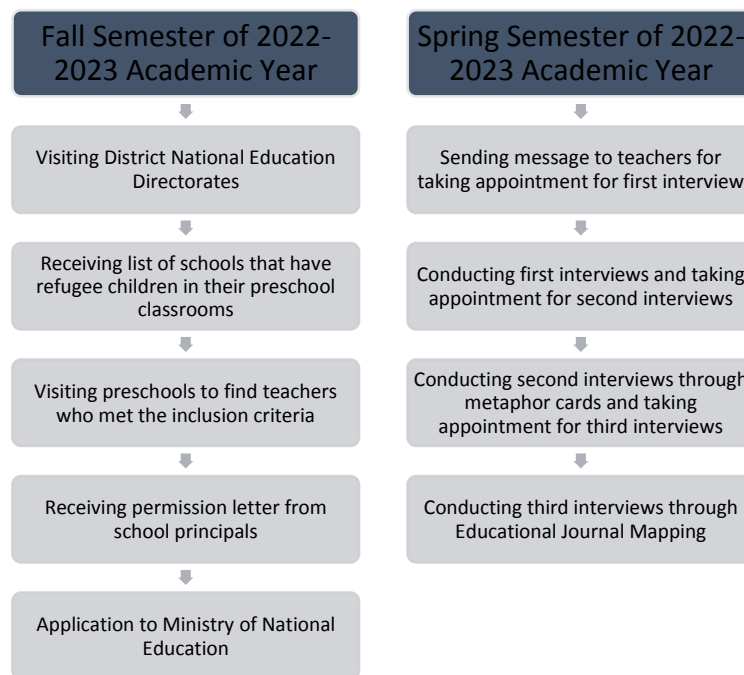
This study's primary data collection technique is Seidman's Three Interview Series (Seidman, 2006). So, there are some expectations for interviewers to consider. Throughout the interviews, I prioritized the teachers' time and dedication. Prior to each session, I provided an estimated duration and scheduled appointments at their convenience. In instances where last-minute changes occurred, such as unexpected meetings or absences, meetings were promptly rescheduled. Furthermore, I refrained from posing leading questions or interrupting participants, ensuring an open and respectful dialogue.

In this study, each interview with teachers has a different purpose. For this reason, I took distinct roles as a researcher in the interviews. Before the interviews, I told the teachers there were no right or wrong answers to the questions, but I was just researching their experiences. Teachers talked about the processes they experienced with refugee children and their families. In this process, I avoided judgmental expressions, glances, and facial expressions to make them comfortable in next meetings. The first interview aimed to obtain information about the teachers' relevant backgrounds. For this purpose, I took the role of an active listener in the first interviews and asked the teachers my questions. The purpose of the second interview was to explore the teachers' journeys by focusing on their past and current experiences. In this interview, data was collected through metaphor cards. I got training twice to be able to use metaphor cards. In addition to the training, I received a supervisory and got a card usage certificate. For this reason, in the second meeting, I took on the role of facilitator in addition to the active listener. By asking the appropriate questions to the teachers, I became a facilitator in choosing the card that evoked the most. In the last meeting, I asked the teachers to draw their journeys. Due to the nature of Educational Journey Mapping, teachers are expected to be comfortable while drawing, far from feeling "watched". For this reason, in the third interview, I assumed the role of a researcher drawing my own journey with the

teachers instead of being someone who "watches" or "controls" their drawings. In this way, they expressed themselves more easily.

### 3.7. Data Collection Procedure

In 2020, the Ministry of National Education changed the Research Application Permit Directive. According to the relevant article, "before long-term studies, researchers are required to inform schools and relevant persons in advance and submit the received school approval at the time of application." In the current study, I aimed to conduct three interviews with each early childhood teacher. That is why my study was evaluated as a long-term study. For this reason, I started to search for schools that met the criteria for the study before getting permission from the Ministry of National Education. Figure 3.5 presents the steps of data collection procedures.



**Figure 3. 5.** Steps of data collection procedures

First, I visited the District National Education Directorates of Sancaktepe, Sultanbeyli, Pendik, and Çekmeköy districts, where immigrant populations are concentrated in Istanbul (Özaslan, 2019). I received a list of schools with refugee children in their preschool classrooms from the District National Education



Directorates. Afterward, I visited these schools individually during the Fall Semester of the 2022-2023 Academic Year. During these visits, I first met with the school principals and explained the purpose of the study. After receiving the information that there are refugee children in preschool classrooms, I interviewed preschool teachers with the principals' permission. I asked the teachers how many years of experience they had in total working with refugee children. I briefly summarized that I would carry out an academic study in the spring term of the 2022-2023 academic year, the purpose of the study, and what will be done within the scope of the study to the teachers who meet the criteria of at least three years. I registered the teachers who volunteered to participate in the study. Later, I received a permission letter from the school principal stating that the study was approved to be carried out in their school. In this way, I visited all the schools and reached 17 teachers for the main study. I applied for permission to the Ministry of National Education with the permission letters I received from the school principals. Finally, I received permission from the Ministry of National Education to conduct the study.

In the first week of the Spring Semester, I sent a message to the teachers explaining myself and the purpose of the study. In the message, I asked them to make an appointment for the first interview at the appropriate time and hour. I explained to the teachers that the study could not be done in the classroom environment and that the interviews should be held separately to ensure their focus. Thereupon, the teachers made appointments for suitable days. Interviews were conducted in an empty classroom, in the school library, or in the kitchen section of the kindergarten when it was empty. Before the first interviews, consent forms were given to the teachers, and their permission to participate in the study was obtained again. The first interviews lasted three weeks. All interviews were audio-recorded. At the end of the first interview, each teacher was re-appointed for the second interview. In this way, there were approximately three weeks between each interview. At the end of the first interview, three teachers stated that they wanted to leave the study. The study was continued with 14 teachers.

Before the second interview, I completed the Metaphor Card Use Training organized by Kim Psychology and given by psychologist Ceren Sarı. In this training, we

focused on the history of metaphoric cards, determining the goal of card use and how metaphorical cards are used in studies. In addition, I met a psychologist who is an expert in metaphor card use and acquired knowledge about how to use cards and how to ask questions per the purpose of the study. On the appointment day, we met the teacher in an empty classroom with a desk. I read a prompt to the teachers explaining the study's purpose and what we would do with the cards. If there was anything unclear about the method, I explained it. I then placed all the cards in front of the teacher in an open way. As a first step, I asked the teacher a question about the topic. The teacher verbally explained his/her experiences over the years. In the next step, I asked them to choose at least three and at most five cards that evoked associations related to her experiences. If there was a change in their experience, I asked them to sort the cards chronologically from the first years to the last years. Then, we discussed why they chose which card and what it evoked about their experience from the beginning to the end. We continued the process without sorting if there was no change over the years. In this way, all questions were completed.

At the end of the second interview, I made appointments for the third interview, and we met again in an empty classroom with a table. I distributed A3 paper and colored pencils to the teachers. Again, I read a prompt stating the purpose of the study and my expectations from them. If they had any questions about the method, I answered them. I did not give the teachers a definite time to finish the drawing during this process. Due to the nature of EJM, teachers should avoid the feeling of being watched while drawing. For this reason, I made my own drawings while they were drawing. After the drawings were finished, we had a third interview with the teachers about their drawings. In this part of the interview, we summarized the processes of dealing with refugee children and ended the interviews.

### **3.8. Data Analysis Procedure**

The data analysis process for this study adhered to Creswell's (2007) methodology, which comprises six distinct steps for qualitative data analysis. Figure 3.6 delineates the sequential procedure for data analysis as outlined by Creswell (2007).



**Figure 3. 6.** The Steps of Data Analysis Procedure According to Creswell (2007)

According to Creswell (2007), data analysis starts with organizing and preparing data. For this step, I transcribed all the interviews. The study involved 14 participating teachers, each of whom underwent three interviews, resulting in a total of 42 interviews which were transcribed verbatim. To facilitate analysis, interviews with the same teacher were consolidated. Subsequently, I meticulously reviewed all qualitative data multiple times to grasp the overarching themes, general experiences, and needs of early childhood educators teaching refugee children. This iterative process contributed to establishing the credibility of the findings.

The third step of analysis is coding. This is the most demanding phase of analysis. In this study, I used open coding based on the literature. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), researchers break down data using an interpretive process. Researchers compare narratives or other pieces of data in terms of their similarities and differences. Further, Charmaz (2006) suggested that line-by-line open coding is best for the researchers to analyze interview transcripts. In the current study, I coded data inductively to conceptualize similarities and differences between stories of teachers over the years.

I used the MAXQDA Software program for qualitative analysis. MAXQDA helped me to organize data, assign codes, name categories, and construct initial themes. I read transcriptions and coded them line by line by doing open coding. In other words, I did not use predetermined themes or frameworks for coding the data. At the beginning of the coding procedure, 658 individual codes were generated from 42 interviews in total. Afterwards, I carefully scanned and examined initial coding. Some codes included only one quotation. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), if codes exist in one or two pieces of data, they can be eliminated. Therefore, I removed these codes from the analysis. 431 individual codes were remaining in the

analysis. Then, I realized that some codes refer to the same topics. I merged these codes, and 126 codes remained in the study.

In the current study, teachers selected metaphor cards to represent their experiences throughout the years in the second interview. Besides, teachers drew their EJMs to visualize their experiences with refugee children in the third interview. For the second interview, what the teacher conveys through the card is the critical aspect, rather than focusing on which card he/she chooses (Popova & Miloradova, 2014). The same applies to EJMs. EJMs and metaphor cards are the tools teachers use to convey their experiences. For this reason, in the analysis part, I coded narratives conveyed by teachers by using metaphor cards or Educational Journey Mapping. However, teachers' card selections or drawings were presented to support data in the findings and discussion parts.

For the coding part, I worked with a second coder to provide reliability of the findings. The second coder is a PhD student in the department of Early Childhood Education. She is experienced in qualitative research and analysis as well. The second coder randomly selected five interviews out of 14, read transcriptions, and coded data openly using the MAXQDA Program. Following this, the second coder and I engaged in collaborative discussions regarding merged codes and discrepancies between codes, ultimately reaching a consensus on certain codes. Intercoder reliability was assessed using the Miles-Huberman formula (1994), yielding a reliability coefficient of .93.

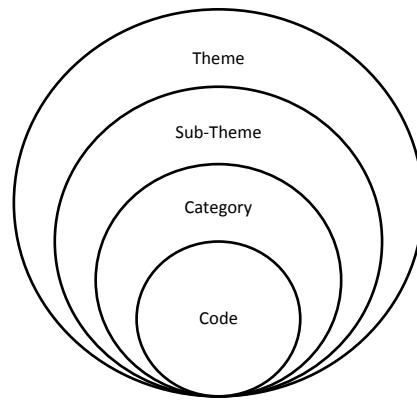
In the fourth step, I listed all codes and clustered the similar codes under the same categories. Furthermore, I reread all categories and constructed similar ones under the sub-theme and themes based on research questions in the next step. As a result, I labeled data as code, category, sub-theme, and theme, as shown in Figure 3.7. For example,

**Main Theme:** Teacher's Cultural Awareness

**Sub-Theme:** Teacher's Previous Cultural Self-awareness

**Category:** Cultural Blindness

**Code:** Perception of Child



**Figure 3. 7.** Steps of Constructing Themes

In this step, the second coder and I discussed categories, sub-themes, and themes. The fifth step of Creswell’s data analysis procedure is represented. Final themes, sub-themes, categories, and codes are presented in the text. Interpreting is the final step of the analysis procedure (Creswell, 2007). I interpreted data derived from teachers’ narratives by relying on existing literature. According to Merriam (2009), two sources for labeling themes are given to the research questions. These are the researchers and the literature. I conducted literature to label existing themes. The first four themes are compatible with Gay’s Culturally Responsive Teaching. These themes are Teachers’ Cultural Competency, Cultural Content/ Diversity in Curriculum, Communication Process with Refugee Children and Building Partnership with Refugee Parents. The fifth theme was constructed based on teachers’ observation on the relationship between local and refugee children. The final theme, Professional Competencies and Development, is related to teachers’ views on their culturally responsive competencies and the quality of in-service and pre-service training.

### **3.9. Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is critical in developing trust in qualitative findings (Stahl & King, 2020). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are four criteria to convey trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is about questioning how closely the findings are congruent with reality. It also represents the study’s internal validity (Shenton, 2004). One strategy to ensure

the credibility of the study is triangulation. Researchers aim to increase the study's validation through triangulation (Noble & Heale, 2019). In the current study, I interviewed each teacher three times. Although each interview served a different purpose, I got teachers to repeatedly talk about the same experiences to validate the data by referring to what they had mentioned in the previous interview. In this sense, data was collected using multiple methods at multiple times.

On the other hand, conducting three interviews with each teacher was an opportunity for prolonged engagement. I engaged with participants three times during the semester. Besides, I used member checking by presenting a summary of my findings to some of the early childhood teachers. I agreed with some teachers for this process and told them that after the analysis process, we would communicate face-to-face or via e-mail and do member checking. I reached out to these teachers and asked them if I represented their perspectives or not. They stated I represented their perspectives.

The second criteria is transferability which refers to generalizability in other words. In qualitative research, transferability is related to whether descriptions or cases apply to another situation or context (Stahl & King, 2020). One effective method is providing a thick description of the context, site, participants, and data collection method. In my current study, I provided a thick description of the schools, data collection instruments, and how I collected data through face-to-face interviews, metaphor cards, and Educational Journey Mapping.

Dependability is the third criterion of trustworthiness. Triangulation is a method to ensure the reliability of the data. In this study, data were collected by interviewing teachers more than once. Furthermore, to enhance the reliability of the results during the analysis phase, I enlisted the assistance of a colleague with a PhD in early childhood education to serve as the second coder. This collaboration supported the confirmability of the data, aligning with the final criterion for trustworthiness, which pertains to objectivity.

### **3.10. Ethical Issues and Considerations**

Creswell (2007) stated that ethical considerations must be considered carefully in qualitative studies because these designs include focusing deeply on participants'

lives, experiences, and environments, asking detailed questions about them, and spending a long time in the field. Therefore, ethical issues were followed in the current study. Before starting data collection procedures, I applied for permission and received approval from the Research Center for Applied Ethics at METU. A consent form was given to early childhood teachers to inform them about the purpose of the study and data collection procedures. There was no deception in the current study. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. At the same time, it was stated that they could pass on the questions that they felt uncomfortable with.

Audio recording was used in the data collection process, and consent was obtained from the teachers both verbally and in the consent form. The actual names of the teachers were not used in the study. Each teacher was given a pseudonym. At the same time, the names of the schools were kept confidential in the study. Within the scope of the study, teachers were asked to describe their memories and experiences with refugee children and their families. During the sharing of experiences, the teachers used pseudonyms for refugee children and their families to ensure the privacy of these children and families. It was also stated that the audio recordings would only be listened to by the researcher and deleted after they were transcribed.

### **3.11. Limitations**

As a researcher, I followed the qualitative design rules. However, there are some limitations to this study because of its nature. To begin with, the current study was conducted with early childhood teachers who work in Sancaktepe, Pendik, Sultanbeyli and Çekmeköy. The findings are limited to the experiences, strengths and needs of these teachers working in four districts. Other districts of İstanbul or another city in Türkiye may produce different results. Besides, the findings may not be generalized to other early childhood teachers who are working with refugee children. The second limitation is that the main data collection method is interviewing participants. Teachers were expected to remember their past memories regarding their experiences, strengths, and needs. So, data is limited to teachers' self-reported experiences, strengths and needs while working with refugee children.

There was no observation in the current study to evaluate teachers' actual practices with refugee children. Therefore, certain reliability and validity issues were followed to meet the study's criteria for validity and reliability.



## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

This phenomenological study focused on early childhood education teachers' experiences, needs and strengths in working with refugee children over the years. It was designed to investigate the journey of teachers throughout the years. In this section, I will share teachers' narratives accompanied by metaphor cards and Educational Journey Mappings. The following research questions were answered.

1. How do early childhood teachers describe their teaching experiences with refugee children?
  - a. What are the previous teaching experiences of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - b. What are the current teaching experiences of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - c. If there is change, in what ways have teachers' teaching practices changed?
2. How do early childhood teachers describe their strengths and needs in working with refugee children?
  - a. What are the previous strengths and needs of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - b. What are the current strengths and needs of preschool teachers who have experience in working with refugee children?
  - c. If there is change, in what ways have teachers' strengths and needs changed?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers who have experience in working with refugee children about culturally responsive teaching?

For the representation of teachers, pseudonyms (i.e., T1, T2...) were used to provide confidentiality. The findings were provided according to each related research question. The sequence of presentation of the study's findings is explained in Figure 4.1 briefly.

<b>EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS'</b>		
<b>Experiences with Refugee Children</b>	<b>Needs and Strengths</b>	<b>Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers' Cultural Competency</li> <li>2. Cultural Diversity in Curriculum</li> <li>3. Communication Process with Refugee Children</li> <li>4. Building Partnership with Refugee Parents</li> <li>5. Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children</li> <li>6. Professional Competencies and Development</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers' Strengths</li> <li>2. Teachers' Needs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers' First Perceptions</li> <li>2. Teachers' Last Perceptions</li> </ol>

**Figure 4. 1.**The Sequence of Presentation of the Findings

**4.1. Findings Explaining Early Childhood Teachers’ Teaching Experiences with Refugee Children**

The first research question investigated how early childhood teachers describe their teaching experiences with refugee children over the years. In sub-questions, I focused on teachers’ previous teaching experiences, current teaching experiences, and how these experiences changed over time. These previous and current experiences with refugee children were investigated by asking

- Teachers’ communication process with refugee children and their parents
- Their instructional practices
- Their observation on the relationship between local and refugee children.

Data analysis yielded six main themes from teachers' narratives throughout the three interviews. These main themes are Teachers' Cultural Competency, Cultural Diversity in Curriculum, Communication Process with Refugee Children, Building Partnership with Refugee Parents, Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children and Professional Competencies and Development. Each main theme includes sub-themes. These sub-themes also include categories that consist of codes and subcodes.

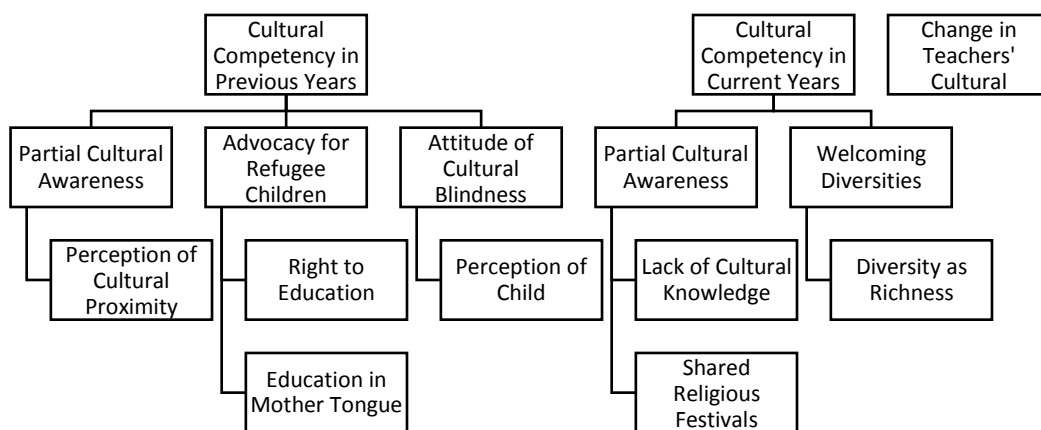
The first four main themes are compatible with Gay's (2010) Culturally Responsive Teaching components. The fifth theme emerged based on teachers' observations on the relationship between local and refugee children. Finally, the last theme, Professional Competencies and Development, reflected teachers' narratives related to their professional development process including their pre-service and in-service training.

#### **4.1.1. Teachers' Cultural Competency**

Cultural competency is becoming aware of cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions using critical-thinking skills (Mayfield, 2020). According to Gay (2002), teachers' cultural competency increases when they understand the cultural characteristics of certain groups and how these ethnic groups contribute to society. Culturally competent teachers have and gain knowledge about cultural values, communication methods, learning styles and traditions of ethnic groups.

In educational settings, teachers need to have cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills because otherwise, multicultural educational practices are not performed or performed in limited way by teachers (Collins, 2009). Therefore, developing cultural competency enhance teaching practices in multicultural and diverse classrooms.

In the current study, this main theme was constructed based on teachers' narratives related to their understanding of the cultural background of refugee children. It has three sub-themes and each sub-themes includes categories and codes presented in Figure 4.2 below.



**Figure 4. 2.** Sub-Themes, Categories and Codes Related to Teachers' Cultural Competency

#### 4.1.1.1. Teachers' Cultural Competency in Previous Years

This first sub-theme reflects teachers' cultural competency in previous years of teaching refugee children. Data collected through interviews yielded how teachers perceived the culture of refugee children in the first place. The sub-theme, categories, codes, and example quotations based on teachers' narratives were presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4. 1.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' cultural competency in previous years

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Teachers' Cultural Competency in Previous Years	Partial Cultural Awareness	Perception of Cultural Proximity (n=5)	"I did not know anything about the Syrian child. You see, because they are Muslims, their holidays and customs are somewhat similar to ours. I have never heard anything from his family. (...) You know, things like birthdays and things like that, those do not need to be pertain to a specific culture anyway. I have never celebrated a special holiday or done anything for the refugee child. (T10)"

**Table 4.1 (cont'd)**

<b>Sub-Theme</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Example Quotations from Participants</b>
<b>Teachers' Cultural Competency in Previous Years</b>		Right to Education (n=3)	"They have the right to education just like every child has the right to education. So, everyone has the right to education. These children have come to us. We should educate them in the best way in our school. (T13)"
	Advocacy for Refugee Children	Education in Mother Tongue (n=1)	"I thought that people have the right to receive education in their native language, which is more in line with universal values, and more egalitarian, where children express themselves more comfortably, are not uniformized, or that these should be supported. (T12)"
	Attitude of Cultural Blindness	Perception of Child (n=9)	"So, a child is always a child. I mean, even if the language and culture are different, it is always a child, and a simple smile is sufficient. (...) So, I cannot say that it has changed me too much. Okay, then a child is a child. I mean, yes. Exactly. I mean, there was no difference. (T4)"

#### **4.1.1.1.1. Partial Cultural Awareness**

Partial cultural awareness has the potential to cause cultural bias (Pederson, 2009) and means individuals' superficial awareness of diversity. A lack of cultural awareness may reduce the significance of diversity or cultural contributions of certain groups. In some cases, they are incapable of understanding the cultural characteristics of some cultural groups (Thu, 2010).

In the current study, I asked teachers about their first years of experience with refugee children and families. In their narratives, seven teachers stated their perspectives on the culture of refugees by comparing Turkish culture to the culture of refugees. Their perspectives on these questions reflected their partial cultural awareness because while some teachers did not consider a reflection of diversity as unnecessary, other teachers perceived the culture of refugees and Turkish culture as

similar. For example, T6 considered Syrian and Turkish cultures similar because both are in the Middle East. She stated her perspective as follows:

“I mean, refugee children do not have a quite different culture either. I mean, I do not think we do have such a different culture. Because we are in the Middle East. I mean, there is a child from Japan. Between a child from Syria and a child from Japan, there is something more distinctive for Japanese children. They [Syrian children] are closer to us, but of course, different cultures (T6)”

In the statement above, the teacher mentioned the common points of the two countries' cultures with the effect of geographical proximity. Geographical proximity and religious commonality bring the two cultures closer to each other. However, culture is not a superficial phenomenon that can be handled only in terms of religion etc. Therefore, the expression of T6 reflects her perceived cultural proximity. Qureshi (2007) defines cultural proximity as characteristics of migrants and refugees reflecting their physical, cultural, and emotional closeness. It reflects how different cultures are similar or different from each other. In the current study, five teachers have perceived cultural proximity between Turkish cultures and the cultures of refugees. For example, T3 also focused on similarities between the two cultures and noted that she did not use cultural references of refugee children in the education process due to this reason. She stated her idea as follows:

“You know, there are not very obvious differences in the preschool period. I mean, numbers are the same everywhere. You know, Arabic letters differ. I did not reflect their cultures. (T3)”

This situation also points out their partial cultural awareness. Culture includes many elements such as language, rituals, norms, and values. However, teachers discussed culture from a limited perspective due to commonalities in holidays and feasts and stated that the two cultures are similar to each other. For example, T10 stated that

“I did not know anything about the Syrian child. You see, because they are Muslims, their holidays and customs are somewhat similar to ours. I have never heard anything from his family. (...) You know, things like birthdays and things like that, those do not need to be pertain to a specific culture anyway. I have never celebrated a special holiday or done anything for the refugee child. (T10)”

#### **4.1.1.1.2. Advocacy for Refugee Children**

While investigating early childhood teachers' previous teaching experiences, five teachers stated their advocacy for the education of refugee children. Three teachers stood for refugee children's right to education. They believed that refugee children have the right to education just as other children in our country. T13 stated her idea on this issue as follows:

“They have the right to education just like every child has the right to education. So, everyone has the right to education. These children have come to us. We should educate them in the best way in our school. (T13)”

Another teacher (T14) explained that she approached each child equally due to her belief in the right to education for all. She stressed her idea as follows:

“Regardless of language or culture, a child remains a child. They have the right to education, just like everyone else. For this reason, I believe that teachers should treat everyone equally and approach them in the same way (T14)”

Besides, one teacher (T12) advocated refugee children's right to education in their native language. She expressed that universal values are more appropriate if refugee children receive education in their native language. She explained the reason with these sentences:

“I thought that people have the right to receive education in their native language, which is more in line with universal values and more egalitarian, where children express themselves more comfortably, are not uniformized, or that these should be supported. I hope for an educational environment where children can freely express themselves (T12)”

Finally, according to T10, refugee children should be educated in free environments where they can express themselves and learn by doing.

“I hope for an educational environment where children can freely express themselves. And how can I put this? As a teacher, I advocate for an educational setting where students learn through hands-on experiences and enjoyment, rather than being overwhelmed with excessive information. (T10)”

#### **4.1.1.1.3. Attitude of Cultural Blindness**

According to Gay (2010), cultural blindness emerges when teachers believe that each child is universally the same. Culturally blind teachers claim that they approach children in a non-discriminatory way because they do not consider these children's cultural backgrounds in the educational process. Instead, these teachers believe that treating children differently because of their cultural background is the real discrimination in the classroom. They argue that a good education should be the same for all students and circumstances.

During all interviews, nine teachers expressed that they have a non-discriminatory perspective and treated all children equally in their first year. They noted that they perceived a child as a child regardless of their culture and race. In other words, they approached the refugee child as a child just like any other local child in their classroom during their first years. While expressing their non-discriminatory perspectives, they refer to their attitudes and behaviors towards refugee children. They did not refer to their instructional techniques. For example, T8 stated that she approached all children regardless of their cultural background in terms of her attitudes.

“Regardless of where he comes from, he is still a child to us. He is our friend, and we have no right to treat anyone differently. After all, he is an individual. If we teach our children to follow this path, they will naturally do so. (T8)”

Similarly, T6 emphasized that a child is a child regardless of his/her nationality.

“He is a child. His nationality is not especially important. A child of any nationality is a child. (T6)”

T4 also expressed her idea as follows:

“So, a child is always a child. I mean, even if the language and culture are different, it is always a child, and a simple smile is sufficient. (...) So, I cannot say that it has changed me too much. Okay, then, a child is a child. I mean, yes. Exactly. I mean, there was no difference. (T4)”



When one teacher (T3) was asked to choose a card representing the relationship between local and refugee children, she chose a card with a picture of two heads on one body represented in Figure 4.3. When asked why, she explained her non-discriminatory perspectives.



**Figure 4. 3.** Metaphor Card Representing Two Heads on One Body

“I mean, even if their heads are different, they can move in coordination because they are children. (Talking about the card) Even though one of them has a stick and the other has a tree, let’s attribute it to personal differences. Such disparities exist. However, I can affirm that they complement each other. Despite their distinct perspectives, they can still work together in harmony. However, at the moment, I feel like they are no different from other children. (...) They are all the same for me. They are all our children anyway. A child is a child (T3).”

#### **4.1.1.2. Teachers’ Cultural Competency in Current Years**

This second sub-theme reflects teachers’ cultural competency in the current years of teaching refugee children. Data collected through interviews yielded how teachers currently perceived the culture of refugee children. Two categories emerged under this sub-theme: partial cultural awareness and welcoming diversity. The sub-theme, categories, codes, and quotations based on teachers’ narratives were presented in Table 4.2.

**Table 4. 2.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers’ cultural competency in current years

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Teachers’ Cultural Competency in Current Years	Partial Cultural Awareness	Lack of Cultural Knowledge (n=3)	“You know, I do not even know their special weeks or things, you know, special days of Syrians. I never looked at it. (T4)”
		Shared Religious Festivals (n=3)	“ I mean, they [both cultures] are mostly similar. (...) since they are Muslims, they already accompany us on celebrating religious holidays (T2)”
	Welcoming Diversities	Diversity as Richness (n=6)	“We must accept differences. The more society embraces them, the more they will try to be part of that society. Of course, we should appreciate every culture. Each one adds a unique flavor to the classroom. Just as we have our own culture, they have their own cultural background. I think it is important. So, we should value them too. Diversity... I think it is to feel the diversity. I think valuing diversity and feeling them (T13)”

#### 4.1.1.2.1. Partial Cultural Awareness

Gay (2010) asserted that diverse children learn better and become successful when curriculum content is connected with their daily life experiences. Besides, culturally competent, and responsive teachers are expected to link curriculum content with the cultural background of students. In other words, teachers are expected to integrate diverse learners' cultures in the education process. In the current study, during the interviews, three teachers stated that they do not adapt the culture of refugee children to education currently because they have no idea about Syrian culture, or they perceive Syrian culture as similar to Turkish culture. This lack of cultural knowledge reflects teachers’ partial cultural competency. For example, T3 stated that she realized this contributes to refugee children’s learning, but she does not learn the cultures of refugees.

“I need to learn in order to contribute to them, but I do not. I do not know their national holidays because I have not done any work on this subject. (...)

They need to get used to Turkish culture. We involved the children in the activities we do in our class, you know, on religious and national holidays. (T3)”

Similarly, T4 expressed that she did not look at special days or cultural values of Syrian refugee children.

“You know, I do not even know their special weeks or things, you know, special days of Syrians. I never looked at it. (T4)”

On the other hand, three teachers discussed culture more from a religious perspective and stated that Turkish and Syrian cultures are similar because the two nations have common religious festivals. For example, T2 stated that she still considered the two cultures to be similar due to their religion.

“ I mean, they are mostly similar. You know, these are in the preschool period. There are not very obvious differences. But as I said, since they are Muslims, they already accompany them on religious holidays (T2)”

T4 and T5 also supported the idea of T2 as follows:

“Well, when you say Syrian, I mean Muslim, you know, Ramadan Feast (Eid al Fitr) or something like that, but in general, conforms to the order to the culture of this country. They are similar (T4).”

“They are Muslims anyway. They also accompany us on our holidays (T5)”.

#### **4.1.1.2.2. Welcoming Diversity**

Cultural competency is also related to teachers’ action to show openness to diversities (Kochoska et al., 2022). In this respect, while investigating their current experiences, six teachers stated that diversity and the presence of different cultures in the classroom added richness to the classroom and that we should live together with differences. For example, T13 mentioned that we must value and accept diversity. She expressed her ideas as follows:

“We must accept differences. The more society embraces them, the more they will try to be part of that society. Of course, we should appreciate every

culture. Each one adds a unique flavor to the classroom. Just as we have our own culture, they have their own cultural background. I think it is important. So, we should value them too. Diversity... I think it is to feel the diversity. I think valuing diversity and feeling them (T13)”

T10 stated his opinion about the same subject as follows:

“I think the presence of refugee children in the classroom, refugee children, you know, I did not have them in the previous years, but for the last three or four years, every year there is a refugee student in my class. I think this is a good thing. (...) I think having at least children from different countries in my class is a good thing. (T10)”

T14 also identified challenges she experiences while working with refugee children. However, she also evaluated having diversity as a valuable thing for their classroom.

“I have two Syrian students. One of them is from Egypt. While this situation is not something we anticipate, if they are in the same class, we adapt and proceed accordingly. The effort we invest in them is not identical to the effort we put into local students. Even forming a sentence and making them understand it costs us time, but I think this is very valuable. (T14)”

#### **4.1.1.3. Change in Teachers’ Cultural Competency**

In the scope of this study, I investigated in what ways teachers’ experiences have been changed over time, if any. Therefore, this third sub-theme is related to how teachers’ cultural competency has changed over time when I compared their previous experiences with their current experiences.

To begin with, partial cultural competency is one of the categories under sub-themes of teachers’ cultural competency in both previous and current currents. It shows that teachers still lack enough awareness, knowledge and skills related to the cultural backgrounds of refugee children after at least three years of teaching refugee children. For example, teachers preferred to focus on commonalities between two cultures from the point of religious perspective. However, different groups of teachers stated their religious perspective in their previous and current years. While T6 and T10 stated that Turkish culture and culture of refugee children are quite similar in their previous years, more teachers (T2, T4 and T5) evaluated culture from a religious perspective. As an example, T10 narrated in his previous experiences that

“I did not know anything about the Syrian child. You know, since they are Muslims, their holidays and everything are more or less the same with us. I have never heard anything from his family. (...).(T10)”

In addition to the teachers who stated that they did not have cultural knowledge in their past experiences, there are also teachers who stated that they still do not have enough knowledge in their current experiences. For example, T3 expressed that she did not reflect culture in her current experiences. She considered that she needed to learn how to integrate, but she did not have any knowledge of their cultures. She noted as follows:

“I need to learn in order to contribute to them, but I do not. I do not know what their national holidays are because I have not done any work on this subject. (T3)”

Secondly, there have been changes in teachers’ ideas on the culture of refugees over the years. These changes are related to teachers’ view of diversities and culture. For example, T4 stated that she closed her eyes to diversities in her first year of teaching. On the other hand, she has found diversity to be rich in her current years. The changes in her views are exemplified as follows:

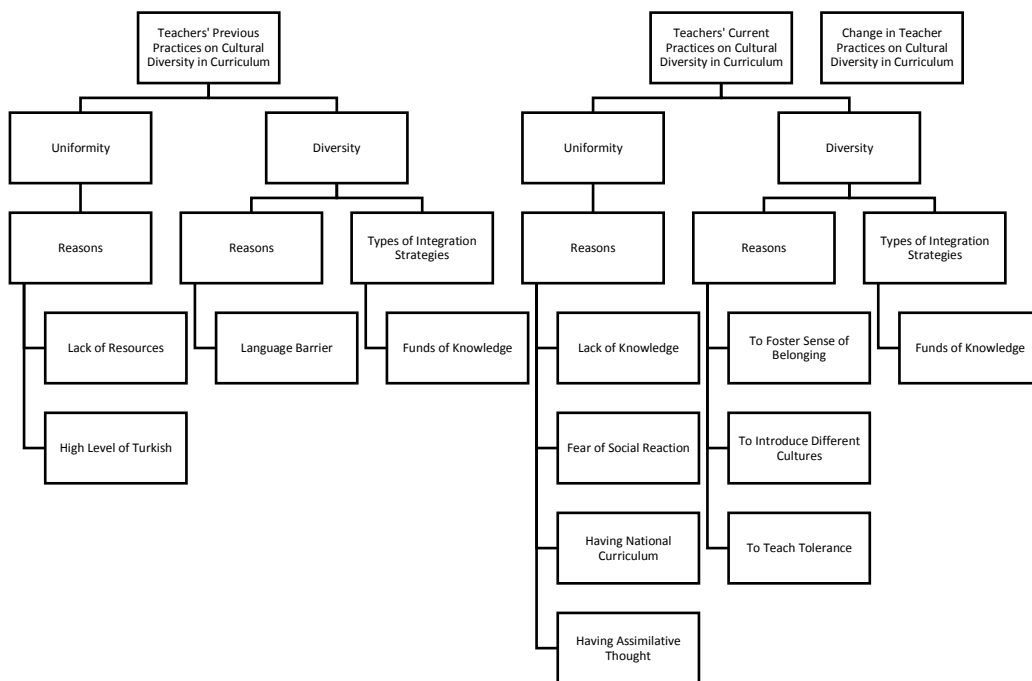
“Refugee children are no different from others. I chose to overlook their differences. Yes, I closed my eyes; after all, they were just children. (T4)” [first year of teaching]”

“(…) Different languages are spoken, but we can all be happy together. You know, to be able to emphasize this, at least all of them have seen this [refugee child] one-on-one. Because an abstract concept is not suitable for kindergarten as an age level. But concretely, it is a good thing to have a child who speaks a different culture and language in the classroom. (T4)” [current years of teaching]”

In conclusion, some teachers’ narratives showed that their incompetent cultural awareness still exists. They still consider the culture of refugee children from a religious perspective and accept that Syrian and Turkish cultures are quite similar. On the other hand, compared to their past experiences, more teachers (n=6) today recognize diversity as a strength that should be present in the classroom.

### 4.1.2. Cultural Diversity in Curriculum

According to Gay’s Culturally Responsive Teaching framework (2000), teachers are expected to integrate cultural elements into curriculum and instructional strategies. This integration fosters culturally diverse students’ academic achievement and self-efficacy beliefs. Besides, when students' cultural background is linked to curriculum content, it motivates students to learn better (Brown, 2007). Within the scope of this information, this second main theme is related to teachers’ previous and current practices on providing cultural diversity in curriculum and activities. It has three sub-themes and each sub-themes includes categories and codes presented in Figure 4.4 below:



**Figure 4. 4.** Sub-Themes, Categories and Codes Related to Teachers’ Practices on Cultural Diversity

#### 4.1.2.1. Teachers’ Previous Practices on Cultural Diversity in Curriculum

The first sub-theme refers to teachers’ previous practices in integrating the cultural knowledge of refugee children in education. Therefore, during the interviews, teachers were asked whether they made any changes in their education plans or teaching methods and techniques after the arrival of refugee children in their

classrooms. According to the answers, two categories emerged: uniformity in instruction and curriculum and diversity in instruction and curriculum. The sub-theme, categories, codes, and quotations based on teachers' narratives were presented in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' previous practices on diversity in curriculum

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Sub-Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Teachers' Previous Practices on Cultural Diversity in Curriculum	Uniformity in Instruction and Curriculum	Reasons	Lack of Resources (n=1)	"I mean, in general, Urfa is already a place with limited resources. I'm specifically referring to Urfa because it was the initial location. Due to my own constraints, I treated all the children equally. I couldn't provide anything extra or different (T4)."
			Refugee Children's High Level of Turkish (n=5)	"I told you that I did not use anything different in the method and technique. Most of the children had a good command of communication methods and techniques, and most of the children had a good command of Turkish. So, I did not have any problems (T5)"
	Diversity in Instruction and Curriculum	Reasons	Language Barrier (n=7)	"Yes, the first years were actually more difficult. The majority of the class did not speak the language. There were many things we could not do. We were very weak in Turkish language activities. We had them do certain things in activities, but we had a lot of trouble in obvious things, especially speaking activities. So, I made changes. (T8)"
			Types of Integration Strategy	Funds of Knowledge (n=3)

#### **4.1.2.1.1. Uniformity in Instruction and Curriculum**

This category is related to whether teachers added cultural content to the curriculum, designed cultural activities related to the cultural background of refugee children, or whether they used strategies in the integration process or not. While talking about teachers' teaching practices, six teachers stated that they did not change their instruction or curriculum during their first year. The reason they provided for this is that they did not have enough resources for adaptation or due to refugee children's high level of Turkish. One teacher's first duty place was in Southeast Anatolia, where they first encountered refugee children. T4 stated that she could not change her teaching methods due to insufficient resources.

“I mean, in general, Urfa is already a place with limited resources. I'm specifically referring to Urfa because it was the initial location. Due to my own constraints, I treated all the children equally. I couldn't provide anything extra or different (T4).”

Besides, some teachers (n=5) mentioned that they did not change their teaching methods and techniques or adapt them to refugee children. This was because refugee children who came to their classrooms in the first year knew Turkish well, understood the instructions and activities in Turkish, and therefore did not need any change in the curriculum.

“I had such a chance. Most of the children spoke Turkish properly. That is why there has been no change in my teaching methods. (T7).”

“I told you that I did not use anything different in the method and technique. Most of the children had a good command of communication methods and techniques, and most of the children had a good command of Turkish. So, I did not have any problems (T5)”

#### **4.1.2.1.2. Diversity in Instruction and Curriculum**

Conversely, when questioned about alterations in their teaching methods when working with refugee children, seven teachers recounted modifications made during their initial years. Several teachers highlighted adjustments to instruction and



curriculum necessitated by language barriers, preventing the implementation of speech or language-based activities for non-Turkish-speaking refugee children. For instance, T8 noted the need to adapt instruction to overcome language barriers during language-related activities

“Yes, the first years were actually more difficult. The majority of the class did not speak the [Turkish] language. There were many things we could not do. We were very weak in Turkish language activities. We had them do certain things in activities, but we had a lot of trouble with obvious things, especially speaking activities. But we achieved at the end of the day (T8)”

On the other hand, during interviews, three teachers mentioned how they diversify instruction by using funds of knowledge in the first year of teaching. For example, T10 and T11 mentioned using cultural songs and games to integrate refugee children’s culture into the curriculum.

“I’ve also played some music. Specifically for this young refugee girl, I put on Arab music, belly dance tunes, and similar genres. It was just a small gesture to help her come out of her shell. It worked. It worked within a day. In fact, I mean, it worked on the first day. (...) Sure. After the first child, especially the first children, you cannot normally talk to such children when they first arrive, but they explain everything about dance and play. They especially love dancing; they especially love dances. Especially if the dance is close to their own culture or something. Of course, it has even more effect (T10).”

“They connect better through plays and songs. So, I played music from their own culture for them. (T11).”

T8 also expressed that she used funds of knowledge to integrate culture.

“We did this [integration] more during the domestic goods week when we introduced different countries. He came with food, with visuals, the child was telling us about their homeland. We included him in that process. He could not tell us, but he presented it to us visually. (...) They brought things that were made for a different culture. He brought kibbeh, but it was not like ours. They were very different. There are also differences in nutrition. My child was always bringing different types of food. Now we have overcome that. He eats here, but it was clearly reflected. (T8)”

#### 4.1.2.2. Teachers' Current Practices on Cultural Diversity in Curriculum

During the interviews, teachers also talked about their current experiences in terms of their practices on cultural diversity in the curriculum. According to the answers, two categories were constructed: uniformity in instruction and curriculum and diversity in instruction and curriculum. The sub-theme, categories, codes, and quotations based on teachers' narratives were presented in Table 4.4.

**Table 4. 4.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' practices on cultural diversity in current years

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Sub-Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Teachers' Current Practices on Cultural Diversity in Curriculum	Uniformity in Instruction and Curriculum	Reasons	Lack of Knowledge (n=3)	"So, I do not know. How can it [culture] be included? I do not know (T6)"
			Fear of Social Reaction (n=2)	"I mean, I do not think my Arab students should get reactions when we present their cultural values in the classroom. I think we might get reactions from other parents and the administration (T5)"
			Having National Curriculum (n=3)	"We are all Turkish citizens, citizens of Türkiye, and as a result, we are all familiar with the culture here. In that sense, we have studies on general customs and traditions for our class. We have activities related to specific days and weeks, holidays, religious holidays, and national holidays. We have a certain curriculum (T3)"
			Having Assimilative Thought (n=2)	"Luckily, they don't have their own curriculum. As I mentioned earlier, I'm opposed to incorporating cultural elements because I identify as a nationalist. I swear, this shows my nationalist side a bit. You know, Turkish culture is Turkish culture for me. German culture is German culture. There is a guest student or someone who will settle here. He plans to remain here for the rest of his life, but in my opinion, the Turkish spirit encompasses a wide range. There's no need to incorporate anything from elsewhere. I told you that I am a bit biased in this question because of my nationalism (T7)"

**Table 4.4 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Sub-Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Teachers' Current Practices on Cultural Diversity in Curriculum	Diversity in Instruction and Curriculum	Reasons	To foster sense of belonging (n=2)	"We need to introduce children to different cultures. They need to learn tolerance from each other. They need to acquire this tolerance from kindergarten onwards. I mean, because they are constantly marginalized and excluded outside, so it is not just about culture. You know, mindset, appearance, everything. I think classrooms should be multicultural in order to overcome this. (T9)"
			To introduce different cultures (n=3)	"As a cultural activity, for example, I explain the situation of the refugee children. Just like we have different lives, they have different food... I can talk about their food, their speech, their clothes, sometimes they can even come with their heads covered. I can talk about their closeness. (T13)"
			To teach tolerance (n=1)	"I mean, I see this [incorporating culture] as very important, but I think there should be something for them to feel that they belong. We should learn something from their culture. So that they can adapt more easily. I think children should feel a little bit of belonging. (T9)"
		Types of Integration Strategies	Funds of Knowledge (n=7)	"I mean, of course it is different if you know. If because there is a home environment. For example, what he sees there, what he eats, drinks, even his clothes, his speech, everything. (T12)"

#### 4.1.2.2.1. Uniformity in Instruction and Curriculum

When I asked about current teacher instructional techniques changes, six out of 14 teachers stated that they did not make any changes in their current years. Some teachers gave more than one reason for this. They gave because we already have a certain curriculum, lack of knowledge, are against integration, and fear social reaction. To begin with, T3 stated that she did not adapt culture because we are all Turkish citizens. She noted her perspective on this issue as stated below:

“We are all Turkish citizens, citizens of Türkiye, and as a result, we are all familiar with the culture here. In that sense, we have studied general customs and traditions for our class. We have activities related to special days and weeks, holidays, religious holidays, and national holidays. We have a certain curriculum (T3)”

Similarly, T4 expressed that refugee children are living in Türkiye for a long time, so they need to adapt to our culture. So, they did not change any instruction or curriculum content for these children.

“I mean, I think that if we are in this country, if this country is experiencing our culture, I honestly think that activities should be organized accordingly. You know, according to the general culture. In general, it is exactly the same. You know, we already do certain days and weeks. That is our culture. For example, tomorrow is Çanakkale<sup>3</sup>. Today we did an activity about Çanakkale. I do not know how much of it was passed on to the refugee children, but somehow, we included them in it, in general. We naturally follow our cultural practices and observe special occasions and weeks. You know, I do not even know their special weeks or things, you know, special days. Actually, when you say Syrian, I mean Muslim, you know, Ramadan Feast or something like that, but in general, according to the order or the culture of this country. (T4)”

On the other hand, some teachers explained why they did not diversify instruction and curriculum even if they wanted to integrate the culture of Syrian refugee children into the education process more. Two teachers stated that they were afraid of the social reaction they would face if they did activities related to the culture of refugees in the classroom. T5 expressed her opinion as follows:

“I mean, I do not think my Arab students should get [negative] reactions when we present their cultural values in the classroom. I think we might get [negative] reactions from other parents and the administration (...) (T5).”

Another teacher (T10) explained his hesitation in reacting socially.

“Yes, now when I create an information board about Syria, not everyone will be open to it. Of course, they will show a reaction. I mean, I would have even reacted to this before I interviewed you. (T10)”

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<sup>3</sup> With this expression, 18 March Çanakkale Victory and Martyrs' Memorial Day is meant.

Furthermore, two teachers said that they were against the inclusion of cultures due to their nationalist perspective. T7 expressed her idea as the following sentences:

“Fortunately, they do not have their own curriculum. Again, as I said at the beginning, I am against the inclusion of culture because I am a nationalist. I swear, this shows my nationalist side a bit. You know, Turkish culture is Turkish culture for me. German culture is German culture. There is a guest student or someone who will settle here. He plans to remain here for the rest of his life, but in my opinion, the Turkish spirit encompasses a wide range. There’s no need to incorporate anything from elsewhere. I told you that I am a bit biased in this question because of my nationalism (T7)”

Finally, three teachers stated that even if it was necessary to include culture in education, they did not know how to do so. T4 believed that there should be an education based on the cultural structure of refugees, however, she did not know how to provide it.

“Considering the Syrians, I think that we should give them an education according to the cultural structure they live with. I mean, but how can that be achieved? I do not know; I cannot find a solution for that. (T4)”

“So, I do not know. How can it [culture] be included? I do not know (T6)”

#### **4.1.2.2.2. Diversity in Instruction and Curriculum**

Seven teachers stated that they are adapting their activities, teaching methods, and practices for refugee children. They stated the reasons why they need to design cultural activities currently. They mentioned that they aim to foster refugee children’s sense of belonging, teach diverse cultures to the whole class, and teach tolerance to diversities. For example, T9 stated that she designed cultural activities to teach tolerance toward diversities.

“We need to introduce different cultures to children. They need to learn tolerance from each other. They need to acquire this tolerance from kindergarten onwards. I mean, because they are constantly marginalized and excluded outside, so it is not just about culture. You know, mindset, appearance, everything. I think classrooms should be multicultural in order to overcome this. (T9)”

The other two teachers (T9 and T14) also explains their goal of designing cultural activities to increase refugee children's sense of belonging.

“I mean, I see this [incorporating culture] as very important, but I think there should be something for them to feel that they belong. We should learn something from their culture. So that they can adapt more easily. I think children should feel a little bit of belonging. (T9)”

“Yes, it is valuable for this, to be honest, it has not been much, but something where he can tell us about his own country, where he can show us the values of this country, its cultures, its characteristics, its historical things, its dress, a special dress of his own country, and where this is appreciated and liked will make him happy. And he will feel more belonged here. That is why I think it is valuable and I try to do it (T14)”

Besides, T13 narrated that she designed cultural activities to introduce the culture of refugee children. She stated her idea as follows:

“As a cultural activity, for example, I explain the situation of the refugee children. Just like we have different lives, they have different food... I can talk about their food, their speech, their clothes, sometimes they can even come with their heads covered. I can talk about their closeness. (T13)”

When I asked how and in what way they diversified their activities they carry out under the name of cultural activities, it is seen that they carry out such activities on important days and weeks by using children's funds of knowledge. For example, T12 introduced local products of refugee children on Domestic Good Week.

“I mean, of course it is different if you know. If because there is a home environment. For example, what he sees there, what he eats, drinks, even his clothes, his speech, everything. I mean, it is a good thing for him to reflect. We have a domestic good week. For example, everyone brings something from their own region and culture. That child also brings something valuable from their own country and shares it. Because we are introducing it. "Oh, look, this grows here. It does this." or "this is the local dress here." You know, it is a good thing to show this. That is why I try to do it normally. (T12)”

T2 also stated that she designed activities to integrate refugee children's cultures of home through their own music.

“In fact, we do from time to time. We sometimes incorporate children's cultures, the cultures they bring from where they live, into our classrooms from time to time. So, we benefit from this. For example, how can it be? Music... We make the child who knows how to dance to their own music dance, etc. (T2)”

#### **4.1.2.3. Change in Teachers’ Practices on Cultural Diversity in Curriculum**

This sub-theme is related to how teachers’ self-reported practices on cultural diversity changed over time. When I look at teachers’ previous and current implementations on including cultural content on the curriculum, there are some changes in their integration strategies and their adaptation of activities according to refugee children.

First, six teachers expressed that they did not change their instruction when they first met with the refugee children in their previous years. Different groups of teachers also stated that they do not currently change their instruction. However, these two groups provide different reasons for their unchanged practices. For example, the lack of resources and the high level of Turkish of some refugee children were reasons for this uniformity in instruction and curriculum in previous years. On the other hand, teachers currently consider that refugee children have been living in Türkiye for so many years that they have to learn Turkish or adapt to Turkish culture so that they do not need to change their activities or educational plans.

For example, T9 expressed her idea as follows:

“I mean, I do not do it [diversification in curriculum] too much, to be honest. I mean because they need to learn Turkish. So, nothing much different happened.(T9)”

On the other hand, although some teachers consider integrating cultural content as critical and want to design cultural activities, they fear social reaction or lack of knowledge about the integration process. These barriers to cultural integration only exist in teachers’ current practices. For example, T10 noted that

“Yes, now when I create an information board about Syria, not everyone will be open to it. Of course, they will show a reaction. I mean, I would have even reacted to this before I interviewed you. (T10)”

Secondly, there are different reasons why teachers add cultural topics to the curriculum in their previous and current experiences. While teachers needed to adapt language and literacy activities due to language barriers in their previous years, they are integrating culture now to increase refugee children’s sense of belonging and teaching tolerance in their current years. Furthermore, teachers currently practice various cultural activities for refugee children because they have found more ways to include culture in the curriculum than their past experience. While in their past experience only three teachers used funds of knowledge, seven teachers currently use different strategies to include cultural activities, even if they are only implemented on specific days such as April 23<sup>rd</sup> or Local Product Week. For example, in the first years, only two teachers used Syrian children’s music and songs, and one teacher used refugee children’s funds of knowledge to represent his hometown culture. T8 stated that

“Yes, we did in the first years. Some local children asked. We told the kids a little bit about it. This is what our friends brought, what they did. We did this more during the domestic goods week when we were introducing countries. They introduced Syria to us. I see. Wherever he was born, everyone was introducing their homeland. He came with a food. With visuals, the child was telling us about their homeland. We included him in that process.(T8)”

On the other hand, in current years, some teachers (n=7) have designed cultural activities on Domestic Good Weeks to introduce cultural elements of refugee children. For example, T2 stated as follows:

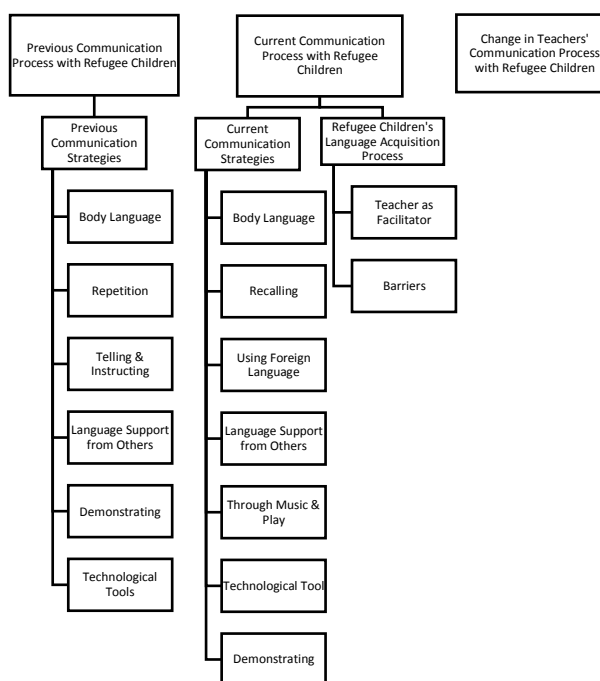
“In fact, we do from time to time. We sometimes incorporate children's cultures, the cultures they bring from where they live, into our classrooms from time to time. So, we benefit from this. For example, how can it be? Music... We make the child who knows how to dance to their own music dance, etc. (T2)”

#### **4.1.3. Communication Process with Refugee Children**

Communicating effectively with refugee children is acknowledged as critical for their learning process (Gay, 2010). This third theme describes teachers’



communication process, strategies and challenges while working with refugee children in their previous and current years. During the interview, they were asked how to communicate with refugee children, what strategies they used and are currently using, and what challenges they have faced over the years. This main theme has three sub-themes, and each sub-theme includes categories and codes, as presented in Figure 4.5 below.



**Figure 4. 5.** Sub-Themes, Categories and Codes Related to Communication Process with Refugee Children

#### 4.1.3.1. Previous Communication Process with Refugee Children

During the interviews, I asked teachers how they communicated with refugee children who did not know Turkish in their previous years. Teachers talked about their previous communication strategies. They stated that they used body language to communicate with refugee children. Besides, they used teaching techniques such as telling and instructing, repetition, language support from others, demonstrating to help them in communication. Finally, one teacher benefited from technological tools. In Table 4.5 presents categories, codes, and example quotations from participants.

**Table 4. 5.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' communication process with refugee children

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Communication Process with Refugee Children	Previous Communication Strategies	Body Language (n=4)	"So now something like this happened. At first, I could not understand it at all. Then I felt that these children, these children can perceive my gestures and my body language, and I tried to approach them more as my body language. (T13)"
		Telling & Instructing (n=3)	"I mean, I was telling them, I was telling them over and over, I was holding their hand and making them do it, I was holding their hand, this is how you write. You will draw or you will cut. You will cut it with these scissors. (T5)"
		Repetition (n=3)	"I mean, I was saying it. I was saying it over and over again. (...). In general, in the first few months of the school year, children gradually absorbed the language by conversing in Turkish, one phrase at a time. Their rapid learning allows them to do it. Even if they could not speak, they understood it. (T5)"
		Language Support from Others (n=2)	"When something happened, his friends would help him and be there for him when he had any problems. They would express it to me. Because at that moment, if something happened while playing the game, they were witnesses and they told me somehow. We could communicate like that (T12)."
		Demonstrating (n=2)	"I mean by supporting it with many visual things. More through visual things, by directing them, by showing them. We had to go through concrete things. We could not give anything abstract (T8)."
		Technological Tools (n=1)	"I mean, at first, I was trying to understand Arabic a little bit, I was trying to translate from Google Translate or something (...). Turkish, I mean, at first, I was trying to translate what they said. For them to understand and so on (...) I mean, in the first year I did not know exactly how I should explain things to the children. I was looking at it on Translate. (T6)."

#### **4.1.3.1.1. Previous Communication Strategies with Refugee Children**

When teachers were asked to describe their communication experiences in the first year of teaching refugee children, they mentioned some methods and strategies to make the communication process more manageable and possible. Teachers' most common communication strategies are communicating through body language, telling and instructing, language support from others, demonstrating, and using technological tools. To begin with, four teachers declared that they used body language to communicate with refugee children. T13 stated that she used body language because she realized that refugee children could understand body language.

" So now something like this happened. At first, I could not understand it at all. Then I felt that these children, these children can perceive my gestures and my body language, and I tried to approach them more as my body language. (T13)"

T14 also used body language because neither refugee family nor refugee child could speak and understand Turkish.

"I mean, we spent a year with sign language without speaking, unfortunately, because the family didn't know it either. ( T14)"

Secondly, three teachers used techniques of telling and instructing to be able to communicate with refugee children. Telling and instructing is a teaching technique in which teachers describe or provide verbal information about what should happen (MacNaughton & Williams, 2004). For example, T5 described how she used this technique with refugee children during activities.

"I mean, I was telling them, I was telling them over and over, I was holding their hand and making them do it, I was holding their hand, this is how you write. You will draw or you will cut. You will cut it with these scissors. But of course, this takes a few months, every day, every day. This child gets used to it after a few months. Of course, it was difficult. Sometimes I was angry with the child. Sometimes I was angry with myself for not being able to do it. I was angry because he did not understand me. (T5)"

Similarly, T9 conveyed that:

"I swear, you know what we did in Turkish? I tried to show and make them do it more. This is this. This is red, this is blue. The same, yes (T9)."

On the other hand, repeating Turkish words continuously is another method three teachers use first in communication. T10 and T4 repeated Turkish words several times.

"I did things slowly. I repeated the words slowly (T10)."

"I was more impatient. Yes, I wanted them to learn immediately. I mean, when I said something, they just looked at my face. That is why I was a bit more impatient when I had to repeat it three or four times. (...) As I said, at first it was like this, door, door, open the door. (T4)"

As a fourth strategy, teachers used demonstrating techniques to communicate with refugee children who do not speak Turkish. According to MacNaughton & Williams (2004), demonstrating is beneficial for children's learning because teachers provide visual clues on how to do certain tasks. In the current study, teachers used the technique of demonstrating in conveying instructions or communicating with children. T14 mentioned her need for visual materials in the communication process.

"I was preparing materials and there were children who do not speak Turkish. Our great need was to support them with visuals somehow. Because they didn't understand the language, I tried to fill the classroom full of colors, shapes, and all the concepts I was giving to the class, at least by enriching them, visually, so that they can at least be familiar with what they see and hear, so that they can practice what they see and hear (T14)."

"Of course, I included more visuals. I included more visual works (T13)."

In addition to all these methods, teachers get help from some people and tools such as translators in the communication process. In the context of the current study, teachers positioned people near refugee children to be able to communicate with them. In the early years, if there were children in the class or in other classes who knew both Arabic and Turkish, teachers communicated through them. For example, T12 mentioned how she got help from another bilingual child in her classroom.

"When something happened, his friends would help him and be there for him when he had any problems. They would express it to me. Because at that moment, if something happened while playing the game, they were witnesses and they told me somehow. We could communicate like that (T12)."

Finally, only T6 communicated with the children by translating Turkish-Arabic through Google Translate.

"I mean, at first, I was trying to understand Arabic a little bit, I was trying to translate from Google Translate or something (...). Turkish, I mean, at first, I was trying to translate what they said. For them to understand and so on (...) I mean, in the first year I did not know exactly how I should explain things to the children. I was looking at it on Translate. (T6)."

#### 4.1.3.2. Current Communication Process with Refugee Children

This second sub-theme is related to teachers' current communication strategies with refugee children. Besides, teachers described their roles and perceived barriers in refugee children's language acquisition process. Table 4.6 presents categories, codes, and example quotations from participants.

**Table 4. 6.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' current communication process with refugee children

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Communication Process with Refugee Children	Current Communication Strategies	Demonstrating (n=4)	"By showing it with gestures and saying it at the same time. I have now learned through experience that when I say, "cut with scissors", I have to explain it by showing the scissors and making a cutting sign, by visualizing it with gestures and saying it at the same time. I mean, I do not look at translation anymore. I mean, I was explaining it this way, and the children understood it after a while. (T5)"
		Recalling (n=2)	"They cannot make out some words, for example. Sometimes some children speak very little Turkish, they cannot make out some words. I do something for them to get those words out, that is, I make them repeat the word. (T13)"
		Using Foreign Language (n=2)	"For example, my student speaks English. I understand what he says in English. Yes, I have enough English to be able to talk to him and explain his problems. We talk, but still, sometimes it is simple things. He says things like I am tired, I am thirsty, I am hungry. Then I can understand, but when he has a bigger problem, when he expresses it, I cannot understand. (T14)"

**Table 4.6 (cont'd)**

<b>Sub-Theme</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Example Quotations from Participants</b>	
Current Communication Process with Refugee Children		Language Support from Others (n=6)	“Now I think the biggest helpers are our own children [local children]. Because they can communicate more easily in a child-to-child manner. I use my children, I mean I use Turkish children, I use children who speak Turkish, they get along better. I get help from my children. Or we can find a child from the same country, the same race, who is at school, and if they speak Turkish, we can make them talk to them. So, we can find different ways like that. (T2)”	
		Current Communication Strategies	Through Music & Play (n=5)	“I think I spend more time with them, I get involved in their games, and I can spend more time with them and talk to them. In other words, I try to be involved in his games, to understand what he is saying, to make him show it through play. “But now I think that by trying different methods through drama, through play, it allows children to express themselves. And it is effective. So, they are more comfortable, more willing (T14)”
			Technological Tools (n=1)	“My student this year is very introverted. For example, he does not speak most of the time. As I said, I downloaded a software on my phone in Arabic. Sometimes I try to use it (T9)”
			Body Language (n=3)	“There's one newcomer. He does not know anything. He does not speak any Turkish and he does not understand. We do body language now. (T11)”

**Table 4.6 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Communication Process with Refugee Children	Refugee Children's Language Acquisition Process	Teacher as Facilitator (n=5)	“We are practicing words one by one. By saying the names of the items used in the classroom and making him repeat them, this is still going on, in the same way. I mean, it is not like we did it like that the first year and we are not doing it this year. We do it all the time. Always show them, "this pen, this phone, table. Look, table, chair, chair. You repeat it, chair. Like this chair, for example." By telling the child. (T2)”
		Barriers (n=7)	“Children learn Turkish or somehow manage to express themselves by hearing it from each other, from their social environment, from the classroom, but if families do not know it, if other languages are constantly spoken at home, Turkish remains in the background and cannot progress. (T14)”

#### 4.1.3.2.1. Current Communication Strategies with Refugee Children

Based on the data derived from teachers' narratives, there are some communication strategies that teachers are currently using to communicate with refugee children. In their current experiences, three teachers talked about how they currently use body language or another foreign language to communicate with refugee children. T11 and T13 declared that

“There's one newcomer. He does not know anything. He does not speak any Turkish and he does not understand. We do body language now. (T11)”

“I told you; I use body language more if children do not know Turkish (T13)”

T6 evaluated this situation as “learning how to communicate”.

“I mean, I learned to communicate more anyway. Since I say it in Turkish with physical expressions and show it with physical expressions, the children

start to understand after a while. Right now, I am expressing myself in Turkish with gestures and so on. When I was explaining something to Syrian children, for example, I learned how to explain it. (T6)”

In addition to body language, two teachers discussed that they are using another foreign language in the communication process. While T6 uses basic Arabic, T14 prefers to speak English.

“I mean, I might have used it in introducing colors. You know, he sings in Arabic. I say it in Turkish and so on. In numbers, they already watch videos about numbers on YouTube. So, they know the numbers. But for example, sometimes the child tries to express himself. He says he is sick or something. For example, he says it in Arabic. He does not know Turkish. I understand a little bit of these words, but I am not at a very good level of Arabic as a whole. (T6)”

“For example, my student speaks English. I understand what he says in English. Yes, I have enough English to be able to talk to him and explain his problems. We talk, but still, sometimes it is simple things. He says things like I am tired, I am thirsty, I am hungry. Then I can understand, but when he has a bigger problem, when he expresses it, I cannot understand. (T14)”

Furthermore, eleven teachers stated that they are currently using teaching techniques to communicate with refugee children. Four of eleven stated that they are demonstrating children to be able to convey instructions of activities or communicate with them. They selected a metaphor card represented in Figure 4.6 below.



**Figure 4. 6.** Metaphor Card Representing a Person Painting



T2 stated that

“It was just that I was explaining it to him with my hand at first by pointing, or if it needed to be cut, I would first cut it together with scissors and show him, and so on. (T2)”

T8 and T6 also stressed that role models help refugee children understand instructions.

“We show him how to do it, then he understands. (T8)”

“I think it is more effective now. I show him when I say "glue" and then he understands what glue means. I mean, I am just doing it in Turkish now, without having to use Translate or anything. By asking questions and talking at the same time as showing. We keep this communication going (T6)”

On the other hand, recalling is another strategy teachers use to help refugee children understand instructions and conversations. MacNaughton and Williams (2004) stated that recalling is a critical aspect in the language learning process. In the current study, teachers constantly recalled the Turkish meanings of some items to help children's learning. For example, T5 stated that

“When engaging in activities, I try to mention the names of objects. While I can't always do this consistently, I make an effort to say things like ‘this pen,’ ‘these scissors,’ ‘this red,’ and ‘this blue.’ Then, I encourage the child to repeat these words one by one. (T5)”

Another teacher said that:

“They cannot make out some words, for example. Sometimes some children speak very little Turkish, they cannot make out some words. I do something for them to get those words out, that is, I make them repeat the word. (T13)”

Some teachers discussed the role of play and music in their communication process with refugee children. In the second interview, T12 selected a card that shows a girl painting. She asserted that

I mean, I chose it because it means a little more play for me. Because you communicate with children by playing games, because body language is more active in the game. That is why I preferred it. They understand better through play. They adapt easily (T12)”

Besides, T4 selected a clown card to represent her current communication experience with refugee children.



**Figure 4. 7.** Metaphor Card Representing a Clown

She explained the role of music and songs in this process.

“And then there’s this card. It might sound a bit strange, but music and similar things have helped us connect. We’ve found common ground through songs. Initially, I couldn’t help but wonder why he didn’t understand, but over time, it evolved. First, it was music, and then I tried to listen to him more attentively, with a sense of calm. For example, while we were going like "Close the door", afterwards, by integrating it into daily life and going with those songs, it was better in that way. The children had more fun. (T4)”

Moreover, six teachers positioned people in the communication process with refugee children. For example, T2 evaluated peers of refugee children as her biggest helper.

“Now I think the biggest helpers are our own children [local children]. Because they can communicate more easily in a child-to-child manner. I use my children, I mean I use Turkish children, I use children who speak Turkish, they get along better. I get help from my children. Or we can find a child from the same country, the same race, who is at school, and if they speak Turkish, we can make them talk to them. So, we can find different ways like that. (T2)”

Similarly, T14 stated that

“For example, that Egyptian student of mine knows Arabic. That is how they communicate with the Syrian one. Since he knows Turkish better, sometimes he translates it to me that way. All kinds of problems, unfortunately. (T14)”

On the other hand, some teachers benefit from peer support to communicate with refugee children.

“If the refugee child does not speak Turkish, I assign my students who are compatible with the refugee child and can easily communicate with him/her. (...) But I think communication is easier with peer learning. I realized that I get a better improvement when I bring friends together with the student who can build friends quickly. (T5)”

Finally, only one teacher talked about using a mobile application to communicate with refugee children.

“My student this year is very introverted. For example, he does not speak most of the time. As I said, I downloaded a program on my phone in Arabic. Sometimes I try to use it (T9)”

#### **4.1.3.2.2. Refugee Children’s Language Acquisition Process**

During interviews, I asked teachers how they are currently communicating with refugee children. In addition to their communication strategies, teachers talked about refugee children’s language acquisition process and their facilitator role in this process. Barriers preventing refugee children’s language acquisition are presented as well.

First of all, five teachers stated that they are using some methods to teach Turkish to refugee children to promote communication. For example, T11 stated that she uses visual cards when she finds an opportunity in the classroom:

“What we can do about this is to try to teach Turkish from cards, and there are twenty-five children, if we can find the opportunity from the other twenty-four children. It usually happens during free play time. Of course, he does not want to, he wants to play games. He does not want to learn anything at that moment. We play cards together, for example. So that he can learn at

the same time. I cannot always do that either. When that happens, he cannot learn. And when he cannot learn, we have problems. (T11)”

Three teachers stated that they often made refugee children repeat Turkish words and, in this process, they tried to support children's language acquisition by matching verbal words with concrete objects. For example, T9 expressed that:

“I am trying to say yes, say yes, here is something, tell me something. For example, his mother is trying to do it too. We also told her to try to learn Turkish. I try to make her say it a little bit, but it was not very effective. (T9)”  
On the other hand, seven teachers stated that although they tried to teach

Turkish in the classroom, some barriers prevented this process. First of all, they stated that the fact that Turkish is not spoken at home and the refugee family does not speak Turkish negatively affects the refugee child's Turkish language learning.

T9 stated that

“For example, the child does not make much effort. When the family does not know Turkish, they cannot teach the child. But I asked his mother, the child was introverted at home too. I mean, she does not talk to her parents much at home either. (T9)”

Similarly, T8 and T11 stressed the role of refugee parents.

“I wish more Turkish was spoken at home, but the family does not speak any. Only the elder sister knows. And that is because she went to high school. She learned it in 7-8 years. I tell them to speak Turkish with the child at home. I do not believe this is how it is done because the mother does not know. The father does not know. The only one who knows Turkish is the elder sister. I do not know if the elder sister has taught her. It has been three months since the child arrived. We have not seen any progress. (T11)”

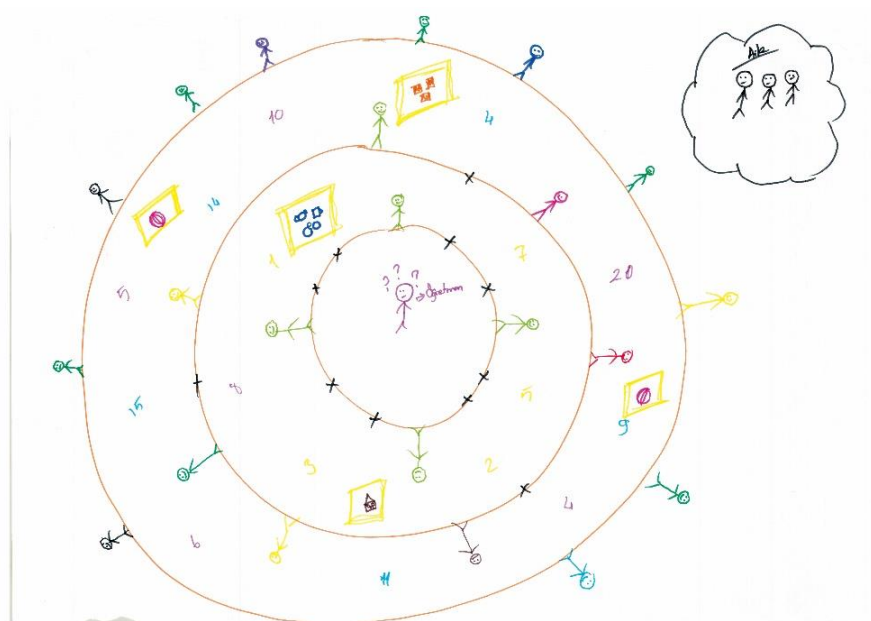
T14 and T2 pointed out the same idea regarding barriers preventing refugee children's language acquisition.

“Children learn Turkish or somehow manage to express themselves by hearing it from each other, from their social environment, from the classroom, but if families do not know it, if other languages are constantly spoken at home, Turkish remains in the background and cannot progress. (T14)”

#### 4.1.3.3. Change in Communication Process with Refugee Children

This sub-theme reflects the change in teachers' strategies and ways to communicate with refugee children throughout the years. During interviews, some teachers talked about the progress in terms of communication. On the other hand, some teachers did not narrate any progress, however, they stated their previous and current communication methods separately. So, these narratives provided me with data to understand the change, if any. In addition to progress, there has been a change in the number of communication strategies teachers have used over the years.

To begin with, the teachers talked about the progress they experienced while discussing their communication processes with refugee children. For example, T12 expressed her struggle with communicating with refugee children in the first year. Nevertheless, she stated that she gained more experience as time passed. She explained it in her Educational Journey Mapping in the third interview (Figure 4.8). She drew an intertwined circle from the early years to the last, putting more than one cross in the first years. During the interviews, she stated that these crosses represent the negativities experienced in communication. In the last years, she depicted her progress in terms of communication by not putting the crosses.



**Figure 4. 8.** Educational Journey Mapping of T12

T12 also noted that

“We had communication problems. Yes, we had more problems at the beginning. You know, in my first year, there were more question marks and more negativity.

G: Are these crosses negativity?

T12: Yes, I mean, even if I did not experience it one-on-one, at least there were things that were question marks in my mind or things that I thought about how it should be. As time goes by, of course, as you gain experience or as you live, you do something (T12)”

T8 also expressed the progress she has made in terms of communication better.

“We are a little bit more relaxed in the conversation now. We are better than the process at that beginning. I mean, I feel better because I think the child understands me in the process now. At that time, I was having more difficulties, I could not tell myself and the children, but now we can. I can explain it more by talking. We can explain ourselves more by talking than by gestures. It is also about the child. I do not know. (T8)”

T4 compared her previous years and current years to explain the progress in communication.

“In terms of communication, I mean, at first, we were actually talking word by word. I wanted them to get the words out, but then I realized that we could actually be understood through dialogue. Communication somehow gets easier over time, you know. At first you do not know what to do. I do not remember much now, but at first you do not know what to do with such children, how they look at you, they are afraid. Because it is a teacher whose language they do not know. I am also talking about other students in Urfa, both because of the refugees and the language. I mean, for example, a child was crying a lot in Urfa. He did not want to enter the classroom at first. He was scared because he did not speak the language. But then they started to come and hug us. They take scissors from our cheeks when they want to. You know, we came to that point. That communication during the year. Over time, as I said, a little more. Activities... I honestly did not know how to get them to do the activities at first, because you give instructions.. He does not understand, he looks or something. Afterwards, you have to think about how you can explain it before each activity, so that they will understand it better, they will understand it better. Inevitably, that inevitably brings experience. (T4)”

The other two teachers, T1 and T13, also talked about how they gained experience over the years regarding communication.

“Before, I could not communicate much like this. I was already telling them with my head and eye gestures. We were very inexperienced at that time. You know, we were just adapting to them. They were already in a completely different world, but now, as the years pass, we get used to it. It is easier for us; it is easier for me. (T1)”

“So now something like this has happened. At first, I could not understand at all. Then I felt that these children, these children can perceive my gestures and my body language, and I tried to approach them more as my body language. Now I get along better (T13)”

“(…) Communication is no longer difficult. First, I found myself in a void about how to behave, then I brought myself to a light and found solutions. And then I feel very comfortable now. (…) I mean, how do I communicate like this? How do I speak? Will they understand our language? I thought in this way. By observing the children, I felt that they were very good observers. The light shone in me. Now we can communicate very comfortably. (T13)”

Besides, T6 talked about how working with a refugee child allowed her to gain experience over the years in terms of communication.

“I think it is better in terms of communicating with them. When I was explaining something to Syrian children, for example, I learned how to explain it. For example, I learned how to explain by visualizing and showing them the body. But it was not like this in the first year. I mean, it was not like this in the first year. (…) Communication is always evolving. (T6)”

During the second interview, I asked teachers to select cards representing the change in their communication process with refugee children. T1 selected these three cards and sorted them chronologically to represent her previous years, following years and current years in terms of communication with refugee children. These cards are presented in Figure 4.9.



**Figure 4. 9.** Selection of T1 Representing the Change in Her Communication Process with Refugee Child

She then explained her selection.

“They were silent. I mean they do not know; they do not know anything. They cannot speak, they do not understand me either. Then I think, well, they do not understand me. I say, for example, a foreign person was saying something to me, but I do not understand anything. That is how I feel. That is why I chose this card [the first one] at first. The next card is a process (2nd card). So, this is a process, to enable them to express this process. In the end, I think that we have achieved victory (3rd card), at least because we can understand each other with simple words, at least such routine daily things. That is what I think in the end. (T1)”

Secondly, when I examined early childhood teachers’ communication strategies, I found that teachers continued to use similar communication methods from the past to the present. The consistent methods used by teachers over the years are body language, demonstration, and language support from others. The difference is that they now realize they can communicate using more active methods such as music and games. Also, they use foreign languages such as English and Arabic in addition to strategies they have used before. For example, T14 stated that

“I think I spend more time with them, I get involved in their plays and I can spend better time with them and talk to them. In other words, I try to be involved in his plays to understand what he is saying, to make him show it through play. (T14)”

Thirdly, five teachers talked about their facilitator role in refugee children’s language acquisition process in their current experiences. However, teachers did not mention any attempt to acquire language skills for refugee children during their first years. For example, T4 stated that he helped them learn Turkish by having more Turkish conversations with refugee children.

“At home, since there is not much communication with the parents, I try to give them the opportunity to express themselves a little more. I mean, I need to have more conversations with them so that they can develop that language. It is usually about that. (T4)”

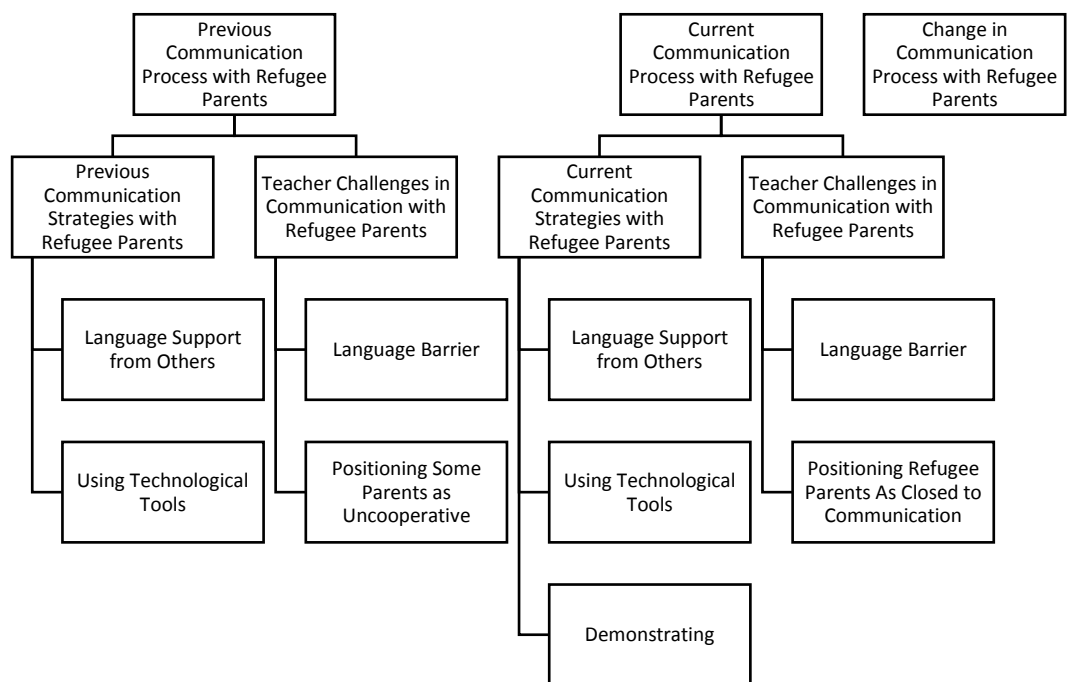
#### **4.1.4. Building Partnerships with Refugee Families**

One of the main tenets of Culturally Responsive Teaching is to have high expectations for all children and support their academic achievement in this sense



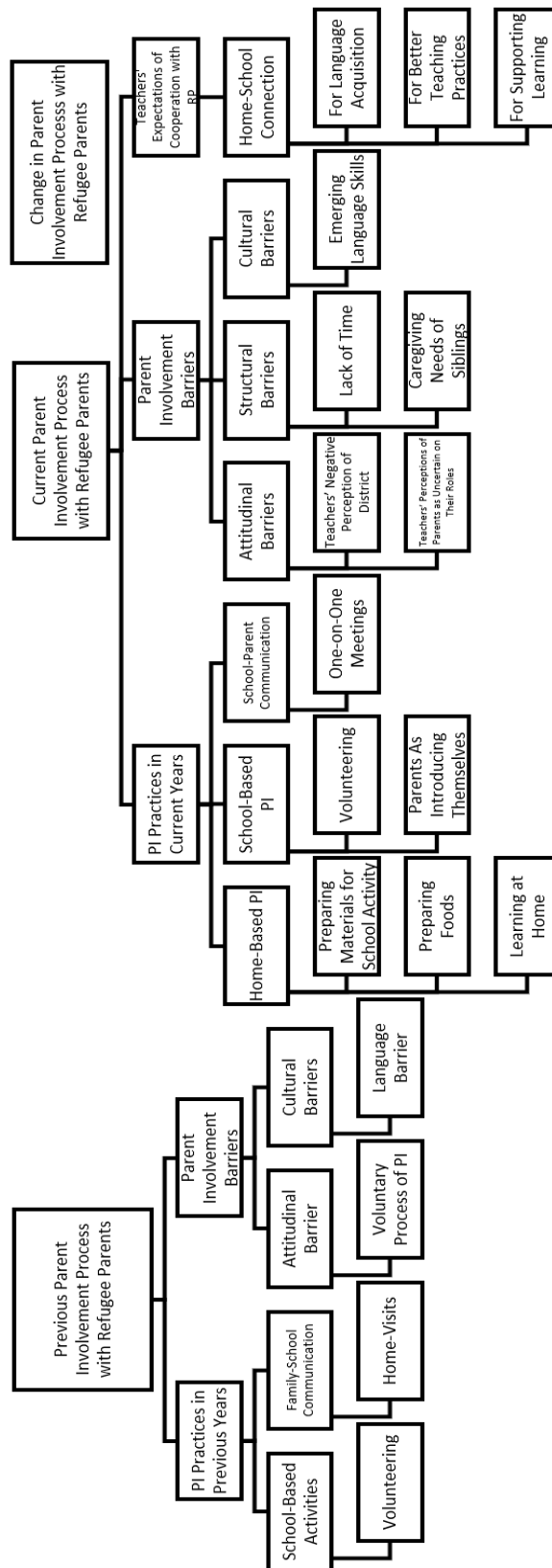
(Gay, 2002). Children’s academic achievements are not only affected by teachers’ practices. There is also a reciprocal relationship between diverse parents and teachers. This relationship was associated with diverse children’s academic outcomes and social and emotional development (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Therefore, it is critical to build partnerships with diverse families.

Building partnership with refugee families in this study has twofold: teachers’ communication process with refugee parents and parent involvement practices. The first three sub-themes reflect teachers’ communication process with refugee parents over the years. I presented teachers’ previous and current communication processes and the changes in these processes, if any. These three sub-themes, categories and codes are presented in Figure 4.10 below:



**Figure 4. 10.** Sub-Themes, Categories and Codes Related to Teachers’ Communication Process with Refugee Parents

The last three sub-themes are about parent involvement practices with refugee parents over the years. Similarly, I introduced teachers’ previous and current parent involvement practices and the change in this process, if any. These three sub-themes, categories and codes are presented in Figure 4.11 below.



**Figure 4. 11.** Sub-Themes, Categories and Codes Related to Parent Involvement Practices

#### 4.1.4.1. Previous Communication Process with Refugee Parents

This sub-theme relates to how teachers communicated with refugee parents in their previous years and the challenges they experienced in this period. The first category represents teachers' techniques in communicating with refugee parents in previous years. The second category refers to teachers' communication challenges in their first years. Categories, codes, and example quotations from participants are presented in Table 4.7.

**Table 4. 7.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' communication process with refugee parents

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Communication Process with Refugee Parents	Previous Communication Strategies with Refugee Parents	Language support from others (n=6)	"I mean, with some of them [refugee parents] I was establishing a relationship through the help of siblings. More precisely, with the siblings of two of my three students. One of them, yes, he was high school age, he was an adult. You know, he was expressing himself well. You know, he had a command of the Turkish language. I mean, we could communicate easily with the boy, and he would somehow convey it to the mother. The older sister of one of my students was in the fourth grade. She did not have much command of the language either. You know, we were speaking barely. The parents did not know the language at all. It was through the child who went to primary school (T12)."
		Using Technological Tools (n=2)	"The families were very eager to learn Turkish like this. They were trying to understand me. They were always using Google Translate. They translated everything I said from there (T5)."

**Table 4.7 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Communication Process with Refugee Parents		Language Barrier (n=6)	"We were blindfolded because we were prevented from communicating. As I said, how much communication even though we try to establish a common language, we always encountered language barriers (T3)"
	Teacher Challenges in Communication with Refugee Parents in Previous Years	Positioning Some Parents as Uncooperative (n=3)	"I told you that in the first year they were very close. They said absolutely nothing to me and were not cooperative. I mean, I felt like a shadow in my child's life or like someone who would only take care of the family for that year. Exactly. I mean, I felt invisible like that. (...) I had a very difficult first year working with refugee children and I could not accept it. The family was very overprotective. I felt very helpless.(...) As I said, they did not cooperate in any way. And afterwards they accused me of discriminating against such children (T5)"

#### 4.1.4.1.1. Previous Communication Strategies with Refugee Parents

During the interviews, teachers were asked how they communicated with refugee families in their previous years. The teachers mentioned that they used various methods to communicate with the families who did not speak Turkish. These methods include communicating by language support from others such as Syrian teachers or bilingual children or using technological tools such as Google Translate.

To begin with, six teachers stated that they got help from refugee children's siblings, other bilingual children in the classroom, or Syrian teachers to communicate with refugee parents in their first years. T4 and T5 stated that they were using children who knew Turkish and Arabic to communicate with refugee parents.

"Well, for my students in Urfa, since the children knew Turkish gradually, they provided a comfortable translation to their families. (T4)"  
 "Sometimes we could find a student in another class and have them translate, that's how we communicated (T5)."

Syrian teachers also helped local teachers to get in contact with refugee parents in one school. T5 stated her opinion in this regard as follow:

"One year we had something at school. We had a Syrian teacher for Arab or rather refugee children. She took care of the children and parents. (...) Yes, yes, our school had two teachers during the pandemic. One took care of the morning classes, and one took care of the students. She came to the whole primary school and kindergarten when there was a problem. We were explaining the situation to her. And she would translate it to the parents. Or she turned to the children.(T5)"

Siblings of refugee children also played an important role in communicating with families. Older brothers and sisters, as well as other siblings who attended higher grades and were proficient in Turkish, acted as a bridge between refugee parents and teachers during this process.

When I was working in Urfa, there was a family that did not speak Turkish at all. There were many who did not speak Turkish. When they came to school, their older daughters, other children, or a child from the family would come as a translator. (...) when I was working in the classroom there, I would come in the morning and in the afternoon, I would get the older sisters of the children to help me, I would establish support in between like a translator. We received that kind of support. We used this method by getting the older sisters of the children who were two or three years older, not boys but girl versions. They would help us in that area. (T8)"

When a teacher who made a home visit to the homes of refugee families is asked how she communicated during home visits, she stated:

"Yes, there were people with us, they were interpreting for us. There were people who knew [Turkish]. At least I know the older children who came... Or their cousins, nieces, nephews somehow... (T8)"

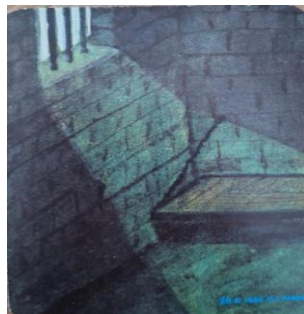
Secondly, two teachers were using technological tools, Google Translate, to communicate with refugee parents in their previous years.

"The families were very eager to learn Turkish like this. They were trying to understand me. They were always using Google Translate. They translated everything I said from there (T5)."

“When google Translate became widespread, I was trying to type it in and have them read when we needed to talk (T5)”

#### **4.1.4.1.2. Teacher Challenges in Communication with Refugee Parents in Previous Years**

Six teachers discussed their challenges in their first years working with refugee families. In general, the difficulties experienced by teachers can be divided into two codes: language barriers and positioning some parents as uncooperative families. During interviews, six teachers yielded that they had difficulties due to the language barrier between them and refugee parents. Teachers focused on their negative experiences in communicating with these parents. Specifically, in the second interview, I asked teachers to select metaphor cards representing their previous years in communicating with refugee parents. One teacher (T4) chose the dark card represented in Figure 4.12 below.



**Figure 4. 12.** A Metaphor Card Representing a Dungeon

When I asked why, she stated:

"I chose that card because my understanding was insufficient. It was a blind spot for me. I mean, and even if I did something... I could not do anything. The family did not speak any language. I chose this card because I felt that I would not be able to reach a result even if I tried. (T14)"

Additionally, two teachers chose a card with a blindfolded person on it to represent their previous years. It is presented in Figure 4.13.



**Figure 4. 13.** A Metaphor Card Representing a Blindfolded Person

They stated the issue from a similar perspective as follows:

“We were blindfolded because we were prevented from communicating. As I said, how much communication even though we try to establish a common language, we always encountered language barriers (T3)”

“I did not even see them there; we were living like we were ignoring each other and not talking to each other. (T10)”

T4 also pointed out that the language barrier created difficulty in asking materials for activities.

“In our attempts to communicate, we express ourselves. How to act, how to behave? Let me give you an example related to hair conditioner. I organized an activity involving conditioner. A woman participated, and we repeated the process three times. She brought shampoo and other items. I showed her the cream and explained that it wasn't effective or something. It would be much more convenient if there were some forms of training for them. (T4)”

On the other hand, during interviews, three teachers focused on the negative experiences when refugee parents did not cooperate with them. They expressed that refugee parents preferred not to talk to teachers on behalf of their children. T5 stated that:

"I told you that in the first year they were very close. They said absolutely nothing to me and were not cooperative. I mean, I felt like a shadow in my child's life or like someone who would only take care of the family for that year. Exactly. I mean, I felt invisible like that. (...) I had a very difficult first year working with refugee children and I could not accept it. The family was

very overprotective. I felt very helpless.(...) As I said, they did not cooperate in any way. And afterwards they accused me of discriminating against such children (T5)"

T2 also expressed that

“Families of refugee children were always one step behind. They are still one step behind. Still, I cannot say they know exactly. They did not attend many meetings. They do not participate, not at all. (T2)”

#### 4.1.4.2. Current Communication Process with Refugee Parents

This sub-theme is related to how teachers are currently communicating with refugee parents. Similar to their previous experiences, two categories emerged: teachers’ current communication strategies and current challenges. Codes and example quotations from participants are presented in Table 4.8.

**Table 4. 8.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers’ communication process with refugee parents

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Communication Process with Refugee Parents	Current Communication Strategies with Refugee Parents	Language support from others (n=3)	“Now usually the parents of my students, I mean, they knew a little Turkish. If they did not speak Turkish, we did something like this, we contacted another parent who spoke Turkish. For example, I was explaining my problems to him [the one who speaks Turkish], and he [the Turkish-speaking refugee family] was explaining his [the non-Turkish-speaking refugee family] problems to her. Something like that. Now, as I said, we know some of the parents because we have been working here for so many years. Some parents have numbers. You know, we were talking, bringing them together. They communicate with each other and talk to each other. (T13).”



**Table 4.8 (cont'd)**

<b>Sub-Theme</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Example Quotations from Participants</b>
Current Communication Process with Refugee Parents	Current Communication Strategies with Refugee Parents	Demonstrating (n=2)	“I mean, how should we communicate with the families? What can I do even if they do not know? Yes, maybe we couldn't communicate in Turkish, but in the activities, I send, I explain with visuals that these things can be done, these things can be practiced. I mean, we were able to continue the process in a way by seeing at least in the visuals. (T14)”
		Using Technological Tools (n=4)	“But intensively by message, we can translate each other's writings. Therefore, if I have something to write, I send a direct message. She translates it from Google Translate. She sends me her answer in Arabic. I translate it. That is how we do it (T5)”
	Teacher Challenges in Communication with Refugee Parents in Current Years	Language Barrier (n=3)	“And they have been living in Türkiye for many years. I mean, this child, his parents are going to get married, they are going to have that child, and the parents should be at least twenty-five or thirty years old. I think they do not educate themselves on this issue [learning Turkish]. They do not communicate with me. (T3)”

**Table 4.8 (cont'd)**

<b>Sub-Theme</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Example Quotations from Participants</b>
Current Communication Process with Refugee Parents	Teacher Challenges in Communication with Refugee Parents in Current Years	Positioning families as Closed to Communication	“I do not know if it is because they do not feel they belong here. Both of them, for example. But there are some in this class too. It is not like that. They do not do anything. They do not get back on time and they do not try to contact me. I have to stop them and try to explain (T11).”

#### 4.1.4.2.1. Current Communication Strategies with Refugee Parents

While we were interviewing teachers about their current communication strategies with refugee parents, they talked about some strategies and techniques, such as language support from others, demonstrations, and the use of technological tools. Besides, teachers’ narratives yielded that refugee parents’ level of Turkish determines teachers’ communication methods.

To begin with, when teachers were asked about their current communication strategies with refugee parents, they stated that they received language support from others as translators in the communication process with refugee parents. The three teachers said refugee families get help from their neighbors to translate the messages into Turkish. T13 expressed that refugee parents get help from their neighbors to understand assignments.

“I assign it [homework] in Turkish, they actually engage with it. One student even approached me and said something. when they encounter words they don’t understand, they turn to their Turkish-speaking neighbors, who help them read and pronounce those words (T13).”

T13 also stated that they paired refugee families who speak Turkish with those who do not speak Turkish, establishing communication in this way.

“Now usually the parents of my students, I mean, they knew a little Turkish. If they did not speak Turkish, we did something like this, we contacted another parent who spoke Turkish. For example, I was explaining my

problems to him [the one who speaks Turkish], and he [the Turkish-speaking refugee family] was explaining his [the non-Turkish-speaking refugee family] problems to her. Something like that. Now, as I said, we know some of the parents because we have been working here for so many years. Some parents have numbers. You know, we were talking, bringing them together. They communicate with each other and talk to each other. (T13).”

Secondly, four teachers are currently using technological tools such as Google Translate to communicate with refugee parents. For example, T5 stated that

“But intensively by message, we can translate each other's writings. Therefore, if I have something to write, I send a direct message. She translates it from Google Translate. She sends me her answer in Arabic. I translate it. That is how we do it (T5)”

T13 also expressed that:

“Here's what we are doing. She has an application on her phone. I send a message and she answers me. Or we open it. I respond with my voice, and she says it in Arabic and the program translates it into Turkish when we need to talk face to face.(T13)”

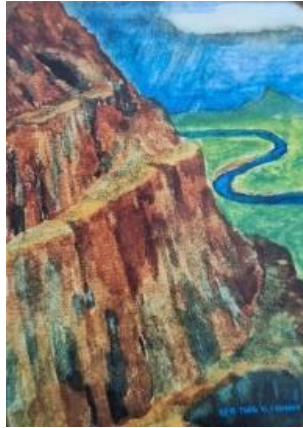
Thirdly, only two teachers talked about using visuals to express their thoughts and ideas to refugee parents.

“I mean, how should we communicate with the families? What can I do even if they do not know? Yes, maybe we could not communicate in Turkish, but in the activities, I send, I explain with visuals that these things can be done, these things can be practiced. I mean, we were able to continue the process in a way by seeing at least in the visuals. (T14)”

Teachers' current communication methods with refugee families were examined, and it was understood that the family's assumed level of Turkish language skills shaped the communication method. Three teachers stated that they use communication strategies according to the Turkish level of refugee families. If the refugee family speaks Turkish, the teacher talks to the family on the phone. T13 and T6 stated that

“This year I communicate more by phone or message because the family speaks Turkish.” (T13)”

When T4 chose a card reflecting methods of communication with refugee families presented in Figure 4.14, she chose a card with a mountain and a river running down the mountain to represent how communication method differs according to characteristics of parents.



**Figure 4. 14.** A Metaphor Card Representing a Mountain and a River

When I asked why, she said:

“As I said, there are different ways. Different roads for everyone, you know, there is a waterway here. There is a mountain road. I mean, according to the person, according to the thing, I prefer whichever way is suitable. I mean, the method I choose is not suitable for all families. I use different methods for each family, depending on their language skills. (T4)”

#### **4.1.4.2.2. Teacher Challenges in Communication with Refugee Parents in Current Years**

Teachers also narrated their challenges in the communication process. For example, while some teachers experienced difficulties due to the language barrier, other teachers evaluated refugee parents as closed to communication. To begin with, three teachers expressed the difficulties they are currently experiencing due to the language barrier with refugee parents. Teachers complained that despite living in Türkiye for many years, the families still do not speak Turkish. T4 stated that

“For example, my student this year has been in Türkiye for four years, his mother does not speak a single word of Turkish. You know, I teach the child here, the child will grow up. He will teach his mother. So yes, it is a long process for women (T4).”

Besides, T3 said that

“And they have been living in Türkiye for many years. I mean, this child, his parents are going to get married, they are going to have that child, and the parents should be at least twenty-five or thirty years old. I think they do not educate themselves on this issue [learning Turkish]. They do not communicate with me. (T3)”

On the other hand, five teachers evaluated refugee families closed to communication.

T11 stated that

“I do not know if it is because they do not feel they belong here. Both of them, for example. But there are some in this class too. It is not like that. They do not do anything. They do not get back on time and they do not try to contact me. I have to stop them and try to explain (T11).”

Also, T2 stated that

“The families of refugee children have always been one step behind. They are still one step behind. I cannot say that they are still fully informed. They do not attend parent-teacher meetings much. Not very much, not at all. They do not communicate with us much. For example, other parents are in constant contact with us. How is my child? Or did he/she eat, drink his/her milk? I do not know, did he misbehave today, etc. There is a constant influx of parents towards us, but they are always one step behind. If we talk, they only talk to us. (T2)”

During the second interview, I asked the teacher to choose a card representing their current experiences with refugee families. T11 chose two cards: a woman with her arms folded across her chest and a woman with her eyes covered with a cloth presented in Figure 4.15.



**Figure 4. 15.** Card Selection of T11 Representing Her Experiences with Refugee Families

When I asked her why, she stated:

“T11: It could be that it [crossing arms across the chest] means closed to communication in body language. Sometimes I feel like that, sometimes I feel that in parents.

G: And finally, blindfolded card.

T11: They do not see my messages. It is like they sometimes do not see the problems I describe (T11)”

Another teacher chose two dark cards expressing her current communication with refugee families represented in Figure 4.16.



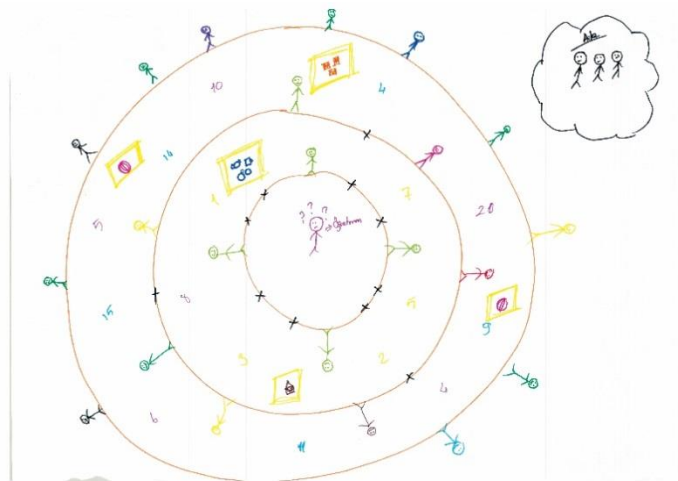
**Figure 4. 16.** Card Selection of T1 Representing Her Experiences with Refugee Families

“All of these are dark to me, that is, they show hopelessness for them. Because we cannot communicate in any way, the process is not the beginning or the end. I cannot express these; we are trying to talk. Then there is no result. We try to do something. I am choosing these pictures. Okay, he is trying to do something. But, uh. It is always unfinished. It cannot be completed because of the other side. (T1)”

On the other hand, two teachers stated that although refugee families have been in Türkiye for years, they still remain outside the system and are not very involved in the education process. For example, when teachers were asked to draw their experiences of working with refugee children, one teacher drew the system circle in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory but put the family outside the circle. It is represented in Figure 4.17.

“There, unfortunately, when I have a language problem, we do not see the parent. The parents are out of the picture. (T8)”

“Because the family is always left out. Families were never very much involved. You know, they always stay in a separate corner. You know, but since this family is always outside, I preferred to draw the family as a whole, just outside the circle, because the missing is always missing (T12).”



**Figure 4. 17.** Educational Journey Mapping of T12

#### **4.1.4.3. Change in Communication Process with Refugee Parents**

When comparing teachers' strategies in their communication methods with refugee families in their previous and current years, it seems that they found more ways to communicate with refugee families in their current communication methods. In previous years, teachers preferred communicating through language support from others such as siblings, and through technological tools such as Google Translate. However, some teachers currently use visuals and drawings to convey their ideas or important things to refugee families who do not know Turkish.

Besides, teachers talked about their first-year challenges while communicating with refugee parents. These challenges stemmed from language barriers and the positioning of some parents as uncooperative parents. Remarkably, teachers expressed their challenge due to refugee parents' language diversity in their previous and current experiences. However, they used more accusatory language for refugee

parents for not learning Turkish even though they had lived in Türkiye for many years in their current experiences. In other words, when talking about their past experiences, the main focus was on the language barrier and the difficulties they faced because of this. However, when talking about their current experiences, they again focused on the families' lack of Turkish and criticized them for still not speaking Turkish despite being in the country for many years. For example, T1 stated that

“Well, these children have been here for five years. Probably the children who came to me were born here. They were born and raised in Türkiye. I mean, most probably so. But it saddens me that they do not know a single word of Turkish. That is also because of the family. I mean, after all, that child was born and raised here. (T1)”

Also, teachers currently perceive refugee parents outside the system. One of the reasons for this is the language barrier. For example, T8 stated that:

“There, unfortunately, when I have a language problem, we do not see the parent. The parents are out of the picture. (T8)”

Additionally, T12 expressed that family is always left out. The problem for her is still the language barrier. She also pointed out the implementations of authorities as a solution to this problem. She expressed her idea as follows:

“Families do not speak the [Turkish] language. We teachers do not know a common language. So maybe there could be mobile interpreter groups in schools or at least in districts. But there are not. We cannot communicate in any way. Just having children in classrooms does not mean anything. It is actually a loss after not being able to reach them. (T12)”

#### **4.1.4.4. Previous Parent Involvement Process with Refugee Parents**

This sub-theme reflects teachers' previous attempts to involve refugee parents in parent-involvement practices. During interviews, teachers described the parent involvement activities they implemented with refugee parents. Besides, some teachers' perceived barriers to parent involvement activities were presented in Table 4.9 as well.



**Table 4. 9.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding parent involvement process with refugee parents

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Sub-Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Parent Involvement Process with Refugee Parents	Parent Involvement Practices in Previous Years	School-Based Activities	Volunteering (n=5)	“In the first years, I did story reading activities. Fathers came and read stories, mothers came, and their children read stories. (T10).”
	Parent Involvement Practices in Previous Years	Family-School Communication	Home-Visits (n=3)	“We started going on home visits. Let Us at least get to know the family. Let us communicate that way. I met my parents. We can communicate as much as a child, which was actually effective. It was good too. We visited more parents there [Urfa] because in general, during that period of time compared to here. (T8)”
	Parent Involvement Barriers	Attitudinal Barriers	Voluntary Process of Parent Involvement (n=1)	“In the first years, they did not come for parent involvement. Since this was already voluntary, we could not force them too much, we gave them a form for parent involvement. In that form, those who want to participate, those who can come participate. So, when they were reluctant, we did not have such a study (T14)”
		Cultural Barriers	Language Barrier (n=2)	“There was not much parent involvement in Urfa. I mean, honestly. There, we had a bit more of a language problem with the parents and we could not have a good relationship with each other. (T4)”

#### 4.1.4.4.1. Parent Involvement Approach in Previous Years

During interviews, teachers discussed their attempts to involve refugee parents in their children’s education process. These designed involvement activities was categorized based on the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model of Parent Involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The findings showed that only

four teachers stated refugee parents were involved in school-based parent involvement activities in the first years. On the other hand, two teachers stated that they did home visits to refugee families' homes. The three teachers discussed factors preventing refugee parents' involvement in the process.

To begin with, some teachers described their school-based parent involvement activities. These activities were related to doing activities in the classroom such as experiments or reading a book activity. Specifically, inviting parents for a reading activity was the most commonly designed activity for parent involvement. For example, T5 and T10 stated that

“We had parents come and do activities together. Those who had little time read books and left. It was nice. The children saw their parents. For example, they would come and help me with activities that I would find difficult to do alone in class. It was good. I was enjoying it. (T5)”

“In the first years, I did story reading activities. Fathers came and read stories, mothers came, and their children read stories. (T10).”

On the other hand, some teachers talked about home-visiting as their attempts at parent involvement for various reasons. This type of parent involvement also refers to family-school communication (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). For example, T8 stated that she conducted home visits to get to know the refugee family by communicating with them.

“We tried things. We did home visits in the first stages. Not in the first year, but in the second and third years, I think we started going on home visits. Let Us at least get to know the family. Let us communicate that way. I met my parents. We can communicate as much as a child, which was actually effective. It was good too. We visited more parents there [Urfa] because in general, during that period of time compared to here.

G: Well, I think you said to communicate with the family or for the continuity of the children.

T8: To get information, to ensure continuity. Because we did not get to know the family very well, they do not always come. The sibling took the child and left. We would visit from time to time and get information about the family. That was our aim. We were also trying to attract the family to the school. (T8)”

#### **4.1.4.4.2. Barriers to Parent Involvement**

Parent involvement barriers are grouped according to the types of barriers to family engagement by Moodie and Ramos (2014), which was developed for the engagement process of diverse families. These types are structural (such as scheduling time), attitudinal (such as the exclusion of parents), and cultural (such as language barrier). In the current study, three teachers talked about factors that negatively affect the parent involvement process of refugee parents. T14 mentioned that the fact that the family involvement process was not compulsory resulted in families not coming to school. This is an attitudinal barrier.

“In the first years, they did not come for parent involvement. Since this was already voluntary, we could not force them too much, we gave them a form for parent involvement. In that form, those who want to participate, those who can come participate. So, when they were reluctant, we did not have such a study (T14)”

Two of them stated that their parents’ low level of Turkish prevented them from being involved in school activities. This barrier is related to the cultural barrier to family engagement. T4 stated that the language barrier prevented refugee parents’ involvement.

“There was not much parent involvement in Urfa. I mean, honestly. There, we had a bit more of a language problem with the parents and we could not have a good relationship with each other. (T4)”

#### **4.1.4.5. Current Parent Involvement Process with Refugee Parents**

This sub-theme is related to teachers’ practices of parent involvement with refugee parents in their current years. Some teachers also specified barriers preventing refugee parents’ involvement. For several reasons, teachers have described their expectations of cooperation with refugee parents for the past few years. They found it critical for refugee children’s language acquisition and education process. Sub-themes, categories, codes and sub-codes and example quotations are presented in Table 4.10.

**Table 4. 10.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding parent involvement process with refugee parents

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Sub-Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Parent Involvement Process with Refugee Parents	Parent Involvement Practices in Current Years	Home-Based Parent Involvement	Preparing Materials for School Activity (n=2)	“For example, we do this [parent involvement activity] on April 23rd, they prepare costumes. Costumes of the world's children. Everyone wants to wear the costumes of children from different countries... We prepare this at home with our parents. You know, they are doing things in that sense. Parents do it too (T12)”
			Preparing Foods (n=3)	“If anyone wanted to make something and send it as family participation, I mentioned it and gave it to the children. For example, let us say the student's name is Ahmet. Ahmet's mother sent it. (T5)”
			Learning at Home (n=8)	“An idea came to my mind. Today, I sent home a story to the refugee family, a story we read in class. “Here, read it together. Then, summarize the book, shoot a video, send it to me, etc.” He is the kid who is able to study at home, make videos, and send them to me. He is a little shy to talk to me here. (T10).”
		School-Based Parent Involvement	Volunteering (n=7)	“Refugee families and parents come here. For example, let us say they are going to read a story together. (T10)”

**Table 4.10 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Sub-Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Parent Involvement Process with Refugee Parents	Parent Involvement Practices in Current Years	School-Parent Communication	Parents as Introducing Themselves (n=2)  One-on-one Meetings (n=3)	<p>“He was a police officer; he was promoting the police profession. Or nothing at all. So, for example, mothers who were not working were always coming and reading books. (T1)”</p> <p>“I told you so since the meetings at the beginning of the year. If you want to meet, let me know in advance. You know, do not ask at the door. Or do not -ask on the phone. Let it be one on one. That it would be more effective. Now, of course, schools will close, and they will start primary school. What should we do? What should we do? What is missing? How should we supplement? I also give them time with requests such as etc. (T7)”</p>
			Teachers’ Negative Perception of District (n=5)	“I want to do family involvement, but we do not practice it very much in this neighborhood. (T11)”
	Parent Involvement Barriers	Attitudinal Barriers	Teachers’ Perceptions of Parents as Uncertain on Their Roles (n=5)	<p>“I think parent involvement is very important. I strongly believe that it is necessary to involve all families in that education, but unfortunately, families are reluctant, not to say very inadequate in this regard, and they are afraid because they do not know what to do and they do not want to come to parent involvement. That is one of the biggest problems we have. We try to attract families to school. But unfortunately (T2)”</p>

**Table 4.10 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Sub-Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Parent Involvement Process with Refugee Parents	Parent Involvement Barriers	Structural Barriers	Lack of Time (n=4)	<p>“No, she did not participate. His mother was also a preschool teacher, but I think she was teaching a Quran course. That is why she could not come. But it was a caring family. They just did not have time and could not come to the parent involvement. (T5)”</p>
			Caregiving Needs of Siblings (n=6)	<p>“So, they are not participating. Because they have a very high number of children. (T10)”</p>
	Teachers’ Expectations of Cooperation with Refugee Parents	Home-School Connection	Emerging Language Skills (n=2)	<p>“As I said, since we could not communicate with Syrians in the classroom, for example, I was normally doing parent involvement before the pandemic. At that time, for example, they would prepare meals and send them to the classroom, but they did not want to enter the classroom themselves. Because they do not know, they do not know anything, and they do not try to learn. So how many years has it been? If you want, you can actually learn in 5 years. (T1)”</p>
			For Language Acquisition (n=4)	<p>“The child cannot learn Turkish because the family does not know it either. The family also needs support at home. I focused on family support in this regard (T8).”</p>
	For Supporting Learning (n=5)		<p>“The same, of course, if the family does not continue what we teach here in five hours when they go home, there is no permanence. As I said, the work at home reinforces the work at school and ensures its continuity. (T11)”</p>	

#### 4.1.4.5.1. Parent Involvement Approach in Current Years

In their current parent involvement practices with refugee parents, teachers talked about more strategies to involve them. These are home-based parent involvement, school-based parent involvement practices and school-home communication. Firstly, five teachers described home-based parent involvement activities for refugee parents. For example, T12 and T10 stated that they are asking for costumes and uniforms from parents to prepare at home and send to school for an activity.

“For example, we do this [parent involvement activity] on April 23<sup>rd</sup> [National Holiday], they prepare costumes. Costumes of the world's children. Everyone wants to wear the costumes of children from different countries... We prepare this at home with our parents. You know, they are doing things in that sense. Parents do it too (T12)”

Besides, eight teachers stated that they sent what they learned at school or homework as a form of family involvement. T10 gave an example of this kind of home-based parent involvement activity.

“An idea came to my mind. Today, I sent home a story to the refugee family, a story we read in class. “Here, read it together. Then, summarize the book, shoot a video, send it to me, etc.” He is the kid who is able to study at home, make videos, and send them to me. He is a little shy to talk to me here. (T10).”

T3 sends homework and evaluates it as a home-based parent involvement activity.

“Family involvement is important, of course. So, even though homework is not recommended lately, I give homework on the weekends. I also send it to refugee families (T3)”

These home-based activities are generally related to preparing food for the class. For example, refugee parents in the T5 classroom sent special foodstuff to the class.

“If anyone wanted to make something and send it as family participation, I mentioned it and gave it to the children. For example, let us say the student's name is Ahmet. Ahmet's mother sent it. (T5)”

“I mean, I remember a few times when we organized bazaars or something like that, they would bring such food there... Other than that, there was nothing. Parents do not take any such initiative. (T2)”

On the other hand, eight teachers talked about school-based parent involvement activities with refugee parents. They designed reading or experimenting activities for all parents but also involved refugee parents in the process. T10 talked about both reading and experimenting activities for parents.

“Refugee families and parents come here. For example, let us say they are going to read a story together. For example, there is another one for the class, I just assigned the tasks per person yesterday. There are experimental studies. We will do it under the name of the science festival, they will come here and make presentations with their children. There are studies of that type, but I did not think of anything further. Well, if these go well and this experiment goes well, I have other ideas in mind. (T10)”

Furthermore, two teachers stated that they are designing activities based on parents’ skills, knowledge, or resources. For example, T1 stated that

“He was a police officer; he was promoting the police profession. Or nothing at all. So, for example, mothers who were not working were always coming and reading books. (T1)”

Finally, three teachers designed individual meetings with refugee parents to provide information or guide them. T7 talked about this issue as follows:

“I told you so since the meetings at the beginning of the year. If you want to meet, let me know in advance. You know, do not ask at the door. Or do not ask on the phone. Let it be one on one. That it would be more effective. Now, of course, schools will close, and they will start primary school. What should we do? What should we do? What is missing? How should we supplement? I also give them time with requests such as etc. (T7)”

#### **4.1.4.5.2. Barriers to Parent Involvement**

Some teachers also talked about factors that negatively affect the parent involvement process of refugee parents. These barriers are categorized as structural, attitudinal, and cultural barriers (Moodie & Ramos, 2014).

To begin with, attitudinal barriers refer to practitioners’ beliefs and attitudes. In the current study, five teachers stated that they did not think their district's parent profile



was suitable for family involvement. When they use the word district here, they refer to the region in which the school they work is located in terms of socio-cultural and socio-economic reasons. For example, T11 and T10 expressed their similar idea as follows:

“I want to do family involvement, but we do not practice it very much in this neighborhood. (T11)”

“I forced the participation of parents in a region where I thought that they would never participate. (T10)”

Besides, attitudinal barriers arise when refugee parents do not understand and define their roles in the school context (Moodie & Ramos, 2014). On this issue, T11 stated that

“We inevitably give them something during the break, but they usually do not do it. I mean, I do not know, the ones who come to me do not. Afterwards, when they come back, they do not fulfill their responsibilities, so I think they are a little bit disconnected from the school. You know, I want home activities or spending time with families during different vacations, I want photos. There is no return from families in any way. They do not do it; they are not interested (T11)”

According to T2, refugee parents’ reluctance might stem from their lack of knowledge about what to do.

“I think parent involvement is very important. I strongly believe that it is necessary to involve all families in that education, but unfortunately, families are reluctant, not to say very inadequate in this regard, and they are afraid because they do not know what to do and they do not want to come to parent involvement. That is one of the biggest problems we have. We try to attract families to school. But unfortunately (T2)”

Another barrier is structural barriers preventing diverse families from parent involvement practices. Child-care needs and lack of time are among the structural barriers (Moodie and Ramos, 2014). Four teachers stated that refugee families do not participate in activities because they do not have enough time.

“They say the time does not fit. They say we have other children. They do not prefer it. (T12)”

On the other hand, the caregiving needs of siblings as structural barriers are another factor preventing refugee families' involvement.

“So, they are not participating. Because they have a very high number of children. (T10)”

“Some of them have little babies and can't leave them.(T9)”

The final barrier is cultural barriers. In the current study, two teachers stated that parents are not coming to parent involvement activities due to their low level of Turkish. T12 mentioned that:

“Because there is already a language problem in the family. When I ask the family, I mean the class, yes, they do things, they support me, but how can I say it? Everything about language, they are always based on language, but if I call them for a class activity, for example, and they don't know, they can't do it. When I help them, it does not mean much. You know, it does not mean anything to me that he just comes to class and goes alone. You know, if an activity is to be done, the parents should be at the forefront. For example, we have collective activities. They do not usually participate, for example. (T12)”

T1 also said that

“They [refugee parents] are not participating in this parent involvement. They do not understand us much anyway (T1)”

She also continued:

“As I said, since we could not communicate with Syrians in the classroom, for example, I was normally doing parent involvement before the pandemic. At that time, for example, they would prepare meals and send them to the classroom, but they did not want to enter the classroom themselves. Because they do not know, they do not know anything, and they do not try to learn. So how many years has it been? If you want, you can actually learn in 5 years. (T1)”

#### **4.1.4.5.3. Teachers' Expectations of Cooperation with Refugee Parents**

When their current experiences with refugee families were discussed, seven teachers expressed their current expectations of cooperation from refugee families. The

reasons for this cooperation were to support language acquisition of refugee children, to support their learning process, and to empower teaching practices. Four teachers emphasized the connection between home and school and their expectations to cooperate with refugee parents to support the language acquisition of refugee children. T8 stressed that

“The child cannot learn Turkish because the family does not know it either. The family also needs support at home. I focused on family support in this regard (T8).”

Similarly, T14 stated that parents should support language acquisition at home.

“Children somehow learn Turkish by hearing it from each other, from their social environment, from the environment in the classroom, or they somehow manage to express themselves, but if the families do not know it, if other languages are spoken at home, Turkish remains in the background and cannot progress. I mean like this, yes, I want the family to support him because unless he learns Turkish, he will have difficulties at school. He will not want to come to school. It will affect him. (T14)

On the other hand, some teachers wanted to cooperate with refugee parents to support children’s learning process. For example, T14 focused on the role of parents in children’s learning in a home context.

“I mean, of course, working with families is a must. Because no matter how much we give, it is meaningless unless the family supports it. In that respect, I think it is good and there should be more of this kind of work so that what is done at school can be supported at home and become more efficient. What is this child lacking? I think it is necessary to discuss this with the family and draw a common path. I also say that in my meetings at the beginning of the year, I held the meeting a little late in order to get to know the children. (T14)”

#### **4.1.4.6. Change in Parent Involvement Practices with Refugee Parents**

This final sub-theme shows the change in teachers’ parent involvement practices with refugee parents over the years. To begin with, in terms of parent involvement practices, it seems that in recent years, there has been an increase in teachers’ attempts to involve refugee parents in the educational process of their children. For

example, five teachers designed school-based parent involvement activities, and three teachers did home visits in their previous years. Currently, more teachers are designing these activities. Besides, they started to implement home-based parent involvement activities for refugee parents.

Secondly, most teachers (n=11) did not give a reason for the lack of parent involvement in the first years. Only one teacher stated that parents were not involved due to the voluntary nature of the parent involvement process, and two teachers stated that parent involvement did not take place due to the families' emerging Turkish language skills. On the other hand, there seems to be an increase in teachers' perceived barriers that prevent refugee families from parent involvement activities, although teachers have been doing more parent involvement activities in their current experience. For instance, only three teachers discussed cultural and structural barriers in the first years. However, teachers currently state that attitudinal, structural, and cultural barriers exist.

For example, five teachers stated they are not planning parent involvement activities because they do not find parent groups suitable. For example, T13 stated that:

"But it is a bit difficult in this environment. I mean, you cannot provide such family involvement in every environment. (T13)" (In this narrative, the teacher refers to the region in which she worked.)

Additionally, teachers stated that refugee parents do not participate because they have a lack of time or another child. Refugee parents' low level of Turkish is still a problem. For example, T12 stated that:

"Because there is already a language problem in the family. When I ask the family, I mean the class, yes, they do things, they support me, but how can I say it? Everything about language is always based on language, but if I call them for a class activity, for example, and they do not know, they cannot do it. When I help them, it does not mean much. You know, it does not mean anything to me that he simply attends class and leaves on his own. You know, if an activity is to be done, the parents should be at the forefront. For example, we have collective activities. They do not usually participate, for example. (T12)"

Again, teachers' expectations of cooperation with refugee parents have increased after spending at least three years with refugee parents. In their current experiences, teachers talked about their expectations from families for refugee children's language acquisition and for establishing a bridge between home and school. For example, T8 stated that:

“I look at it with the logic that whatever we can do with family support is profitable. I mean, I continue this process by just talking or expecting support from the family. without support, we cannot make progress at home, in education (T8)”

These findings show that these eight teachers actually realize the importance of parent-school partnerships. They also conducted home-based and school-based parent involvement activities with refugee parents in their current years. Still, they evaluated these activities as insufficient for refugee children's progress in learning and Turkish. They expressed their desire for a school-home partnership. Moreover, these teachers also discussed parent involvement barriers preventing this partnership. For example, T13 noted the importance of parent involvement.

“I attach importance to the work that can be done with children not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. We try to include them in certain activities, not all the time in the classroom, but from time to time. (T13)”

On the other hand, the same teachers perceived parent involvement as a difficult activity. She stated that

"But it is a bit difficult in this environment. I mean, you cannot provide such family involvement in every environment. (T13)”

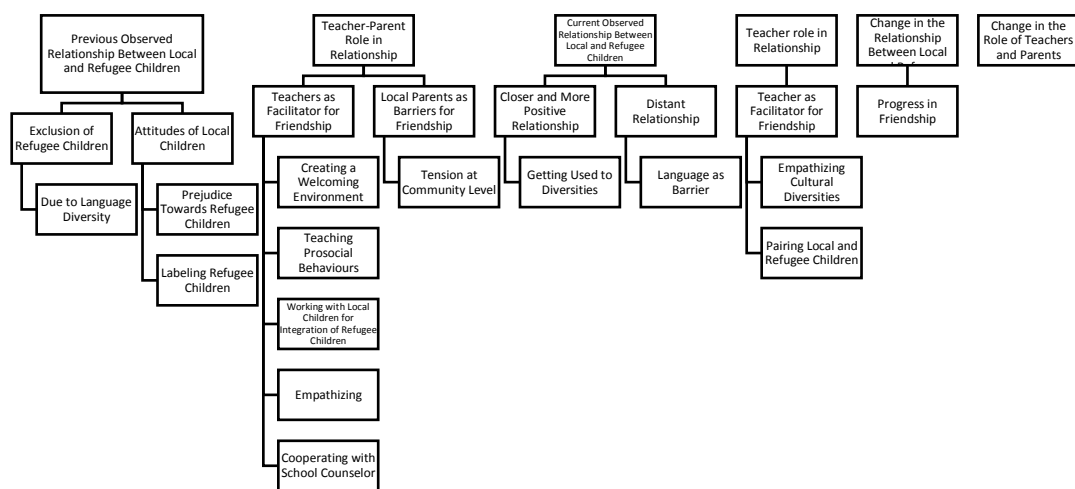
Nevertheless, she stated that she is aware of the benefits of parent involvement activities and home-school partnerships for refugee children's readiness for primary school. She talked about home-based activities she designed for refugee parents.

“I am aware that sometimes it is necessary, but as I said, it is not only with the teacher. The family also needs to support it. Otherwise, it is insufficient, unfortunately. At home, for example, I send the lyrics of the songs we have

learned, I send the music, you know, you should support it, you should sing it at home, you know, support it, support it. How you can explain extra for these, how you can support them at home. Because, you know, it does not work the other way around. Yes, even if the child understands something, when he/she cannot convey it to his/her family, it is not supported and it goes into oblivion. It does not make any sense, but if the family supports and continues the activities at home, that achievement is given. (T13)”

#### 4.1.5. Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children

This main theme was constructed based on teachers’ observations on the friendship dynamic and relationship between local and refugee children. During interviews, I asked teachers about their previous and current observations and how they described the relationship over the years. Based on the data, six sub-themes emerged. These sub-themes show teachers’ observations on the relationship between local and refugee children and the role parents and teachers play in this relationship. Sub-themes, categories and codes are presented in Figure 4.18 below:



**Figure 4. 18.** Sub-Themes, Categories and Codes Related to Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children

##### 4.1.5.1. Previous Observed Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children

This sub-theme was formed from teachers’ observations and narratives regarding the relationship between refugee and local children in their first years. Teachers mainly

talked about local children’s attitudes towards refugee children and the reasons for the exclusion of refugee children. Besides, they talked about their interventions to prevent the exclusion of refugee children and to promote friendship between local and refugee children. The sub-themes, categories, codes, and example quotations are presented in Table 4.11.

**Table 4. 11.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers’ observations

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Observed Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children	Exclusion of Refugee Children	Due to Language Diversity (n=4)	“The [refugee] child felt very lonely. At the beginning of the year, he did not speak the language. They could not understand and get along. The child was inevitably excluded at the beginning of the year (T5)”
		Prejudice Towards Refugee Children (n=3)	“In the first years, there were those who sometimes thought that way with prejudice. Involuntarily, there were those who behaved differently towards the refugee child. We always tried to prevent him.(T8)”
	Attitudes of Local Children	Labeling Refugee Children (n=4)	“I mean, at first, they look at it like a... (...) Even sometimes there is a label, "Oh, he's Syrian." Do you know like that? Labeling. (T1)”

#### 4.1.5.1.1. Exclusion of Refugee Children

While talking about their previous experiences with the relationship between local and refugee children, teachers expressed their observation on the exclusion of refugee children by their local friends. Teachers exemplified the behaviors of local children in this process. They also mentioned that language diversity is the main reason for this exclusion. I also asked them their attitude and interventions in the cases of exclusion. Four teachers stated that this exclusion resulted from language diversity between two groups of children. T5 narrated as follows:

“Yes, exactly. The [refugee] child felt very lonely. At the beginning of the year, he did not speak the language. They could not understand and get along. The child was inevitably excluded at the beginning of the year (T5)”

T1 expressed her idea by focusing on the similar topic as follows:

"At the beginning, [local] children excluded them [refugee children]. Especially because they [refugee children] cannot speak Turkish, [local] children ostracize them, but I made so much effort so that they are not ostracized. (...) you know, the [refugee] child cannot speak at all. I mean, since the things they talk about are always in Arabic, the children are actually a bit of a thing. (T1)”

Narratives of T9, T14 also support the observations of T1.

“For example, he did not speak. Even if he spoke, they were a bit strange because he spoke Arabic. I told them [local children] (T9)”

“I mean, in the first years, there were reactions like "he does not speak" because he could not express himself, but now they are more comfortable.(T14)”

#### **4.1.5.1.2. Attitudes of Local Children**

During interviews, seven teachers mentioned that local children excluded refugee children in their first year by labeling them with unpleasant expressions. To begin with, teachers talked about the prejudices of local children towards refugee children. T8 pointed out the prejudice of local children.

“Of course. In the first years, there were those who sometimes thought that way with prejudice. Involuntarily, there were those who behaved differently towards the refugee child. We always tried to prevent him.(T8)”

T3 also gave an example towards prejudiced behaviors of local children.

“I only saw it the first year with one of my students. He said, "Don't talk to that Syrian. (T3)”

“But some children may have prejudices, though. I heard something like this from one of my students, you know, “Is that Syrian dirty? You know, his hand.” I said I heard something like that. I mean, I talked to him about it (T6).”



Secondly, some teachers mentioned that local children labeled children at first.

“Nevertheless, if they do not like differences, they are very quick to label and very quick to express it in a cruel way. They label. This was more in the first years (T14)”

#### 4.1.5.2. Teacher-Parent Role in Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children in Previous Years

This sub-theme reflects how teachers and parents affected the relationship between local children and refugee children. The sub-themes, categories, codes, and example quotations are presented in Table 4.12.

**Table 4. 12.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers’ and parents’ role

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Teacher – Parent Role in Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children		Creating Welcoming Environment (n=3)	“First year? So, I tried to welcome him with a smiling face to make him feel that he belonged to the class. ‘Children, we have a new friend in your class. Let us say welcome.’ So, we did something like that so that his friends could accept him. They all said welcome. ‘Let us give our friend a hug. Let us give him a smile, let us try to get him into our game and so on.’ I directed him to the group. (T2)”
	Teacher as Facilitator for Friendship	Teaching Prosocial Behaviours (n=1)	“When he talks to the other kids, ‘Can I take it? Can I give it? Here, can I, have it? Thank you. Thank you. I apologize that it was a mistake.’ I taught these behaviors because yes, when you cannot express yourself, you pushed your friend. But let us talk. For example, we talked about how your friend should not push you in the way we explained. You know, when you want to pick up a toy, you say, "Can I have the toy? Can I, have it? Take it from him nicely, you know, no pulling and running. " (T3)”

**Table 4.12 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Teacher – Parent Role in Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children		Working with Local Children for Integration of Refugee Child (n=3)	“Like this. For example, he was not talking. Even though he speaks differently, you know, Arabic? They found it a little strange because he talked. I told them that they came from Syria, that we should help them, that they are also children of the same age. Well, kids adapt very quickly anyway. well. They accept it immediately. (T9)”
	Teacher as Facilitator for Friendship	Empathizing (n=1)	“We practiced this [empathizing] on him [local child] on purpose. I mean, after a lot of things and methods, nothing worked. I said Ahmet, today you will be a child from another country. How do children behave with Ahmet? Let us do the same thing to Ahmet. Then Ahmet, how did you feel? I mean look, how did it make you feel to say that to your friend?” (T3)
		Cooperating with School Counselor (n=1)	“He said, "Don't talk to that Syrian." We immediately intervened with him. We intervened immediately, we talked to that child separately. He was referred to counseling, etc. (T3)”
	Local Parents as Barriers for Friendship	Tension at Community Level (n=4)	“There was tension between the two communities in Urfa. A child in the class started to be ostracized. Then I said to that student that he should not do it or something. It has already been a few days. You know, when you do not care about it and do not draw too much attention to it, the kids get over it in a few days (T4)”

#### 4.1.5.2.1. Teacher as Facilitator for Friendship

When we talked about their observations and practices regarding the friendship between local and refugee children, it was understood that eight teachers were engaged in some practices to facilitate this friendship in the first years by creating a welcoming environment, intervening in exclusionary behaviours of local children, and teaching prosocial behaviours.

To begin with, three teachers described how they created a welcoming environment for refugee children. T2 stated that

“First year? So, I tried to welcome him with a smiling face to make him feel that he belonged to the class. ‘Children, we have a new friend in your class. Let us say welcome.’ So, we did something like that so that his friends could accept him. They all said welcome. ‘Let us give our friend a hug. Let us give him a smile, let us try to get him into our game and so on.’ I directed him to the group. (T2)”

T12 described her good classroom environment. She stated that this environment prevented negative experiences including exclusion and bullying towards refugee children.

“At least in my class, I do not think they experienced a negative traumatic situation. I mean, I do not think they were ostracized by their friends. I do not think they were bullied by their peers, I tried to create a good classroom environment. So, I think this is an important thing. (T12)”

T11 also stressed that she approached the refugee child in a warm and loving way so that local children’s behaviours changed accordingly.

“For example, when I first came, he was included in the class later. At that time, he attracted the attention of the children. How are you going to behave? Sometimes you think about it. You do not act at all. Of course, it is a child no matter what. But I need to reach them somehow and find a common language. What do I do? I always use my body language first. I approach them in a warmer, more loving way. Then it is easier. So, it is easy for the child to get used to it. Other children’s communication with their friends changes in this way. Because if the teacher is prejudiced, I think the children in the class will be too. So, body language is actually my priority. Out of necessity. (T11)”

One teachers’ strategy in the first year was to teach local and refugee children prosocial behaviors to promote their relationship. T3 taught refugee children to ask permission to take someone else’s belongings and say, “thank you.”

“When he talks to the other kids, ‘Can I take it? Can I give it? Here, can I, have it? Thank you. Thank you. I apologize that it was a mistake.’ I taught these behaviors because yes, when you cannot express yourself, you pushed

your friend. But let us talk. For example, we talked about how your friend should not push you in the way we explained. You know, when you want to pick up a toy, you say, "Can I have the toy? Can I, have it? Take it from him nicely, you know, no pulling and running. " (T3)"

Three teachers worked with local children for the integration of refugee children. T1 said that

"I made so much effort so that they were not excluded. "Let them play with you too." For example, I said, "Take the crayons from your closet." I said, "Take the crayons." For example, the refugee child did not know. Since he did not understand, I told his friends: Go and show him. Look, this is dry paint. After a certain period of time, at the end of a period like 2 months, children started to adopt their friends and they felt like we had to help them. They helped them, they took their things, they showed them. Look, this is this, this is this, and so on. (T1)."

One teacher (T3) stated that she made local children empathize with the experiences of refugee children.

"We practiced this [empathizing] on him [local child] on purpose. I mean, after a lot of things and methods, nothing worked. I said Ahmet, today you will be a child from another country. How do children behave with Ahmet? Let us do the same thing to Ahmet. Then Ahmet, how did you feel? I mean look, how did it make you feel to say that to your friend?" I will not do anything bad anymore." But it was really effective. I mean, it was really effective. He does not say that kind of thing to your friend anymore. (...). We empathized. For example, we chose the empathy method. What you did to him was ostracized. He was saying, 'Let us go to other friends, do not play with Merih. Do not pay attention to him. Let him play there by himself. No one will play with Merih today.' I wanted him to feel how Merih feels at the end of the day. That is how we did it. It was done (T3)."

#### **4.1.5.2.2. Local Parents as Barriers for Friendship**

In their previous years, three teachers stated that prejudiced behaviors of local children stemmed from their parents' perspectives towards refugee children. For example, when I asked the teachers to draw their previous experiences, one teacher drew how the tensions between the local community and refugees were reflected in the relationship between the children. In the third interview, T4 drew crossing swords to show the tension between local and refugee people.

“Now, there were some incidents in Urfa, I should say a fight between Syrians and local people in Urfa at that time... I mean, there was a tension that was also reflected in the news. At that time, for example, I saw a few of the children behaving a little bit more towards other refugee children, you know, they threw a toy, they did something, etc.(T4)”

G: Okay, so does this mean anything, all the children are laughing but those children over there are unhappy?

T4: I told you; he is throwing toys. So, I tried to draw that moment.

G: This is the moment in Urfa.

T4: Yes.

G: And have you ever encountered such an incident in Istanbul?

T4: No. That is because of that problem and conflict with the local people.”

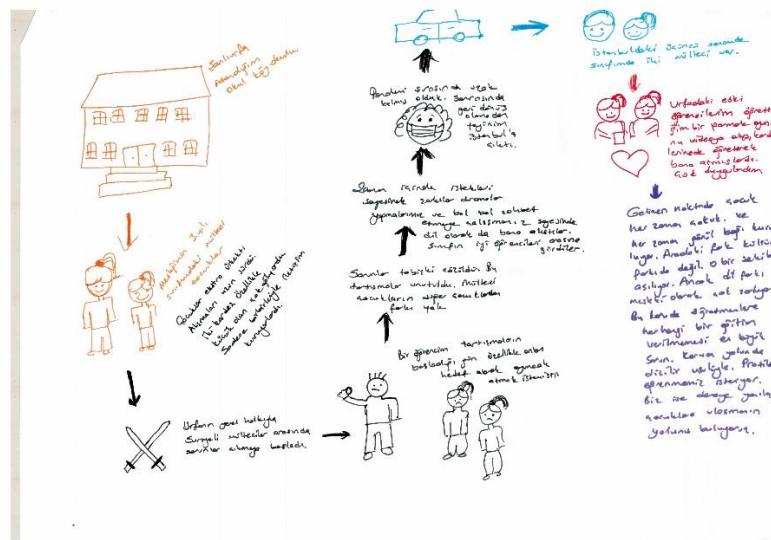


Figure 4. 19. Educational Journey Mapping of T4

T4 is a teacher who previously worked in Urfa (a province in the Southeast of Türkiye). Although she is currently based in Istanbul, she also focuses on her experiences in Urfa. Teachers whose first workplace is Urfa encounter refugee children there for the first time in their professional experience. Besides, T4 described an exclusionary situation stemming from local parents’ attitudes.

“There was tension between the two communities in Urfa. A child in the class started to be ostracized. Then I said to that student that he should not do it or

something. It has already been a few days. You know, when you do not care about it and do not draw too much attention to it, the kids get over it in a few days (T4)”

#### 4.1.5.3. Current Observed Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children

During interviews, I asked teachers about their current observations on the relationship between local and refugee children. Teachers evaluated the relationship between the two groups as closer and more positive. They stated that local children are getting used to diversities. Nevertheless, for some teachers, language is still a preventative factor in friendships between two groups. Sub-themes, categories, codes, and quotations are presented in Table 4.13.

**Table 4. 13.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding the relationship between local and refugee children

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Observed Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children	Closer and More Positive Relationship	Getting Used to Diversities (n=6)	“So, children have learned to accept some people coming from the outside, or not to find them strange. They have learned to accept them [refugee children], to take them in. I am not speaking for all of them, but it is generally like this. For example, they learn not to be strange in pre-school. (T11)”
	Distant Relationship	Language as Barrier (n=4)	“(…)Disagreements are not based on race; they are based on language. For example, at the very beginning of this year, they were very good. They were very close. But afterwards, they are close again, you know, they are not like that again, they should play again, there is no prejudice, but let me say that they probably do not prefer it [playing with refugee children] probably because they cannot communicate much while playing a game. (T4)”

#### **4.1.5.3.1. A Closer and More Positive Relationship**

Some teachers pointed out that local children are accepting refugee children's presence in the classroom and society over the years. For example, T11 noted that

“So, children have learned to accept some people coming from the outside, or not to find them strange. They have learned to accept them [refugee children], to take them in. I am not speaking for all of them, but it is generally like this. For example, they learn not to be strange in pre-school. (T11)”

T14 expressed that local children like diversity currently, compared to previous years.

“So, it is more enjoyable, it is something that children accept, love and are interested in more than us. You know, they are interested in it now. They used to find them [refugee children] strange. Now they like that it is different. For example, they liked the fact that he sang the letters differently when he made a presentation that day or when he sang the national anthem. They were all giggling, for example, while he was singing it. It was fun, so it was good for them too. Because compared to previous years, recently they [local children] have been more positive, more, well, maybe they have gotten used to this process. Since they are used to the fact that there may be foreign children, that there may be different children, that there may be children who speak a different language, that there may be differences, it is easier for them to accept this. (T14)”

#### **4.1.5.3.2. Distant Relationship**

On the other hand, four teachers stated that language diversity prevents refugee children from getting involved in local children's play or from having a close relationship. For instance, although T11 expressed that there is a closer relationship between local and refugee children, refugee children still are not involved in play activities with local children due to language diversity, T11 noted that

“But they [refugee children] do not participate in play too much. Because they cannot communicate (T11).”

T8 evaluated language apart from culture and stated that language is a barrier to friendship, not cultural diversities.

“They just cannot get along because of the language. I do not think cultural things will be very effective. The difference in culture is not very effective for children. (T8)”

Similarly, T4 added that language is the determining factor for friendship, not the cultural background of refugee children.

“(..).Disagreements are not based on race; they are based on language. For example, at the very beginning of this year, they were very good. They were very close. But afterwards, they are close again, you know, they are not like that again, they should play again, there is no prejudice, but let me say that they probably do not prefer it [playing with refugee children] probably because they cannot communicate much while playing a game. (T4)”

#### 4.1.5.4. Teacher Role in Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children in Current Years

This sub-theme describes teachers’ role in facilitating the friendship between local and refugee children. Teachers talked about their interventions and strategies to promote the relationship. Sub-themes, categories, codes, and quotations are presented in Table 4.14.

**Table 4. 14.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers’ role

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Teacher Role in Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children		Emphasizing Diversity (n=2)	“We try to incorporate them. Because the children speak a different language, this friend of ours came from a different country. He does not speak our language. We actually guide the children so that we can help them. They take it as we explain it to them. (T8)”
	Teacher as Facilitator for Friendship	Working with Local Children for Integration of Refugee Child (n=6)	“As I said, it is more like a friend, you know, someone who can play with him, play with him... For example, in some classes there are children like this. There is one child. He leads the others. For example, children who are more oriented towards being a leader, or some children who have a good relationship with whoever comes near them. You know, by identifying those children and sitting refugee children next to them. (T9)”



#### 4.1.5.4.1. Teacher as Facilitator for Friendship

Teachers are using several strategies to strengthen the relationship between local and refugee children in their current practices. Some teachers talked about their diversity-related activities and how they explain and emphasize diversity to facilitate relationships between two groups of children. T8 noted that:

“We try to incorporate them. Because the children speak a different language, this friend of ours came from a different country. He does not speak our language. We actually guide the children so that we can help them. They take it as we explain it to them. (T8)”

T2 also said that

“I am talking about this: These children come from another country, they may have difficulties because they do not speak Turkish. Try to take their games all the time. Because it could always be me pushing or encouraging them. (T2)”

The other strategy is to pair local and refugee children during activities to strengthen their relationship. T11 described her strategy as stated below.

“In circle activities, I try to put them [refugee children] in between local children, because I realize that they always sit at the ends. I try to put them in between because they cannot stop. They only talk to each other. At least let the people they talk to be the local children next to them. (T11)”

On the other hand, T7 stated that she separated groups of refugee children to make them have a good relationship with local children.

“For example, if a child tries to form a group of three, I watch them for a while, and when they start to become stereotyped, I separate them from other groups. In the same way, sometimes when there are two Syrians and three Syrians, I prevented them from grouping together. (T7)”

T1 encouraged local children to invite refugee children into their plays.

“I constantly go to them [local children] and say, "Come on, you play too, invite them [refugee children] to play, invite others to play with you, invite

your friend to play with you" and so on. I see myself in such a negotiation thing all the time. So, it is a long and difficult road for me. (T1)"

T2 and T13 also mentioned their steps to pair two groups.

"For example, I try to pair them with children with whom they get along better, I do not want them to be separated. "Or, if there is a great need for verbal communication, I try to bring the children in with the other [refugee] children, so that they can mingle a bit more. (T2)"

#### **4.1.5.5. Change in the Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children**

In the scope of this study, I examined teachers' observations and perceptions related to the relationship between local and refugee children. First of all, based on their narratives, it seems that there has been a decrease in the exclusionary behavior of local children towards refugee children over the years. When I asked teachers about their perceptions of local and refugee children's relationship in their first years of teaching, four teachers mainly talked about the exclusion of refugee children. They stated that local children tended to exclude refugee children because of language diversity. For example, T1 stated that:

"At the beginning, children excluded them. Especially because they cannot speak Turkish, children, children, children exclude them, but I make so much effort so that they are not excluded. (T1)"

Moreover, four teachers mentioned that local children were labeling refugee children by saying some unpleasant words. In general, these teachers observed that there were dissociated and distant relationships between children in their first years. On the other hand, when we talked about their current experiences, teachers did not talk about exclusionary behavior. Instead, six teachers described the relationship as closer and more positive. For example, T11 stated that

"So, children have learned to accept some people coming from the outside, or not to find them strange. They have learned to accept them, to take them in. I am not speaking for all of them, but it is generally like this. For example, they learn not to be strange in pre-school. (T11)"

Similarly, T2 and T14 compared their first and last observations on the relationship between two groups of children.

“In the first years, the refugee children were more separated. They were more alien, more on their own. They were playing alone. They were doing activities alone. Now they get in between the other children. The other children take them in, but I cannot say that they still mingle with each other like two Turkish children do. (T2)”

“In the first years, exclusion was higher. Now, either with the awareness of the families or in the studies and activities, we are already doing this in every activity. You know, our differences are valuable. And we should respect them. (T14)”

Progress in Friendship. During interviews, eight teachers talked about progress, representing the relationship between local and refugee children for each year. According to these teachers, the relationship between children goes through three stages. First, refugee children are lonely due to language differences; second, they get along well; third, they become friends. There is a friendship process that goes from being excluded or playing alone to making friends and getting along well at the end of the year. For instance, T1 stated the steps of becoming friends toward the end of the year.

“In the beginning, children excluded them [refugee children]. Especially because they cannot speak Turkish, children excluded them, but I made so much effort so that they are not excluded. (...)After a certain period of time, at the end of a period like 2 months, children started to adopt their friends and they felt like we had to help them. They helped them, they took their things, they showed them. [T1]”

T13 also talked about similar progress in her classroom.

“Let me put it this way. These [refugee] children generally prefer to play alone. But I mean, at first, they preferred to play alone. Then, as they come here, they get used to each other. Then they strengthen their communication (...) That's how it is. That is how it happens. They are always a bit hesitant at the beginning of the year, but then I felt that the children were bonding with each other through our activities, activities, and games. First there is exclusion. But then, when we get to know them and they get to know us, they communicate a little bit. I mean, not completely, but little by little. (T13)”

T5 also pointed out that children's friendship go through the same process each year.

"Yes, yes, they are a bit prejudiced at the beginning of the year, but once they overcome that prejudice and start to connect with the child, they form an incredible friendship. If you see my refugee child, you will never realize that he is a foreigner in the class. Because children accept them very well (T5)."

During card selection in the second interview, I asked them to choose 3 cards showing how the relationship between refugee children and local children has changed over the years. A teacher (T9) compared the relationship between children to a sword presented in Figure 4.20.



**Figure 4. 20.** A Metaphor Card Representing Sword

"I mean, how does it represent? I remembered a conflict when I saw that sword. I mean, at first the children found it strange, but then they accepted it. So, it is like a war. So, it made a connotation from here. The contrast of colors, yellow and red. Yes, it is.(T9)"

T13 selected some cards representing the relationship between local and refugee children over the years. Her narratives showed the progress in these children's friendships over time. He compared the relationship between refugees and local children to a spider web in card selection in Figure 4.21.



**Figure 4. 21.** A Metaphor Card Representing Spider Web

“I swear I think of it like a spider web. It is like a spider's web, like this, it weaves and weaves and weaves and weaves and then completes it, that is how I feel the communication between children. (T13)”

#### **4.1.5.6. Change in the Teacher-Parent Role in Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children**

Teachers have been taking facilitator roles in the children’s friendship process over the years. However, it seems that teachers engaged in various practices to facilitate friendship and prevent the exclusion of refugee children in their first years. For example, teachers noted that they created a welcoming environment, got help from school counselors, used empathic techniques, taught prosocial behaviors, and designed cooperative activities and opportunities to promote the relationship in the previous years. However, teachers have only talked about two strategies currently. These match two groups of children and explain cultural diversity in the classroom.

On the other hand, teachers have not mentioned any effect of local parents on the relationship between refugees and local children in recent years. However, three teachers stated that local children’s behaviours towards refugee children were affected negatively by their parents’ attitudes. T4 described an exclusionary situation stemming from local parents’ attitudes.

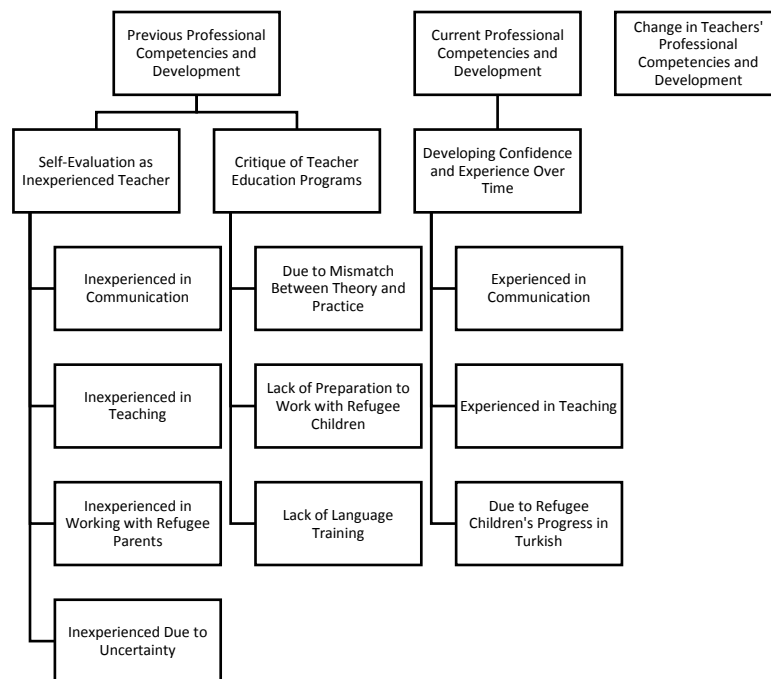
“There was tension between the two communities in Urfa. A child in the class started to be ostracized. Then I said to that student that he should not do it or

something. It has already been a few days. You know, when you do not care about it and do not draw too much attention to it, the kids get over it in a few days (T4)”

#### 4.1.6. Teachers’ Professional Competencies and Development

Professional competencies include teachers’ skills, values, attitudes, and knowledge required to perform teaching tasks effectively (MoNE, 2017). Areas of teaching competencies consist of many factors, such as pre-service teacher training, continuing professional development, and planning in-service training programs or teachers’ self-evaluation as teachers.

First, regarding self-evaluation of teaching competencies, teachers evaluated themselves as inexperienced teachers in their previous years and more confident teachers in their current years. Secondly, this main theme is also related to factors facilitating teachers’ sense of adequacy or factors increasing their sense of inadequacy. Finally, teachers evaluated in-service and pre-service teacher education programs in terms of empowering their teaching practices with refugee children. Sub-themes, categories, codes, and sub-codes are presented in Figure 4.22.



**Figure 4. 22.** Sub-Themes, Categories and Codes Related to Teachers’ Professional Competencies and Development

#### 4.1.6.1. Previous Professional Competencies and Development

This sub-theme includes teachers' self-evaluation about their competencies in the previous years. Self-evaluation is a process of assessing oneself that requires both professional and personal responsibility, consciousness, and competence (MoNE, 2017). During self-evaluation, teachers become reflective about their professional teaching practices. In the current study, teachers evaluated themselves as inexperienced while we were talking about their previous teaching practices with refugee children. Secondly, teachers mentioned the factors increasing their sense of inadequacy due to being inexperienced in the previous years. Sub-themes, categories, codes, and quotations are presented in Table 4.15.

**Table 4. 15.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' professional competencies and development

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Professional Competencies and Development		Inexperienced in Communication (n=4)	"I did not speak the language, I already felt very deficient in that respect. It is important for us to understand what the child is saying. I felt very incomplete because I could not understand him. That was a deficiency from my first year. (T5)"
	Self-Evaluation as Inexperienced Teacher	Inexperienced in Teaching Refugee Children (n=4)	"You know, at that time I did not have that vision, but I did not have any idea on teaching, I did not have anything. I was inexperienced (T10)"
		Inexperienced in Working with Refugee Parents (n=3)	"I told you the first year they were very close, the parents. I mean, they said absolutely nothing to me and were not cooperative. I mean, I felt like a shadow in my child's life or like someone who would only take care of the family for that year. Exactly. I mean, I felt invisible like that. That is why I saw myself as inadequate (T5)"

**Table 4.15 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Professional Competencies and Development	Self-Evaluation as Inexperienced Teacher	Inexperienced Due to Uncertainty (n=4)	“The first year was a bit like a riddle for me at that time. It was a process in which I could not discover exactly how to behave and what to do (T5)”
	Teacher Critique of Teacher Education Programs	Due to Mismatch Between Theory and Practice (n=2)	“I mean, we have seen that standard things never fit. And I graduated thinking that I graduated with very good equipment, that I would definitely do very good work. I thought I graduated from a good university, but I got a very good education. Yes, we graduate in the mode of "I'm OK", but when we put it into practice, things change a lot. (T14)”
	Teacher Critique of Teacher Education Programs	Lack of Preparation to Work with Refugee Children (n=2)	“I could have been sent more prepared. There could have been another seminar. A seminar could have been organized, but it did not happen (T10).”
	Teacher Critique of Teacher Education Programs	Lack of Language Training (n=2)	“When I was first appointed to Urfa, I wondered why we were not given introductory courses in Kurdish and Arabic. I mean, if we are going to go here, of course they need to learn Turkish too, but I criticized that we did not receive any training on how to teach children who do not speak Turkish how to do activities and how to play (T10)”



#### 4.1.6.1.1. Self-Evaluation as Inexperienced Teacher

During the interviews, ten teachers shared a common point that they were inexperienced or inadequate in communication with refugee children, working with refugee parents, teaching them, and due to uncertainty. First, four teachers expressed difficulties due to their inexperience in communication during their first years. For example, T1 talked about communication challenges due to her inexperience.

“Before, I could not communicate much like this. I was already telling them with my head and eye gestures. We were very inexperienced at that time. We were just adapting to them. We had difficulties (T1)”

On the other hand, while talking about their first-year experiences, two teachers mentioned the factors increasing their feeling of inadequacy due to being inexperienced in working with refugees. Teachers noted that language diversity increased their sense of inadequacy because they did not perceive themselves as efficient in communicating with refugee children. T11 and T5 highlighted the same perspective regarding being inexperienced in communication.

“There is no common language, or I do not know, maybe my communication is not strong. I do not know, I felt very inadequate. (T11)”

“I did not speak the language, I already felt very deficient in that respect. It is important for us to understand what the child is saying. I felt very incomplete because I could not understand him. That was a deficiency from my first year. (T5)”

Second, four teachers noted that they felt inadequate or inexperienced in teaching or designing activities for refugee children and establishing relationships with refugee children. For example, T10 expressed his experiences by stressing how he was inexperienced in teaching.

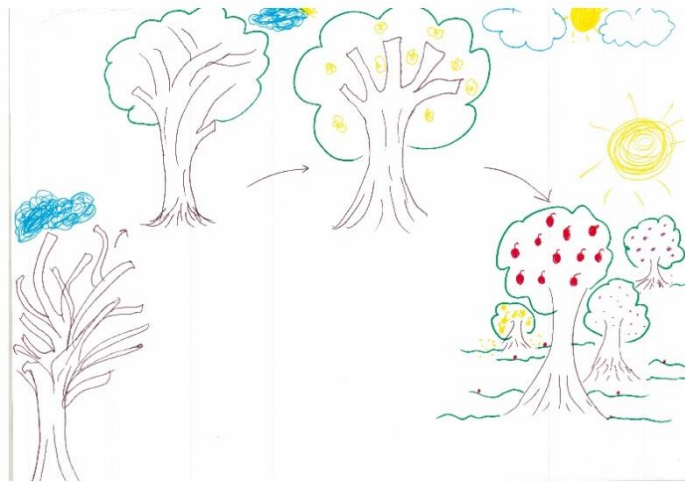
T10 noted as follows:

“You know, at that time I did not have that vision, but I did not have any idea on teaching, I did not have anything. I was inexperienced (T10)”

T4 also mentioned how she was inexperienced in giving instructions during activities for a class with refugee children.

“Activities... I honestly did not know how to do the activities at first, because you give commands. He does not understand, he looks or something. But you have to think about how you can explain it before each activity, so that they understand it better like this, they understand it better like that. Inevitably, that inevitably brings experience. (T4)”

In the third interview, I asked the teachers to draw on their teaching experiences with refugee children. T14 portrayed herself as a tree without roots for the first years, as presented in Figure 4.23. This rootless tree represents her inexperience in teaching.



**Figure 4. 23.** Educational Journey Mapping of T14

"Yes, I drew myself, my process, you know, how do I see myself? How do I feel? Lonely and inadequate, you know, not having enough roots. I drew it that way. The lack of roots was due to the fact that my feet were not firmly on the ground, that I saw myself that way. I did not know how to teach or behave. (T14)."

Thirdly, three teachers complained about uncooperative refugee parents because working with them made teachers feel inadequate. T5 stated that:

“I told you the first year they were very close, the parents. I mean, they said absolutely nothing to me and were not cooperative. I mean, I felt like a shadow in my child's life or like someone who would only take care of the

family for that year. Exactly. I mean, I felt invisible like that. That is why I saw myself as inadequate (T5)”

Finally, four teachers evaluated themselves as inadequate or inexperienced due to uncertainty of the process of integrating refugee children into the education system. For example, the previous years caused many questions for teachers in terms of teaching. T13 stated that

“How can I tell you? How do I behave? How do I act? What can I do? How can I behave when he comes to my class? What can we do? I was feeling like, "Is it possible?" (T13)”

T5 also described her first years as riddle to solve.

“The first year was a bit like a riddle for me at that time. It was a process in which I could not discover exactly how to behave and what to do (T5)”

In the third interview, T6 drew herself with a nervous face in the first years.

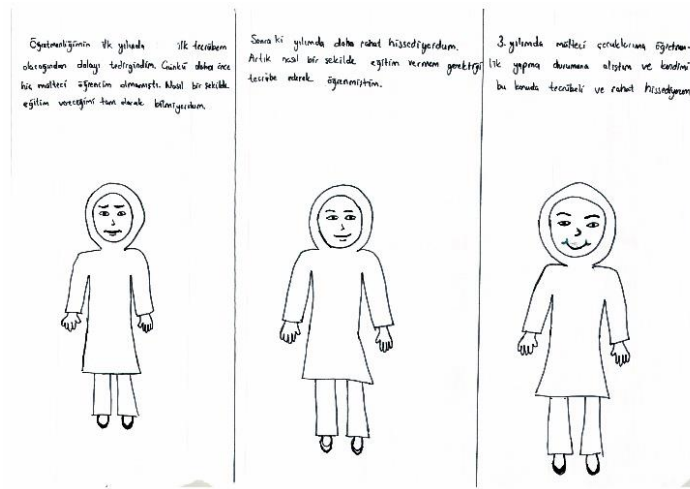


Figure 4. 24. Educational Journey Mapping of T16

She explained that

“I was nervous in the first year. How should I behave? How should I approach? It reflects how I should teach. My expression reflects that. And it is the first year of my profession. I had taught for a semester before, but I had never had refugee children (T6)”

#### **4.1.6.1.2. Teacher Critique of Teacher Education Programs**

Teacher education programs are acknowledged as an important component of teacher competencies (MoNE, 2017). In the current study, four teachers criticized teacher education programs due to a lack of required skills in the field. Besides, they considered that they were unprepared before working with refugee children. For example, they stated they did not take any language courses to teach Arab or Kurdish children in the field.

To begin with, two teachers stressed that what they learned theoretically in the university does not meet their needs in the field. For example, T6 criticized the content of teacher education programs.

“We did not have it at the university. For example, I graduated in 2019. It was not in the program. There was no such thing in any education program. It was not directly related to the classroom and refugee children. There was not even an elective course. I do not remember so it was difficult for me in first years (T6)”

T10 criticized the lack of language courses in the teacher education program.

“When I was first appointed to Urfa, I wondered why we were not given introductory courses in Kurdish and Arabic. I mean, if we are going to go here, of course they need to learn Turkish too, but I criticized that we did not receive any training on how to teach children who do not speak Turkish how to do activities and how to play (...) For example, there are many Kurdish children in our country. For example, we come to school without ever learning Kurdish. We do not even know basic things in Kurdish. When we are first assigned to the East, we are left incomplete. There are also many Arabs in our country. I did not know. We do not know Arabic at all. We do not even know the smallest things. Arabic, for example, if there were at least an introduction to Arabic, if not writing, then speaking, and an introduction to Kurdish in the courses. (T10)”

On the other hand, two teachers also criticized in-service teacher education programs. T10 mentioned that the preparation of teachers was insufficient to work with refugee children.

“I could have been sent more prepared. There could have been another seminar. A seminar could have been organized, but it did not happen (T10).”

#### 4.1.6.2. Current Professional Competencies and Development

Similar to their previous self-evaluation, teachers are currently evaluating their teaching competencies. They mainly talked about factors contributing to their sense of comfort. Sub-themes, categories, codes, and quotations are presented in Table 4.16.

**Table 4. 16.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers’ professional competencies and development

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Professional Competencies and Development		Experienced in Communication (n=3)	“The first year was complicated for me. Working with a foreign child was something I had never experienced. Then I gradually became more enlightened. Now I think it is better. I mean, I gained experience by teaching refugee children. I think it is better in terms of communicating with them. (T6)”
	Developing Confidence and Experience Over Time	Experienced in Teaching (n=8)	“Because when I first started, I had never taught a foreign child, a refugee child. I did not know how to do it, so I learned how to do it over time. This is how I learned as I gained experience. After all, we did not receive any training for this. It was not in our education program either. So teaching was shaped by my own experiences. (T6)”
		Due to Refugee Children’s Progress in Turkish (n=2)	“To be honest, I was afraid of not being enough. First of all, at first, the child was crying because he did not understand me. (...) I felt very inadequate. But gradually, as he started to learn Turkish and understand me, I felt relieved. That is the reason for our hesitation. Since children do not understand us, we do not know exactly how to approach them. (T5)”

#### 4.1.6.2.1. Developing Confidence and Experience Over Time

While talking about their current experiences, teachers narrated how they feel more confident and experienced as time goes by while working with refugee children. To begin with, during three interviews, in narratives, the card selection process, or the educational journey mapping process, teachers mainly talked about how their previous experiences positively affected their later experiences while working with refugee children. They stressed the continuity of experience. This means that each experience modifies and integrates aspects from previous ones, altering their quality.

To begin with, three teachers expressed that they are currently more experienced in communicating with refugee children and parents. T12 noted on this issue that

"Of course, our reactions to events change. Or when we have a problem and in communication with parents, you take a clearer stance. You continue with examples of negative things we have experienced before or positive things. You continue by adding something on top of it. When something negative happens, we can intervene earlier, so this is definitely the experience. (T12)"

According to T6,

"The first year was complicated for me. Working with a foreign child was something I had never experienced. Then I gradually became more enlightened. Now I think it is better. I mean, I gained experience by teaching refugee children. I think it is better in terms of communicating with them. (T6)"

Secondly, eight teachers did not limit their perspectives in terms of communication. They mentioned how they gained experience in teaching refugee children. Besides, they noted the contribution of experiences to their teaching practices. In the current study, experience refers to teachers' years of teaching with refugee children. It did not represent teachers' years of general experience. It only covers teachers' years with refugee children. For example, T6 stated that she did not know how to teach a refugee child in the first year and how she gained experience in the following years.

"Because when I first started, I had never taught a foreign child, a refugee child. I did not know how to do it, so I learned how to do it over time. This is how I learned as I gained experience. After all, we did not receive any

training for this. It was not in our education program either. So teaching was shaped by my own experiences. (T6)”

T2 expressed the contribution of experiences to her teaching practices.

“I think experience is very important. Every year, as you gain experience, you can give more, or you become more efficient. I think you contribute more. I do not think about how to give something. It was like that at first. (T2)”

T9 mentioned how she perceives each year with refugee child as an experience.

“I also think that years are an experience. Every year because you learn something from the children. You know, it adds something. You meet different people. For example, every year our parents and students change. You learn something too. (T9)”

On the other hand, teachers’ sense of confidence resulted from progress in refugee children’s language skills. Teachers' main challenge was having language diversity between them and refugee children. Over the years, while refugee children are getting better at Turkish, although teachers have been working with different groups of children, teachers have begun to feel more comfortable. T5 and T8 stated that

“To be honest, I was afraid of not being adequate. First of all, at first, the child was crying because he did not understand me. (...) I felt very inadequate. But gradually, as he started to learn Turkish and understand me, I felt relieved. That is the reason for our hesitation. Since children do not understand us, we do not know exactly how to approach them. (T5)”

#### **4.1.6.3. Change in Teachers’ Professional Competencies and Development**

When comparing teachers’ previous and current professional competencies and development, it seems they were challenged by being inexperienced in their first years. However, in current years, teachers have talked about feeling comfortable because they have become more experienced teachers now. To begin with their previous competencies, teachers stated that they felt inexperienced and inadequate in terms of communicating with refugees, teaching refugee children, and working with refugee parents. Also, there were some uncertainties about how to approach or teach refugee children. For example, T6 stated that

“I was nervous in the first year. How should I behave? How should I approach it? It reflects how I should teach. My expression reflects that. And it is the first year of my profession. I had taught for a semester before, but I had never had refugee children (T6)”

Regarding their current professional competencies, data showed that teachers feel more experienced in communicating and teaching refugee children. This feeling results from their self-experience with refugee children over the years and also refugee children’s progress in Turkish. In this regard, T6 stated that

“Because when I first started, I had never taught a foreign child, a refugee child. I did not know how to do it, so I learned how to do it over time. This is how I learned as I gained experience. After all, we did not receive any training for this. It was not in our education program either. So teaching was shaped by my own experiences. (T6)”

When we look at the progress of the professional competency of the same teacher (T6), it seems that the years working with refugee children gain this teacher experience in learning how to teach and work with these children.

Another example of a teacher's progress is seen in the drawings in the third interview. T14 draws her progress as a teacher by comparing it to a growing tree, as presented in Figure 4.25. She described feeling lonely and inadequate for the first years like a rootless tree.

"Yes, I drew myself, my process, you know, how do I see myself? How do I feel? Lonely and inadequate, you know, not having enough roots. I drew it that way. The lack of roots was due to the fact that my feet were not firmly on the ground, that I saw myself that way. I did not know how to teach or behave. (T14)."



**Figure 4. 25.** Educational Journey Mapping of T14



When we look at the right part of the drawing, there are four trees with. They represent teachers' current years with refugee children. T14 expressed that

“In the other one, it is a tree in blossom, green and flowering. And the roots are strong. I tried to draw a stronger tree with its branches and roots. The clouds are also whiter because I feel that the more, I get used to it and the more I go through such experiences, the more I try to find solutions and the better it gets. Not black clouds. I drew it as if the sun were exposed. (T14)”

It can be summarized that teachers showed progress due to their self-gained experiences with refugee children and the progress in refugee children's Turkish acquisition.

## **4.2. Findings Explaining Early Childhood Teachers' Strengths and Needs to Work with Refugee Children**

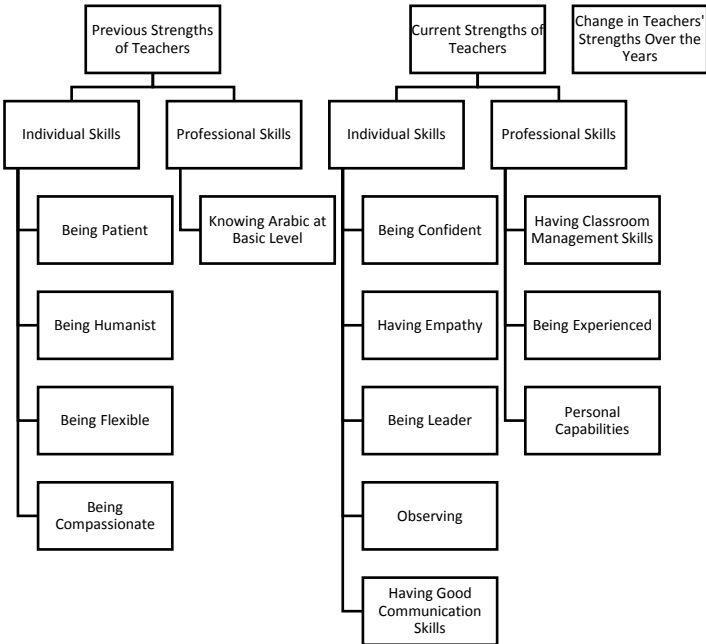
Early childhood teachers' needs and strengths while working with refugee children were investigated by asking about their strengths and needs over the years. Based on the data derived from narratives, card selection and drawings throughout all three interviews, teachers' overall strengths and needs were categorized under two themes. In this section, teachers' strengths and needs are presented by focusing on their past needs, past strengths, current needs, current strengths, and change ,if any, in their needs and strengths over the years. The main and sub-themes are

1. Teachers' Strengths Over the Years
  - a. Previous strengths
  - b. Current strengths
  - c. Change in their strengths
2. Teachers' Needs Over the Years
  - a. Previous needs
  - b. Current needs
  - c. Change in their needs

### **4.2.1. Teachers' Strengths Over the Years**

This main theme is related to teachers' previous and current strengths which helps them in working with refugee children. Furthermore, how teachers' strengths have

changed or remained the same throughout the years are presented. Sub-themes, categories and codes related to teachers' strengths are presented in Figure 4.26.



**Figure 4. 26.** Sub-Themes, Categories and Codes Related to Teachers' Strengths

**4.2.1.1. Previous Strengths of Teachers**

Teachers' strengths were categorized into two categories for their previous years. These are their individual skills and professional skills. Teachers talked more about their personality traits than their professional skills and competencies. Sub-themes, categories, codes, and quotations are presented in Table 4.17.

**Table 4. 17.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' strengths

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Strengths of Teachers	Individual Skills	Being Patient (n=6)	“Patience was the thing that helped me the most, I was patient, and I was not full, I was empty. So, the patient thing, the glass inside me was very, very empty. So, the problems I had were small for me. You know, those times were very empty when I was in Urfa, when I was first assigned. You know, I did not use much other than patience, I am patient. (T10)”

**Table 4.17 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Strengths of Teachers	Individual Skills	Being Humanist (n=1)	“I am normally a humanist person. (...). I can say it is because of my humanist attitude. Because I also observed it with other friends. I did not point my fingers directly [toward refugees]. A lot of things happened between these children, but I did not embarrass the child in that class. I did not differentiate them[refugee children] from other children. I mean, it could be because I did not differentiate them from other children. That is my strength. (T7)”
		Being Flexible (n=1)	“You know, I was not very authoritarian. I mean, I stretched a little bit according to the environment, according to the children. So, in that respect, I did not have much difficulty. (T9)”
		Being Compassionate (n=4)	“I mean, I think it is compassion. I mean, somehow there is a kind of motherhood towards them. In teaching, especially in kindergarten teaching. I mean, it is difficult without compassion (T4)”
	Professional Skills	Knowing Arabic at Basic Level (n=1)	“I mean, at least, let me say that I could pick out some words in Arabic. I could understand, but not at a level to speak, but at least I could catch such a word for myself. I mean, to some extent. It is not a big change, but that is how I remember it. Flashbacks happen. For example, the disease "Naris" in Arabic. He said that, for example, he said something while describing himself. I also asked his family why he did not come and so on. He was sick, for example. I think he was talking about that because he used that word. That is a big strength, that is how it is. At A1 level, maybe knowing a little Arabic was my strength. (T6)”

#### 4.2.1.1.1. Individual Skills

During the interviews, teachers were asked about the strengths that helped them get through the first years of working with refugee children more smoothly.. Ten teachers described their individual skills as their strengths. These individual skills include being patient, being flexible, being a humanist, and being compassionate.

First of all, six teachers stated that their patience helped them. For example, T10 and T4 also defined their strength as being patient. For example, T4 stated that her patience increased when she got more experience in the field.

“Patience. Anyway, I think the refugee student came to me in my third year. Until then, of course, my patience in the third year had increased even more. Anyway, you increase your level of patience as you get more and more professional. You somehow manage to raise your limits. I can say patience. (T4)”

T10 also explained that he was inexperienced in terms of teaching practices. So, being patient helped him to overcome difficulties in his first years.

“I was not creative in terms of teaching. I tried to find activities afterwards. I mean, I had nothing but patience. I mean, we saw a lot of activities, but we did not have much experience. We did not have an internship in high school either. I was just patient, I love children, I always thought that whatever I went through with children was not their fault, it was the fault of mothers and fathers. (T10)”

Secondly, T9 defined her strength as being flexible and adapting to different situations while working with refugees.

“You know, I was not very authoritarian. I mean, I stretched a little bit according to the environment, according to the children. So, in that respect, I did not have much difficulty. (T9)”

Thirdly, being a humanist person helped T7 in her first years of teaching.

“I am normally a humanist person. (...). I can say it is because of my humanist attitude. Because I also observed it with other friends. I did not

point my fingers directly. A lot of things happened between these children, but I did not embarrass the child in that class. I did not differentiate them from other children. I mean, it could be because I did not differentiate them from other children. That is my strength. (T7)”

Fourthly, the four teachers defined themselves as being compassionate.

“I think I am compassionate, because that is the most important quality that a teacher should have, that is, a person who does not love children, who cannot have compassion, should never be a teacher. I do not think they should continue teaching because the child is a child after all. You know, an innocent child. A pre-school child who is separated from his family for the first time. If he can find the comfort he feels at home at school, that is, if he can feel that he belongs there, I think he will be able to get efficiency from there. That is why I think compassion is my biggest helper in working with refugee children. I think so. (T14)”

#### **4.2.1.1.2. Professional Skills**

Only one teacher stated that her strength in the first years was to know Arabic at a basic level. This strength helped her to communicate with refugee children.

“I mean, at least, let me say that I could pick out some words in Arabic. I could understand, but not at a level to speak, but at least I could catch such a word for myself. I mean, to some extent. It is not a big change, but that is how I remember it. Flashbacks happen. For example, the disease "Naris" in Arabic. He said that, for example, he said something while describing himself. I also asked his family why he did not come and so on. He was sick, for example. I think he was talking about that because he used that word. That is a big strength, that is how it is. At A1 level, maybe knowing a little Arabic was my strength. (T6)”

#### **4.2.1.2. Current Strengths of Teachers**

The teachers were then asked about the strengths that help them cope with the current situation and help them in their work with refugee children. In addition to personality traits, teachers mentioned their professional knowledge, skills, and experience as strengths. Sub-themes, categories, codes, and quotations are presented in Table 4.18.

**Table 4. 18.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' current strengths

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Strengths of Teachers	Individual Skills	Being Confident (n=2)	“We're used to these kids now. I am used to their families, so there is no problem now. I am confident that I can handle it, that I can overcome some things (T13)”
		Having Empathy (n=1)	“Empathizing. We tried to think from his point of view. Basically, what would we do if we were in his shoes? Maybe because the thought is very effective, you can still go through the same processes. I mean, every time, I could have been in the place of the child's family. You think about the difficulties they went through. These thoughts are helping me. (T8)”
		Being Leader (n=1)	“When a situation happens, I can approach it more calmly, I can show a little bit more, especially as a leader. You know, it is easier for you to dominate. (T12)”
		Observing (n=3)	“Also, as my strong side, I observe very well. For example, if a child tries to make a group of three, I watch them mingle for a while. When they start to become a strict group, I separate them into other groups. In the same way, sometimes when there are two Syrians and three Syrians, I prevent them from grouping together. I can say that I have a comfortable period due to my observation. (T7)”

**Table 4.18 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Strengths of Teachers	Individual Skills	Having Good Communication Skills	“I think I communicate well with children. I can somehow find a common point, you know, as long as the child wants to communicate with me.. (T12)”
		Having Classroom Management Skills (n=1)	“I am now much, much more technical in my approach to many problems. I know how to cope with larger and more crowded classes. I have learned how to relieve my work by sharing the tasks with the children. By using the sociable children in the class, I reduce my workload by half, especially in complicated activities. I pay more attention to opening creative conversations, asking questions that support creativity at the end of the activity. I could not do that when I was in Urfa. It was a language problem, but I was also incompetent. (T10)”
	Professional Skills	Being Experienced (n=5)	“It is experience for me. Experience. The experiences I have gained with them, I may have been the queen last years. (T3)”
		Personal Capabilities (n=1)	“I mean, I think I have improved in general, my strengths. What would I call my strengths? Hmmm. I have a talent for drawing. I mean, I used to draw cartoons like this, cartoon characters when I was little and stuff like that. For example, this is a strength. For example, let us say there is no photocopier. It broke down and so on. For example, I can change that day's activity to a large group activity, draw something on craft paper and transform that activity in the same direction, aiming for the same goals. (T6)”

#### 4.2.1.2.1. Individual Skills

Five teachers described their individual skills as strengths in working with refugee children and parents. First, T10 and T13 stated that they currently feel more confident. They identified it as their strength.

“I am confident now. I have been here for 4-5 years; I have gained respect and experience here. When I say something, nobody says B to what I say A. I mean, of course, I do not say anything to anyone when they say they can. (T10)”

“We're used to these kids now. I am used to their families, so there is no problem now. I am confident that I can handle it, that I can overcome some things (T13)”

Secondly, one teacher described her strength as having empathy toward refugee children.

“Empathizing. We tried to think from his point of view. Basically, what would we do if we were in his shoes? Maybe because the thought is very effective, you can still go through the same processes. I mean, every time, I could have been in the place of the child's family. You think about the difficulties they went through. These thoughts are helping me. (T8)”

Thirdly, three teachers mention that they are keen to observe children's play and relationships with others. For example, T7 and T13 stated that

“In my strengths, I think that I have strengths because I am able to observe them well and integrate them into the class, and this gave me strength. Of course, with other students, both in the observation and analysis part and in the integration part.”

“I said observation. I feel I observed those children very well. (T13)”

Fourthly, one teacher (T12) expressed that her good communication skills help her while working with refugee children and parents.

“I think I communicate well with children. I can somehow find a common point, you know, as long as the child wants to communicate with me.. (T12)”



Finally, leadership is another current strength of T12. During the second interview, she chose the king and the queen card as representing her leadership skills represented in Figure 4.27.



**Figure 4. 27.** Card Selection of T12 Representing Her Current Strengths

“Actually, the reason I chose the king and queen is because I think they express leadership qualities a little bit. So, as I said, there is nothing strange. When a situation happens, I can approach it more calmly, I can show a little bit more, especially as a leader. You know, it is easier for you to dominate. (T12)”

#### **4.2.1.2.2. Professional Skills**

First, five teachers stated that they gained more experience over the years, representing their strengths. Experience in the current study refers to teachers’ years of teaching refugee children. They stressed that over the years, they gained experience in this subject, and their teaching skills improved. T14 also stated that

“I think I can find solutions to a problem faster. I mean, I gained experience. I used to get blocked on a subject once because I thought, "This is not working." Every child can be reached in some way. I can say this more clearly now. I feel it, so it should be accessible. The ways are different, but we have to find it somehow. And I think so now. (T14)”

In the second interview, one teacher chose the queen card for her current strengths when choosing cards to express change in her strengths.



**Figure 4. 28.** A Metaphor Card Representing a Queen

The reason she gave was:

“It is experience for me. Experience. The experiences I have gained with them, I may have been the queen last years. (T3)”

Secondly, T10 expressed that he has learned how to manage the classroom currently.

“I am now much, much more technical in my approach to many problems. I know how to cope with larger and more crowded classes. I have learned how to relieve my work by sharing the tasks with the children. By using the sociable children in the class, I reduce my workload by half, especially in complicated activities. I pay more attention to opening creative conversations, asking questions that support creativity at the end of the activity. I could not do that when I was in Urfa. It was a language problem, but I was also incompetent. (T10)”

Finally, T6 stated that her personal capability helped her to cope with situations. She stated that she is good at drawing.

“I mean, I think I have improved in general, my strengths. What would I call my strengths? Hmmm. I have a talent for drawing. I mean, I used to draw cartoons like this, cartoon characters when I was little and stuff like that. For example, this is a strength. For example, let us say there is no photocopier. It broke down and so on. For example, I can change that day's activity to a large group activity, draw something on craft paper and transform that activity in the same direction, aiming for the same goals. (T6)”

#### **4.2.1.3. Change in Teachers' Strengths Over the Years**

In the current study, I asked teachers' strength to work with refugee children in first years and current years. Comparing the narratives, cards selected and drawings, it

seems that in the first years of working with refugee children, teachers mentioned personality traits such as patience and compassion as their strengths. When we look at their current strengths, in addition to their personality traits, they also mentioned their professional qualities. The reason for this may be that the teachers gained experience in working with refugee children over time, because they mentioned being experienced, learning classroom management, and feeling more confident as their current strengths.

For example, T10 described his individual skills as his strength in the previous years to work with refugee children. He stated that his patience helped him in this process.

“I mean, I had nothing but patience. I mean, we saw a lot of activities, but we did not have much experience. (T10)”

When we look at his current strength, he also mentioned a professional skill in addition to his individual skill. He stressed that he learned how to manage crowded classrooms.

“I am now much, much more technical in my approach to many problems. I know how to cope with larger and more crowded classes. I have learned how to relieve my work by sharing the tasks with the children. By using the sociable children in the class, I reduce my workload by half, especially in complicated activities.

Another example of a teacher is T14. In her previous years, she defined herself as compassionate

“I think I am compassionate, because that is the most important quality that a teacher should have, that is, a person who does not love children, who cannot have compassion, should never be a teacher.

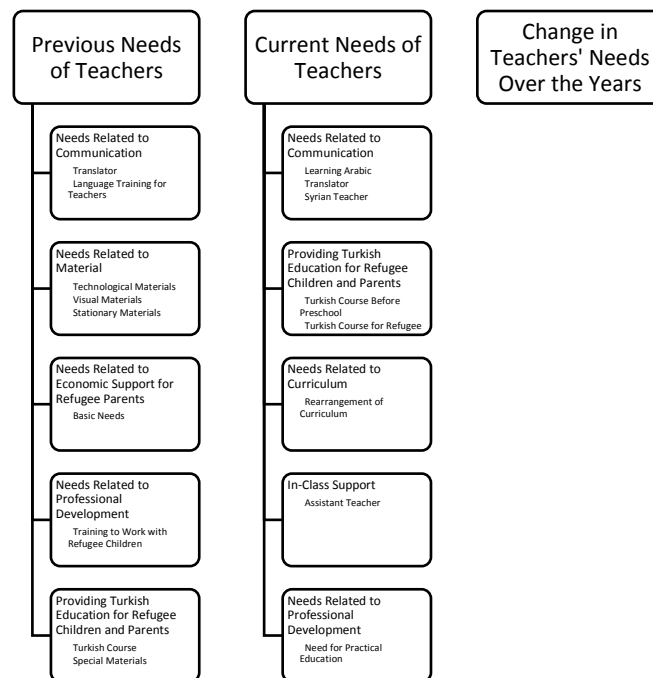
In her current years, she defined her strength as being more experienced teachers in working with refugee children.

“I think I can find solutions to a problem faster. I mean, I gained experience. I used to get blocked on a subject once because I thought, "This is not working." Every child can be reached in some way. I can say this more

clearly now. I feel it, so it should be accessible. The ways are different, but we have to find it somehow. And I think so now. (T14)”

#### 4.2.2. Teachers’ Needs

This main theme is related to teachers’ past needs and current needs in working with refugee children. Besides, how teachers’ needs have changed or stayed the same over the years are presented. Three sub-themes emerged. They also have categories and codes within themselves. Sub-Themes, categories, and codes related to teachers’ needs are presented in Figure 4.29.



**Figure 4. 29.** Sub-Themes, Categories and Codes Related to Teachers’ Needs

##### 4.2.2.1. Previous Needs of Teachers

Teachers' needs were categorized into four categories for their previous years. These are needs related to material, needs related to communication, needs related to refugee parents and needs related to professional development.

**Table 4. 19.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' previous needs

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Needs of Teachers	Needs Related to Communication	Translator (n=8)	"Then I would want a translator with me. The translator teachers in that pandemic year were a great comfort to us. At least we could find instant solutions to problems. But I mean, he was a child, after all. (T5)"
	Needs Related to Communication	Language Training for Teachers (n=3)	"I mean, why don't we know, I wonder if I can learn this language too? There were points where we thought, how can I be better for them? Maybe if we knew a language too? I am talking about Arabic. I thought maybe if I knew it, I would not have so many problems. I mean, I myself could have known this language. Just as we are trying to learn English, this is also a language that we should know. I wonder if we might need to know it too. (T8)"
	Needs Related to Material	Technological Materials (n=2)	What I need most are material deficiencies and technological products. Because we have to give them something visually. And you have to show them things visually all the time. It does not work through books. I was very lacking in technological products because I needed moving things. (T8)"
		Visual Materials (n=3)	"(...) I can say such things that we lack visually. Since we were in dire need of visual support, I felt the lack of it, and that reminded me of that. I mean, the state could have provided more materials, whoever was in charge. (T8)"

**Table 4.19 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Previous Needs of Teachers	Needs Related to Material	Stationary Materials (n=3)	“You know, crayons, pastels, watercolors, pencil holders, etc. were distributed, and they should be distributed anyway. Because people have fled the war. They have no financial power here. They do not have anything; our department is a department with materials. Things that have to be bought; things that have to be done. But when we did not have them, we somehow had to pay for them out of our own pockets. (T4)”
	Needs Related to Economic Support for Refugee Parents	Basic Needs (n=2)	“We had a lot of trouble with their basic needs, nutrition. Even though I provided nutrition, they could not get materials, they could not do it, and so on. We were supplementing with them. (T7)”
	Needs Related to Professional Development	Training to Work with Refugee Children (n=8)	“So, I mean, I really think that for these children in the classroom, teachers should have definitely received training, we should have been definitely informed, that is, it is not only necessary for their learning, but we also actually need to improve ourselves. (T13)”
	Providing Turkish Education for Refugees	Turkish course (n=3)	“I mean, if a little more language work were done on their families, our communication would be much more comfortable. You know, we start with the child, but you know, the incoming families, for example, the child is born and grows up, but the incoming families should also be subjected to training, they should also learn the language somehow.
		Special Materials (n=1)	“For example, there could have been books. Special books could have come to us. For example, we would tell the children to take the books out. After a while we would teach them how to take-out books. There are those hand-in-hand books that focus more on language learning. books that focus more on language learning could be printed. It is not the hardest job in the world, you open a tender, 10 companies would be interested in this job. (T10)”

#### 4.2.2.1.1. Needs Related to Communication

While interviewing about their previous needs to work effectively with refugee children and their parents, eight teachers stated that they needed translators in their classrooms. For example, T5 wanted to have a translator to find quick solutions to problems caused by language diversity.

“Then I would want a translator with me. The translator teachers in that pandemic year were a great comfort to us. At least we could find instant solutions to problems. But I mean, he was a child, after all. (T5)”

Besides, T10 stated that he wanted a translator, although he thought this was a desperate request. He also criticized the authorities on this issue.

“But it is a bit hypothetical. Imaginary, I mean, it would be nice to have a translator. But it is hypothetical. We do not even have an assistant, let alone a translator. It would be nice to have a translator.(...) I mean, since even our simplest needs are not met in the heart of Istanbul, I cannot even imagine that they could have been met in Urfa. Let us say they do not send a translator here because there is one refugee child here, but it could have been in an Arab village in Urfa. (T10)”

Similarly, T3 accepted that providing a translator for all classrooms in Türkiye is hard.

“I mean, as I said, there is a need, there could have been a translator in one or two classrooms. I mean, of course there could not be a translator all over Türkiye. It is a difficult thing. (T3)”

T9 said that there was a translator in her school for a while.

“We had a translator at school for a while. But then he was removed. He went somewhere else. For example, he was good. We could get along a little bit, you know, we could have a good relationship with the parents more easily. (T9)”

In addition to the need for a translator, three teachers explained that language training to learn Arabic would benefit them in their previous years. For example, T8 and T2 emphasized that Arabic is the language that teachers need to know.

“I mean, why don't we know, I wonder if I can learn this language too? There were points where we thought, how can I be better for them? Maybe if we knew a language too? I am talking about Arabic. I thought maybe if I knew it, I would not have so many problems. I mean, I myself could have known this language. Just as we are trying to learn English, this is also a language that we should know. I wonder if we might need to know it too. (T8)”

“Or maybe it would have been different if there had been language training or translators (T2)”

#### **4.2.2.1.2. Needs Related to Material**

While talking about teachers' needs in the first years of teaching, five of the teachers talked about their material-related needs. In the first years, teachers especially talked about the lack of technological materials and visual aids. Other material needs were related to the supply of paint and other consumables for the refugees coming from the war. T8 noted that

“Technological activities were very lacking. (...) Because it is a village school, it is a bit inadequate. Even the materials are insufficient. We were providing them ourselves. We were trying to arrange them ourselves. We were trying to do something for those children without paying anything. Maybe you know it too. What I need most are material deficiencies and technological products. Because we have to give them something visually. And you have to show them things visually all the time. It does not work through books. I was very lacking in technological products because I needed moving things. (T8)”

She also added that visual materials were the need for them.

“(...) I can say such things that we lack visually. Since we were in dire need of visual support, I felt the lack of it, and that reminded me of that. I mean, the state could have provided more materials, whoever was in charge. (T8)”

T4 stressed that they needed materials before the communication.

“You know, crayons, pastels, watercolors, pencil holders, etc. were distributed, and they should be distributed anyway. Because people have fled the war. They have no financial power here. They do not have anything; our department is a department with materials. Things that have to be bought; things that have to be done. But when we did not have them, we somehow had to pay for them out of our own pockets. (T4)”



#### **4.2.2.1.3. Needs Related to Economic Support for Refugee Parents**

Teachers mentioned some needs in terms of teaching practice in the first years. Eight teachers mentioned that they needed training to work with refugee children, while one teacher wanted to know about their educational background in their country of origin to understand the children's level.

“We had a lot of trouble with their basic needs, nutrition. Even though I provided nutrition, they could not get materials, they could not do it, and so on. We were supplementing with them. You know, when they came, they said that in the first years they saw parents collecting pencils and pens from the garbage. If they had started them directly on an equal start in that way, it would be easier (T7)”

T7 also continued to say that

“In terms of clothes, they were not very, very good in the first year because of their purchasing power. If there was a fixed uniform for kindergarten, a tracksuit and a top and bottom. That is also due to the parents. We always say comfortable clothes, etc. and not too extreme clothes. Because the child, especially girls, looks and sees that she is wearing a dress. The next day she wants a dress. The child's mother has no money to buy a dress and so on. Since there is an inequality in these, our need was to help families. (T7)”

#### **4.2.2.1.4. Needs Related to Professional Development**

Teachers mentioned some needs in terms of teaching practice in the first years. Eight teachers mentioned that they needed a training to work with refugee children, while one teacher wanted to know about their educational background in their country of origin to understand the level of the children.

In order to work effectively with refugee children, T2 expressed her need for training.

"I mean, if training had been given at that time, if seminars had been given to us. We would have known better how to approach (T2)."

Similarly, T13 stated that this training was necessary for teachers' professional development.

“So, I mean, I really think that for these children in the classroom, teachers should have definitely received training, we should have been definitely informed, that is, it is not only necessary for their learning, but we also actually need to improve ourselves. (T13)”

T6 talked about her first-duty place. She explained how she was inexperienced and uninformed about teaching diverse groups.

“In fact, teachers could have been given a primary preparation on this subject. It was my first assignment. I started directly and I had never had refugee children before. So, a seminar could have been given in a way that would have been useful for teachers who teach these refugees. (T6)”

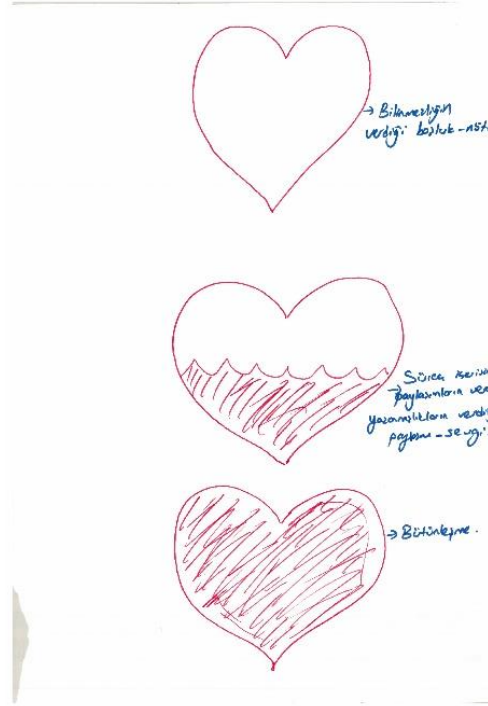
Similarly, T12 also mentioned a teacher training for psychologically traumatized refugee children.

“When I look at the teachers in general, there should have been training for everyone, absolutely. It is not just "here is a child from a different country". Also, the way they come is very different. For example, there are those who come from war. I mean, there are children who have experienced those traumatic things. There are children with scars on their bodies, you know, I personally did not have a student with a very problematic behavior or there were no such serious problems in the family, but when I think in general, teachers should definitely be given a psychological training... A training should have been given on what kind of approach we should take. And it still has not been given. (T12)”

T4 also stated that a training was critical for them to be prepared to work with refugee children.

“So yes, we could have been told too. You know, we could have been given a seminar on how to behave, how to do things, for example, before we just put them in our class. Look, these children will come, these activities can be done for them, etc. Obviously, these were not done. “I am talking about the need for education... I am talking about the need for education, at least we need to be educated rather than just throwing us somewhere without knowing anything. “So, as I said, we need training in every way. There is still no work on this. We have already talked about it. There is still no work on this and no matter how much we try to give, better can always be given. That is why I cannot say I am fully adequate. I cannot say I am not enough either. But it can always be better. (T4)”

In the third interview, T1 drew an empty heart to express her first-year experiences presented in Figure 4.30.



**Figure 4. 30.** Educational Journey Mapping of T1

I asked her to explain her needs in the previous years by using her own drawing, and she stated that

“My needs would be the space here [pointing to the first heart]. Because I have mentioned it before. Because we are not given any support in education and the same with those children. Every year the children come empty anyway. The only thing we have is the experience we gained in the previous year. That is all. (T1)”

#### **4.2.2.1.5. Providing Turkish Education for Refugee Children and Parents**

Three teachers stated that refugee families and children should be required to learn Turkish, and this education should be provided for them.

“I wish children could be taught a little Turkish even before kindergarten. Because in kindergarten, we cannot teach them colors and numbers without knowing the language. You know, they learn in the first grade. Before that, I

wish there were a language teaching activity. For example, in the summer. (...) I wish the children would attend a Turkish course earlier instead of kindergarten. Because they have a lot of problems in primary school. In fact, children were getting lost.(T9)”

T10 needed special books to teach Turkish to refugee children.

“For example, there could have been books. Special books could have come to us. For example, we would tell the children to take the books out. After a while we would teach them how to take-out books. There are those hand-in-hand books that focus more on language learning. books that focus more on language learning could be printed. It is not the hardest job in the world, you open a tender, 10 companies would be interested in this job. (T10)”

On the other hand, T4 teachers stated that there was a need for Turkish course for refugee parents.

“I mean, if a little more language work were done on their families, our communication would be much more comfortable. You know, we start with the child, but you know, the incoming families, for example, the child is born and grows up, but the incoming families should also be subjected to training, they should also learn the language somehow, for example, my student this year has been in Türkiye for four years, her mother does not speak a word of Turkish. You know, I teach the child here, the child will grow up. He will teach his mother. So yes, it is a long process for women. I mean, we are already doing it from child to child here, we start in kindergarten, but if the family were also provided with language training, our job would be much easier then. Our work has become easier. (T4)”

#### **4.2.2.2. Current Needs of Teachers**

In the present study, early childhood teachers’ needs in current years were also investigated in interviews. Data analysis yielded that teachers’ current needs were categorized into four categories for their current years.

These are needs related to communication, providing Turkish education for refugee children and parents, rearranging the curriculum, providing in-class support, and providing practical education for teachers. Sub-themes, categories, codes, and quotations are presented in Table 4.20.

**Table 4. 20.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers' current needs

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Needs of Teachers	Needs Related to Communication	Learning Arabic (n=8)	"I mean, if the national education actually gives us a training, at least at a level that can understand the children, for example, I say that because those coming from Syria speak Arabic. But there are students from many countries. It would be good if we could get a language education (T5)"
		Translator (n=2)	"There may be mobile translator groups in schools or at least in districts. But there are none. We cannot communicate in any way. (T12)"
		Syrian Teacher (n=2)	"Arabic-speaking assistant teachers can actually do a lot. (T9)"
	Providing Turkish Education for Refugee Children and Parents	Turkish Course Before Preschool (n=5)	"In fact, for example, refugee children can be given a training other than pre-school education at the beginning or in the summer before they start. At least to help them understand the instructions during the activities. "Cut. Paste. Don't go to the toilet." You know, there could be a program to teach the instructions we use or the words we may need (...)"
		Turkish Course for Refugee Parents (n=3)	"Especially in order to ensure communication between the family and the teacher, this cannot be done through one-sided training that can only be given to the teacher. Somehow it needs to be given to both sides. Maybe courses can be opened for the family as well. Turkish classes can be opened in schools (T4)"

**Table 4.20 (cont'd)**

Sub-Theme	Categories	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Current Needs of Teachers	Needs Related to Curriculum	Rearrangement of Curriculum (n=4)	“I think there should be a change in the program. It must be because many different people live inside us. (T8)”
	Need for In-Class Support	Assistant Teacher (n=3)	“I try to find things and do it myself. It could be a resource. It could be support. But someone can come to our class, like an assistant teacher. Normally we have an intern, but they can guide us better about these children. Of course, we do not withdraw ourselves because they do not have anything (T13)”
	Needs Related to Professional Development	Need for Practical Education (n=3)	I think there needs to be a very serious guidance work in this field. There is a very serious deficiency. For example, let us say the person who will give training gives training with a video. Or a person from the district is sent. But that is not the person who will actually train me. The person who has actually done research in the field or the person with serious experience is actually much more important. In other words, maybe people who share their experiences are more useful to us than they should be like this, it should be like this. Because you know, "I encountered such and such a problem, I had this intervention here. Later, for example, when I think about it, I could have done this as an alternative. It should have been supported from here". You know, they need to give something that can form an idea (T12)”

#### 4.2.2.2.1. Needs Related to Communication

Currently, teachers stated that they still need to be able to get along with refugee children. For example, eight teachers stated during the interviews that they needed to learn Arabic at a basic level.

T5 noted that national education should provide a language training for teachers.

“I mean, if the national education actually gives us a training, at least at a level that can understand the children, for example, I say that because those coming from Syria speak Arabic. But there are students from many countries. It would be good if we could get a language education (T5)”

Similarly, T9 emphasized that

“At least teach us the basics, you know, how to speak. For example, our summers are usually suitable for this. We have a lot of time. They can add this to in-service training courses. (...) I mean, language is our biggest problem right now. They have actually been here for more than ten years, and the language course can be given to teachers. (T9)”

T13 stated that time is also required in addition to language education.

“Right now, of course we need it [language education]. Of course, we need it. Even though you have gained experience, you still do not know any language, I mean, I do not know Arabic, or I do not know other languages.(...) There can also be training in learning Arabic. But in this case, time is needed to get those trainings. (T13)”

T6 focused on the importance of learning Arabic in communicating with refugee children and their parents.

“If I had improved my Arabic better, I could have helped the children more. Arabic is necessary now. It is a good thing that by learning Arabic, I can both understand what they say, and they feel that they can explain themselves to me, because it is bad not to be understood. (...) I mean for them [refugee parents] too. Sometimes they come, they tell me things, they tell me things. I do not understand. But they keep on telling. (T6)”

On the other hand, two teachers mentioned the need for a Syrian or Arabic-speaking teacher in the classroom, while one teacher mentioned the need for basic translator support.

“It is impossible for us, but maybe they can send teachers for now. After all, a lot of pre-school teachers come from there too. People who work at the Turkish Consulate there flee from the war and come here. I think we should evaluate those who know Turkish. At least for us, if they could evaluate women who know both Arabic and Turkish and keep them at school for a few hours a day at the beginning of the year. I think our job would be easier, at least until the child and the family adapt. (T5)”

“Arabic-speaking assistant teachers can actually do a lot. (T9)”

T10 and T12 also needed a translator.

“There may be mobile translator groups in schools or at least in districts. But there are none. We cannot communicate in any way. (T12)”

“It would be better if we had a translator. (T10)”

#### **4.2.2.2.2. Providing Turkish Language Support for Refugee Children and Parents**

Five teachers currently want refugees to learn Turkish at least at a basic level before they come to the classroom. T6 said that refugee students need to attend a Turkish course before coming to preschool so that they can understand basic Turkish instructions.

“In fact, for example, refugee children can be given a training other than pre-school education at the beginning or in the summer before they start. At least to help them understand the instructions during the activities. "Cut. Paste. Don't go to the toilet." You know, there could be a program to teach the instructions we use or the words we may need (...).(T6)”

T1 also needs Turkish education for refugee children.

“Turkish education is also for children and family. I think it is especially for the family because children come to us from their families. I am here with the



children for four hours. They are together for twenty hours. I think there should be guidance or training in that way. (T1)”

On the other hand, other teachers stated that refugee parents also needs a Turkish education. T4 stressed that language training should be provided for both teachers and parents to communicate effectively.

“Especially in order to ensure communication between the family and the teacher, this cannot be done through one-sided training that can only be given to the teacher. Somehow it needs to be given to both sides. Maybe courses can be opened for the family as well. Turkish classes can be opened in schools. It can be like that. And for us, you know, how we should behave, how we should approach. Because some of these children can also be traumatized children. You know, I have not come across many like that. Actually, there is one this year. Yes, exactly, I mean it can happen. It would be good if we could inform them about how to approach them.(T4)”

Similarly, T6 acknowledges that

10

“Not only children, but also families need an education system. And families should also be trained on learning Turkish. For example, children learn Turkish more, but I do not think families learn Turkish much. Two, one third or something like that. I mean, one person out of three learns Turkish. It would be nice if both families and children were trained in Turkish .(T6)”

#### **4.2.2.2.3. Needs Related to Curriculum**

Four teachers noted that the Preschool Education Program should be arranged by considering the presence of refugee children in our classrooms.

“I think there should be a change in the program. It must be because many different people live inside us. (T8)”

“So, we need a change in general. We are currently using the 2013 program. Yes, we are. It is 2023 now. Ten years have passed. It needs to be renewed; it needs to evolve.(T6)”

T12 stated that something should be added to the curriculum for refugee children.

“The curriculum... the curriculum, for example, they have no place in the curriculum. Yes, refugee children have come to many parts of our country.

And there is a language problem. How are we going to solve it? Should we only speak our own language? If we accept these children, if we accept the country, then I think we should add something to the curriculum. Something should change. There can be extra programs. (T12)”

She also stated that

(...) “And I think there is only one indicator in the program: "Respects differences." I think this also needs to change; it definitely needs to change. So there needs to be something extra. You know, but as I said, this is not just on behalf of a single education teacher. The guidance, the administrator, the staff in the district, you know, all of them are needed. (T12)”

T9 evaluated the curriculum in terms of new generations. She also asked for a change in the curriculum.

“I do not think the curriculum is very suitable for the new generation anymore. Today's children learn more visually. They are all visual now. They are always at home with tablets and television. So, telling them something does not affect them anymore. You need to be more active, more energetic. For example, our plan is very free. You know, there should be more units, for example, I used to work like that in previous years. It was better when we were preparing the plan with the units. It also seemed to provide a standard. One teacher is very creative and does very different activities. But a teacher is not that creative. So there needs to be a guide. I mean, we may be teaching the same outcomes as teachers, but for example, one teacher does art and science activities. Another teacher, for example, does not do it because they do not think of it. Maybe if there was a theme, for example, they would be very confused. You know, what am I going to do? I mean, especially in the first years, I think they can be helped more. (T9)”

#### **4.2.2.2.4. In-Class Support**

Three teachers expressed their needs for in-class support.

“I try to find things and do it myself. It could be a resource. It could be support. But someone can come to our class, like an assistant teacher. Normally we have an intern, but they can guide us better about these children. Of course, we do not withdraw ourselves because they do not have anything (T13)”

“I would have liked to have an assistant teacher for my needs. I hope they will help. We have too many children. And this would be useful in two ways, for example, if an educator who knows Turkish Arabic or at least a two-year graduate of child development could take those who know Arabic Turkish. You know, or from special education, for example. For inclusive children with special education. First, as an assistant teacher or secondly, it would be perfect if these things happen. Exactly, it would be a great relief. Yes, a teacher. A teacher who speaks Arabic and has a pre-school education. (T6)”

#### **4.2.2.2.5. Needs Related to Professional Development**

Three teachers focused on insufficient parts of in-service training provided for them to work with refugee children. For example, T10 stressed that seminars are short, and he needed more professional and academic training to work with refugee children.

“I mean, I think they can actually receive more frequent training, the [in-service teacher] seminars are short, but really, I mean, I do not go and attend seminars given to me by my colleagues. Because I do not find this enough. Yes, I would like to receive it from teachers or university professors who work academically, who do this seriously, professionally, who are interested in the subject. For example, non-governmental organizations. You know, in this sense, because a psychologist has also done very serious research, he has seen it. But of course, it is important to be in the field while doing something professional, not just academic. You know, those who have lived and seen it one-on-one, at least those experiences are shared, or we can apply different training methods here in this sense. This makes it easier. You know if we could get this training for sure. You know, at least it would contribute to me. It would definitely contribute to the child. It is incomplete, somehow incomplete. (T10)”

T2 noted that this training should be provided to help them how to solve problems. Experienced teachers need to inform teachers of refugee children.

“In my opinion, there are also teachers who have had serious experience for ten years. You know, it is absolutely necessary not to underestimate. You know, if they can at least share them, who are much more in their class, who have more problems one-on-one, or who have gained many really positive behaviors, I mean, it is not even done. At the simplest, you know, they give us online training. I mean, if teachers with such experiences could tell and share their classroom experiences one-on-one, there is nothing even about that. I mean, it is not enough for us to just read and do something in this field. You know, we really need to live in the field one-on-one. Because it does not work. It is very different. Experience is a very different thing. Of course, we

should read, we should have knowledge. It is not enough for us; it is not enough. You know, at least short videos of teachers who have had these experiences or you know, I had this problem here, I really think it will be useful for many teachers. You know, yes, I did not have this material. I was lacking this. I did this work over there. It was good. But it would have been better if I had a material like this. They would have supported. Of course, the ministry needs to do some work on this. You know, it needs to send the necessary materials. But as long as these things do not happen, it is incomplete, unfortunately. (T2)”

#### **4.2.2.3. Change in Teachers’ Needs Over the Years**

This sub-theme is related to the change in teachers’ needs over the years. Comparing teachers’ previous needs with the current need to work with refugee children, data showed that teachers hardly talk about the need for materials to work with refugee children today. However, they still need to be able to communicate with refugee children and their families. While their needs related to communication includes only translators and learning Arabic in previous years, they consider currently that language training should be provided for both teachers and refugees. T5 stated that university teacher education programs should include language training for teachers.

“I mean, if the national education actually gives us a training, at least at a level that can understand the children, for example, I say that because those coming from Syria speak Arabic. But there are students from many countries. It would be good if we could get a language education (T5)”

In terms of teaching practices, while teachers did not mention any need for rearrangement of curriculum, today, four teachers expressed their similar idea on the rearrangement of curriculum. For instance, T6 considered

“So, we need a change in general. We are currently using the 2013 program. Yes, we are. It is 2023 now. Ten years have passed. It needs to be renewed; it needs to evolve.(T6)”

On the other hand, there were basic needs for refugee parents in the first years regarding basic needs and nutrition. However, these teachers did not specify any needs for refugee parents. For example, for their previous needs, teachers stated:

“In terms of clothes, they were not very, very good in the first year because of their purchasing power (T7)”

Reviewing the statements provided by the teachers, it becomes apparent that their need for professional development has persisted over both past and present years. Reflecting on previous years, teachers expressed a desire for enhanced preparedness, whereas in more current years, they emphasized the necessity for practical, hands-on training rather than theoretical instruction. As an example of the change in T2, she stated for her past needs in terms of professional development that

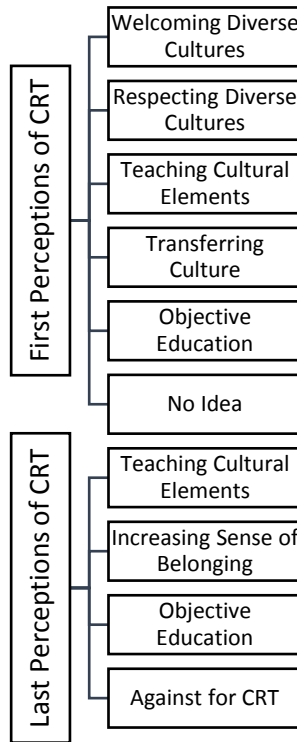
"I mean, if training had been given at that time, if seminars had been given to us. We would have known better how to approach (T2)."

On the other hand, she currently needs to be trained in how to solve problems. She expects more practical education from the authorities.

“I mean, it is not enough for us to just read and do something in this field. You know, we really need to live in the field one-on-one. Because it does not work. It is very different. Experience is a very different thing. Of course, we should read, we should have knowledge. It is not enough for us; it is not enough. You know, at least short videos of teachers who have had these experiences or you know, I had this problem here, I really think it will be useful for many teachers. You know, yes, I did not have this material. I was lacking this. I did this work over there. It was good. But it would have been better if I had a material like this. (T2)”

### **4.3. Findings Explaining Early Childhood Teachers’ Perceptions About Culturally Responsive Teaching**

In this study, three interviews were conducted with teachers. In the first and last interview, they were asked what Culturally Responsive Teaching is. How teachers' perceptions about Culturally Responsive Education changed from the first to the last was examined. Sub-themes and categories related to teachers’ perceptions of CRT is presented in Figure 4.31



**Figure 4. 31.** Sub-Themes, Categories and Codes Related to Teachers’ Perceptions about CRT

**4.3.1. Teachers’ First Perceptions About Culturally Responsive Teaching**

In the first interview, I asked teachers whether they knew or heard about Culturally Responsive Teaching. Based on teachers’ narratives, some codes emerged for this main theme. Sub-themes, categories, codes, and quotations are presented in Table 4.21.

**Table 4. 21.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers’ first perceptions about CRT

Theme	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
First Perceptions of CRT	Welcoming Diverse Cultures (n=3)	“Education... Accepting all cultures, all.... You know, accepting all cultures, more mixed classes, more different activities. (T11)”

**Table 4.21 (cont'd)**

Theme	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
First Perceptions of CRT	Teaching Cultural Elements (n=8)	“In other words, there may be customs, traditions, experiences related to a culture. It may have traditions. Maybe they have holidays and things like us. These come to my mind. (T9)”
	Transferring Culture	“When we say that this thing is culturally responsive, if we take refugee children, I understand it as an acculturation. I understand it as something that passes from refugee children to Turkish culture and from Turkish culture to refugee children, but it is something I do not approve of at all. (T7)”
	Objective Education	“Is it more like that? You know, it could be like the other thing, like not giving any culture. Let me say it is more objective than culture. I thought it might be like staying away from them a little more, not like trying to assimilate them from this side. I will tell you so. (T4)”
	No Idea	“I mean, not culture-based education, but I know that there are many things based on culture, I do not know that there is separate education. I have no idea. (T13)”

First, three teachers stated that when we say culturally responsive teaching, they think of a type of education that accepts all cultures. CRT was considered a tool to welcome all culture. T11 stated in this issue that

“Education... Accepting all cultures, all.... You know, accepting all cultures, more mixed classes, more different activities. (T11)”

The majority of teachers (n=8) considered that CRT is related to teaching customs, traditions, and cultural elements of an origin to children. For example, T12 mentioned that CRT is about introducing other cultures.

“Responsive. I mean, I am probably thinking right now, you know, introducing the culture living in the society or the different cultures in the country, in the world to children, or there could be a mixed education with

the educational approaches there. In other words, an approach like people becoming citizens of the world. I mean, it sounds a bit like that. My children need to learn to respect every culture. Because Türkiye is now a multicultural country (T12)”

T9 approached CRT as a way to introduce Turkish traditions and customs.

"In other words, there may be customs, traditions, experiences related to a culture. It may have traditions. Maybe they have holidays and things like us. These come to my mind. (T9)

On the other hand, three of them perceived CRP as a way to introduce cultural elements of an origin.

“There are things we have just mentioned. Maybe the food, customs, traditions of the place. In other words, there can be training in things that are famous. That is, it. That is, it. (T3)”

“What you call culturally responsive education, I mean reflecting the environment in which the child grows up a little more, for example, like we do during the local goods week, you know, introducing the province in which the child grows up, bringing local items related to it, bringing for whatever it is famous. I make them do things like that. This comes to my mind more often. Is it wrong? Is it right? I do not know. (T1)”

Thirdly, only one teacher evaluated CRT as an education for culture transfer. She also added that she disapproves of this type of education.

“When we say that this thing is culturally responsive, if we take refugee children, I understand it as an acculturation. I understand it as something that passes from refugee children to Turkish culture and from Turkish culture to refugee children, but it is something I do not approve of at all. (T7)”

Fourthly, according to T4, CRT is an objective education. It means that CRT does not introduce any culture.

“Is it more like that? You know, it could be like the other thing, like not giving any culture. Let me say it is more objective than culture. I thought it might be like staying away from them a little more, not like trying to assimilate them from this side. I will tell you so. (T4)”



Finally, T13 stated that she had no idea on CRT.

“I mean, not culture-based education, but I know that there are many things based on culture, I do not know that there is separate education. I have no idea. (T13)”

### 4.3.2. Teachers’ Last Perceptions About Culturally Responsive Teaching

In the third interview, I again asked teachers about their perceptions of CRT. After interviewing refugee children, parents, teaching practices, and teachers' experiences, I aimed to understand the change in their perceptions. Sub-themes, categories, codes, and quotations are presented in Table 4.22.

**Table 4. 22.** Categories, codes, and example quotations regarding teachers’ last perceptions about CRT

Theme	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Last Perceptions of CRT	Teaching Cultural Elements (n=10)	“I mean, teacher, the child... Considering the Syrians, I think that we should give an education according to the cultural structure they live with. (T5)”
	Increasing Sense of Belonging (n=2)	“What can culturally sensitive education be? I mean, as you said, they need to adapt here more, but I think we also need to do something. I mean, we will take a step so that they will be more willing. They should feel a little more belonging to this society. You know, so they do not feel so excluded. (T9)”
	Objective Education (n=1)	“As I said, I said the same thing at the time. I think it is to see my children as a child, regardless of culture, and to try to educate them in a completely objective way without doing anything... Without trying to impose a culture that is not suitable for them, let us say, or without trying to impose a culture that is not suitable for them. (T4)”

**Table 4.22 (Cont'd)**

Theme	Codes	Example Quotations from Participants
Last Perceptions of CRT	Against for CRT (n=1)	“This is a question I am a bit biased, I told you because of my nationalism. So, this is Türkiye. The Republic of Türkiye. We have given many martyrs since its foundation. So, the arrival of refugee children should not make a difference. We should proceed in a good way with the same methods and techniques. If we do not want to affect them, we can take them to a different school and keep them away from this process but integrating them into the class is completely in the hands of the teacher. In the end, differences are beautiful, but our own awareness is more important. (T7)”

In their last narratives, ten teachers considered CRT to refer to education, including cultural references for all children. For example, T5 and T6 noted that education should include content related to the cultures of Syrian refugees.

“I mean, teacher, the child... Considering the Syrians, I think that we should give an education according to the cultural structure they live with. (T5)”

“In mean to say, if there are children from wherever they come from, from which culture they come from, activities related to their values can be organized with the education program related to that culture. I think it is like this (T6).”

Besides, T10 gave an example of the educational system in the United Kingdom and described how cultural references can be integrated into the curriculum.

“Culturally responsive education, as I said in our first meeting, I can give an example of the education system in the UK. I mean, they celebrate the special day of children of whatever race. On their day, they invite their families, make a presentation, and prepare a board. They make them tell what they did on that day. Whatever the local food is, they make the local food and present it to the parents. Children feel very special that day. Whichever culture they come from, the child from that culture feels very special. (T10)”

T12 gave a detailed explanation for CRT. She focused on how culture should be introduced to all children and how teachers should be trained on this issue. Also, she perceived language as a part of culture.

“As I said, again, children living in different countries with different cultures in the classrooms, or children with different mother tongues in our own country, should be told about them. You know, right now, yes, we are doing something, how can I say it? The country consists of seven regions, we talk about the regions. We talk about the different cultures, dances, food, and drink, but when it comes to language, it is not mentioned. In fact, this is the basis of having a different culture. You know, we need to talk about these more. But in culture-based education, I think first of all, teachers need to be trained in a really serious way. In other words, it is necessary to break the prejudices of people who have many prejudices. So that we can reach children. So, in the classrooms, yes, it should be different. Different cultures should be introduced. You know, it is not that. I do not necessarily have to introduce the child in my class. I mean, there should be more things and studies about the cultures that exist in the different world. Or the materials we use should be in the educational materials. You know, it should be normalized so that these children can realize it more, maybe visually. This needs to be adapted to this very much. (T12)”

Similarly, T10 said that a culturally sensitive week can be added to our program for these children.

“For example, we celebrate our national holidays here. We celebrate our religious holidays and so on. Fine, okay, but if there are children from different places, from foreign places, from foreign cultures, they can have a little food, drink, something like that, something like that, something like that can be done on an official day in schools. For example, since we have taken in Syrians or Afghans, these children are not to blame. For example, if we are not going to send them back. For example, a certain day in schools, a certain week, every year, for example, how was July 15th added later? In this case, for example, it could have been added later. It is said that today is, as you said, culturally sensitive education week. For example, the foreign children in your class will bring their own food today and let them taste it. Or, I do not know, we will learn a song from their culture and sing it to them. For example, things like this can happen. You know, it is a bit dreamy, but I think such things can be done when the appropriate conditions are created. (T10).”

On the other hand, T3 focused on celebrating our own cultural holidays.

“Culturally, as I said, culturally responsive education, I would say living our national and religious holidays. Maybe what constitutes culture? Of course, I am not saying that we can dress up as we used to dress up, but at least in small ways, we can keep our religious and national holidays alive. Of course, our national holidays are very valuable for us. Indispensable national and religious feelings. So, I am practicing these things in our class. What other kind of education is there anyway? (T3)”

In their descriptions, two teachers focused on the potential benefits of CRT. T9 considered that CRT is necessary for refugee children's sense of belonging.

“What can culturally sensitive education be? I mean, as you said, they need to adapt here more, but we also need to do something. I mean, we will take a step so that they will be more willing. They should feel a little more belonging to this society. You know, so they do not feel so excluded. (T9)”

Besides, T4 stated that CRT is an objective education.

“As I said, I said the same thing at the time. I think it is to see my children as a child, regardless of culture, and to try to educate them in a completely objective way without doing anything... Without trying to impose a culture that is not suitable for them, let us say, or without trying to impose a culture that is not suitable for them. (T4)”

Out of fourteen teachers, only T7 stated that she is against culturally responsive education.

“This is a question I am a bit biased, I told you because of my nationalism. So, this is Türkiye. The Republic of Türkiye. We have given many martyrs since its foundation. So, the arrival of refugee children should not make a difference. We should proceed in a good way with the same methods and techniques. If we do not want to affect them, we can take them to a different school and keep them away from this process but integrating them into the class is completely in the hands of the teacher. In the end, differences are beautiful, but our own awareness is more important. (T7)”

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study aims to investigate early childhood teachers' journey in working with refugee children in terms of their experiences, strengths, and needs over a while. In this chapter, firstly, teachers' experiences, strengths, and needs will be discussed based on relevant literature and Gay's Culturally Responsive Teaching (2010). Secondly, the change in teachers' experiences, strengths, and needs will be discussed. Thirdly, teachers' perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2010) forms the basis of another discussion of the study. Finally, a methodological discussion is provided, which discusses the visual methods - alternative methods to interviews such as using metaphor cards and EJM in exploring teachers' experiences. At the end of the chapter, implications and recommendations are presented.

#### **5.1. Discussion of the Findings**

##### **5.1.1. Teachers' Experiences, Strengths, and Needs Working with Refugee Children**

This section focuses on the discussion of teachers' experiences, strengths and needs with refugee children. I discuss findings of the study by considering Gay's (2010) Culturally Responsive Teaching components and practices and related literature. Teachers' previous and current experiences, strengths and needs will be discussed accordingly.

###### **5.1.1.1. Teachers' Previous and Current Experiences**

The first research question focuses on teachers' experiences while working with refugee children over the years. The first two sub-research questions aims to

investigate teachers' previous and current experiences. To reach the answers of these questions, teachers were asked about their communication process with refugee children, their parent involvement practices and communication strategies with refugee parents, their instructional techniques in this process, and their observation on the relationship between local and refugee children. According to their narratives, six themes emerges explaining their experiences over the years. In this section, teachers' previous and current experiences with refugee children under six themes, namely Teachers' Cultural Competency, Cultural Diversity in Curriculum, Communication Process with Refugee Children, Building Partnership with Refugee Parents, Relationship Between Local and Refugee Children, and Professional Competencies and Development are discussed in accordance with the relative literature and Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2010).

The first theme regarding teachers' experiences with refugee children is their cultural competency. According to Mayfield (2020), cultural competency is the process of becoming aware of cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions. The current study's findings revealed that some teachers have partial cultural awareness in their past and current years. Primarily focusing on teachers' prior cultural competencies, the present study reveals that seven teachers assume the cultures of Turkish and Syrians to be quite similar due to cultural proximity. Specifically, they stated that the two cultures are the same because they are located in close geographical areas and the two cultures share common religious values. This leads them to believe that they refugee children's culture and carry out activities appropriate to their culture. For example, they stated that when they teach activities related to religious elements in Turkish culture such as the Ramadan Festival, they also address the culture of Syrians due to shared religion. Based on this thought, they considered that they had already implemented cultural activities for refugees. However, geographical proximity or shared religion does not mean cultural proximity. Accordingly, White et al. (2021) stated that the cultural differences between people living in different countries but belonging to the same religion are much more than their similarities. This is due to factors such as traditions, customs, and ways of life in the local areas where people live. The analysis suggests that a subset of educators within this study may possess a constrained view of culture, predominantly interpreting it through a

religious lens. Additionally, it is noteworthy that nine teachers exhibited tendencies of cultural blindness during their initial tenure of engaging with refugee children. Cultural blindness is a perspective that is supposedly used to promote equality (Raveaud, 2008). However, this is not the case in practice. It is seen that teachers who adopt this attitude ignore cultural diversity in school practices in order to approach all children equally. For this reason, it is accepted that cultural blindness is not a fair practice for individuals belonging to disadvantaged groups (Jaurena, 2010). Instead, it ignores diversity between cultural and ethnic groups (Hachfeld et al., 2015).

Consequently, it can be discussed that teachers' lack of cultural knowledge might contribute to their partial cultural awareness and attitude toward cultural blindness. Milner (2007) argues that cultural blindness leads to a lack of cultural knowledge in teaching diverse children. However, Gay (2010) argues that teachers need to have a cultural knowledge base to work efficiently in diverse settings. This knowledge is related to the cultural characteristics of diverse groups such as traditions, cultural values, and communication styles (Gay, 2010). Therefore, in their first years of teaching refugee children, some teachers did not have enough cultural knowledge to work with them. Data on current experiences of teachers reveal that teachers' limited cultural awareness stems from a deficiency in knowledge. The present study's data indicate that despite recognizing the significance of culture in the educational experiences of diverse children, teachers exhibit only partial cultural awareness, attributable to an insufficient understanding of cultural nuances. This situation has also been found in similar studies in the literature. For example, Acar-Ciftci (2016) also conducted a study to determine the multicultural education competencies of early childhood teachers. Their study yielded that early childhood teachers had partial cultural awareness in terms of knowledge. However, knowledge is accepted as critical component of teachers' cultural competency of teachers (Acar-Ciftci, 2016). Teachers are expected to become aware of the effects of culture on education. This is critical not only for children's learning but also for their development. In another study, Vedder et al. (2006) also found that teachers lack cultural knowledge to work in diverse classroom settings. This situation creates a lack of cultural competence in teachers. Grey (2014) evaluates this situation as a concern regarding

teacher practices in diverse settings. Lastly, Majzub et al. (2011) investigated cultural awareness among preschool teachers. Their study concluded that teachers need more training to enhance their cultural awareness. All these findings implied that teachers still require additional support and training to be able to work with refugee children after years. Besides, these studies were conducted in diverse context in different countries. So, it implies that teachers' need for additional knowledge and skills is a global issue in today's multicultural context.

The second main theme is teachers' practices on cultural diversity in the curriculum. Gay (2010) stressed that teachers are required to use cultural elements of diverse children while designing curriculum and learning experiences. In the current study, teachers' narratives showed their previous and current practices on cultural diversity in the curriculum. For both of the times, it has been identified that certain teacher cohorts did not tailor their pedagogical approaches to align with the cultural backgrounds of refugee children, attributable to various factors. For instance, while some educators have acknowledged the relevance of incorporating cultural practices into their curriculum, they admit to a lack of expertise in effectively designing such culturally attuned activities. Teachers' lack of knowledge is also compatible with previous research. The study of Alabay and Ersal (2020) also showed that teachers did not design or adapt new activities for diverse children. In parallel with teachers' partial cultural competency, this can be attributed to a lack of knowledge. According to McNamee et al. (2002), teachers are graduated from teacher education programs that offers insufficient content related to key concepts about curriculum activities. Besides, the study of Ateş and Şahin (2021) also revealed that preschool teachers lacked cultural knowledge did not make arrangements for diverse children in their curriculum and activities. When evaluated together with the first theme, it might be possible to say that some teachers' lack of cultural knowledge negatively affected both their cultural competence and their culturally responsive teaching practices.

Gay (2010) argues that teachers need to design culturally relevant curricula, not only in formal curricula but also in symbolic curricula such as designing walls of the classroom. In the current study, teachers did not mention any attempt to arrange a symbolic curriculum for refugee children. In fact, some teachers even expressed their



hesitation about the social reaction if they prepared visuals such as panels about refugee culture. Instead, it shows that teachers address the culture of refugee children from a limited perspective rather than using it in all aspects of the classroom and curriculum. For example, Pinar et al. (1995) considered that teachers more likely to approach cultures by designing food or festival activities. This situation also represents teachers' unpreparedness to work in diverse context.

Correspondingly, teachers who designed cultural activities in the current study stated that they used or are currently using refugee children's cultural practices such as music and foods in the activities. They also designed these types of activities only on Special Days such as Domestic Goods Week. Besides, a study (Işıkçı-Başkaya et al., 2019) showed that some early childhood teachers tend to design multicultural activities on certain days and weeks. Derman Sparks et al. (2010) asserted that this is a misstep in teaching diverse groups and called tourist curriculum. In this type of curriculum, teachers, like a tourist, incorporates the food, dress, and different celebrations of other countries into the activities only for a day or two and then returns to the regular curriculum. In other words, as in the current study, cultural differences are only addressed at certain times throughout the year, instead of being integrated into the whole program. This tendency of teachers can be interpreted as teachers hesitate to fully incorporate culture into the curriculum and learning process, as seen in other studies. For example, in a study by Ateş and Şahin (2021), preschool teachers talked about their arrangements in the curriculum. Similar to current study, teachers who made arrangements for the activities stated that they talked about different clothing styles, colors, and lifestyles. Besides, teachers designed activities on Special Days for Syrian refugee children in their study. Despite implementing a tourist curriculum, it can still be discussed that although teachers did not integrate the culture of refugee children into their regular practices, it is hopeful that they made an effort to focus on their cultures on specific days. Nonetheless, even when there are no refugee children in their classrooms, teachers still need to organize curricula and classrooms to address the different cultural characteristics of local children in their classrooms. For this reason, the teacher education programs to be designed should provide guidelines that address this issue in a holistic manner rather than a limited approach.

The third theme concerns teachers' previous and current communication processes with refugee children. I asked teachers how they communicated and are currently communicating with refugee children. The research uncovers that educators have employed a variety of strategies to facilitate communication with refugee students. Initially, these strategies encompassed the use of body language, telling and instructing, demonstrating and technological tools in their previous communication strategies. Besides, they are using role modelling, recalling and second language in their current communication strategies. In parallel with previous studies, it can be said that teachers developed common methods while communicating with refugee children. For example, in one study, teachers mentioned role modeling, repetition or teaching Turkish words as solutions to language problems (Karademir & Yılmaz-Tam, 2022). Another common strategy in the current study is the use of body language. Body language is a common technique used by teachers to communicate with refugee children in international studies. For example, in Burgos's (2021) study, teachers stated that body language is a very important communication tool and supports the language acquisition process of refugee children. Çelik-Doğu (2021) conducted a study with early childhood teachers and revealed that refugee children used body language to communicate with teachers and local friends. As in the current study, both children and teachers communicated with each other through body language, gestures, and facial expressions.

In the course of the interviews, teachers reflected on their communicative strategies with refugee children, articulating both the techniques employed and the challenges encountered. It is acknowledged, however, that communication with diverse groups is multifaceted, encompassing a spectrum of distinct considerations. For example, according to Gay (2010), communication includes various factors such as communication styles and word usage of different cultural groups. Based on the current study and previous studies (Çelik-Doğu, 2021; Burgos, 2021), it can be said that teachers evaluated communication only in terms of conveying instructions to refugee children and understanding their problems. It does not cover the dimensions that Gay (2010) refers to as cross-cultural communication. Therefore, it can be assumed that teachers also lack knowledge and experience in this area. Teachers therefore need training support that takes a broader perspective on how to provide

effective instruction in different linguistic contexts. This training process should address communication from a culturally responsive perspective and raise teachers' awareness of the communication methods of different linguistic groups.

The fourth theme is related to building partnership with refugee parents. Teachers discussed their communication process, challenges, and parent involvement practices in the previous and current years. Both current and past experiences show that teachers use common methods of communication (such as technological tools and help from others) and face similar challenges. According to teachers' perspectives, these challenges stem from language barriers. This is supported by similar studies in the literature (Kardeş & Akman, 2018; Karademir & Yılmaz-Tam, 2022). In Kardeş and Akman's (2018) study, teachers cited lack of family responsiveness as one of the problems they experienced. As a ground for this, some teachers mentioned that their families did not support them during the education process because they did not speak the language and they were unable to establish a healthy relationship. In another study, teachers similarly mentioned communication difficulties with non-Turkish speaking families (Karademir & Yılmaz-Tam, 2022). On the other hand, some teachers in the current study perceived refugee parents and families as closed to communication or unwilling to cooperate. Similarly, according to Kardeş and Akman (2022), one of the problems encountered in the education of refugee students is that families are not involved in the education process. In another study by Topaloğlu and Özdemir (2020), teachers perceived refugee families as indifferent to refugee children's education. In this regard, the participation of families is considered to be very low (Szente et al., 2006). These findings can be evaluated in terms of the government's integration policies. Education for refugee children is one of the most important keys to integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). Therefore, including refugee families in the system supports the integration of refugee children. According to the 2018-2023 Integration Strategy Document and National Action Plan published by the Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management, one of the strategic priorities given to refugee children is education and integration. Under this heading, targets have been set to increase migrants' access to and participation in formal education. Activities to achieve this goal also include refugee families. For example, activities such as supporting their children's access to

education by raising the awareness of families, overcoming the language problem, and providing literacy training for refugee families have been carried out. However, the current study revealed that teachers still perceived refugee parents as out of the system. Therefore, more practical steps need to be taken in addition to strategic plans such as this one.

The examination of teachers' experiences with parent involvement reveals an anticipation of collaboration from families, particularly in bolstering the educational journey of refugee children and facilitating their acquisition of the Turkish language. This is not a surprising result because similar studies reach similar results. (Yanık-Özger & Akansel, 2019; Savaşkan, 2019). For example, In Savaşkan's (2019) study, teachers cited the fact that families speak Arabic at home as the reason refugee children still cannot speak Turkish. Therefore, teachers suggested that families speak Turkish in their children's presence for children's language acquisition (Yanık-Özger & Akansel, 2019). However, these recommendations are highly controversial in terms of cultural responsiveness. According to Rodríguez-Izquierdo and Darmody (2019), language is a potent means of bridging the gap between refugee families and the education system. However, the process of building this bridge paves the way for the development of the so-called "language gap" ideology (Curd-Christiansen, 2020). This is because teachers treat the host country's language as the primary language and have an attitude that only this language should be used in the classroom and at home (Horgan et al., 2022). However, families speaking the host country's language at home may not always support children's language acquisition process. A study by Mohammed (2022) shows that communication problems continue even if families speak the host country's language at home. On the other hand, refugee children need to continue learning their mother tongue and the host country's language to maintain their cultural identity (Horgan et al., 2022). Otherwise, forgetting the mother tongue may lead to the risk of migrants losing their national identity after a few generations (Mohammed, 2022). In light of all this information, it can be argued that if teachers implement practices in refugees' mother tongues in addition to the dominant language in their classrooms, it might be a more culturally responsive approach in terms of refugee children's cultural identities.

The fifth theme is teachers' observation regarding the relationship between local and refugee children and the role of parents and themselves in this friendship process. Gay (2001) stressed that developing a caring learning community is the key factor in the learning process of diverse children. For this reason, the significance of the relationship between refugee and local children is undeniably essential for the education and adaptation of refugee children (Correa-Velez et al., 2010). Social bonding, especially in the first years of their arrival in a new country, plays a key role in this sense (Beirens et al., 2007). However, several studies have addressed the challenges refugee children face in this regard (Başaran & Kara, 2022; Kardeş & Kozikoğlu, 2021; McBride, 2018). For the current study, one of the notable findings from teachers' past experiences is the exclusion experienced by refugee children. In line with this finding, in a study conducted in Canada, Syrian refugee children stated that they had difficulty making friends with local children because they were exposed to prejudiced and discriminatory behaviors (Guo et al., 2019). This exclusion mostly stems from the language barrier (McBride, 2018; Kara & Başaran, 2022). For example, in one study with preschoolers, when local children were asked why they did not play with their Syrian peers, they stated that they did not understand refugee children (Yanık-Özger & Kozandağı, 2021). Paienjtton (2023) also found that friendship and interaction between local and refugee children were limited due to the language diversity. In light of all these findings, it can be said that language is a determining and essential factor for friendship among children (Çelik-Doğu, 2021; Yanık-Özger & Akansel, 2019). This shows how important it is for refugee children to learn both their mother tongue and the host country's language while adapting to the host country.

Meeusen (2014) stated that local parents' discriminatory practices negatively influence local children's friendships with refugee children. Teachers in the current study mentioned that local parents established barriers to the relationship between local and refugee children in their previous experiences. As stated by Yalçın and Simsar (2020), it was found that local parents have prejudices against refugee children and families in a Turkish context. Local parents tended to negatively perceive refugee children (Yanık-Özger & Akansel, 2019). In a study conducted by Mercan Uzun & Bütün in 2016, teachers stated that local families had negative

discourses about refugees, negatively affecting their relationship with them. In another study (Başaran & Kara, 2022), parents stated that they did not want their children to be educated in the same class as refugee children. All these data show that even if teachers assume their role as facilitators and mediators to improve the relationship, there is also a need for arrangements at the community level because according to Yanık-Özger and Kozandağı (2021), local families directly or indirectly affect the thoughts of local children. On the other hand, a contrasting finding shows that local families have a positive attitude towards their children's relationship with refugee children (Paienjtton, 2023). In line with this opposite finding, the current study yielded that teachers do not mention the negative attitudes of local families in their current observations. In the Turkish context, refugees have been living in Türkiye since 2011. Findings show that families do not play a negative role in friendship relationships in the current situation, and in the 13-year period that has passed, it can be considered promising for the interaction between two groups of children.

On the other hand, an interesting finding in the current study is that the teachers evaluated the friendship mostly in terms of refugee children and language diversity. They did not assess about local children's level of readiness for multiculturalism. While integrating refugee children into the classroom and school is an issue frequently addressed in local policies, projects and studies, the readiness of local children for this situation may be secondary. Nevertheless, even if the teachers did not mention the readiness of local children in their discourse, they took some concrete steps to prepare them for this situation and strengthen the interaction. It seems that bringing refugee and local children together without any prior preparation caused teachers to assume specific roles, such as preventing discrimination in general (Kardeş & Akman, 2022). These roles are also based on common strategies developed by teachers working in different regions. For example, Yanık-Özger and Kozandağı (2021)'s study showed that teachers preferred group games or planned games to combine these two groups, as with the current study. This may indicate that teachers care about the collaboration in the classroom and the integration of the two groups. When teachers take specific steps such as group games, they both facilitate

the adaptation of refugee children to the classroom and prepare local children for multiculturalism.

Finally, when discussing their current experiences, the teachers described a similar pattern and discussed the relationship development between the refugee and local children. According to the teachers, refugee children are ostracized at the beginning of the year, but towards the end of the year they form friendships. Although friendship is a dynamic and subjective experience (Bergnehr et al., 2020), this pattern has also emerged in other studies. For example, another study found that refugee children did not play the same game in the first days of school, but towards the end of the semester, they were included in each other's games (Yanık-Özger & Kozandağı, 2021). After a certain period, it is stated that as refugee children's Turkish level improves, the friendship relationship also improves (Yanık-Özger & Akansel, 2019).

The final theme reflects teachers' professional competencies and development. The most remarkable finding is that while teachers evaluated themselves as inexperienced and inadequate in their first years of teaching refugee children, they felt more confident and experienced in the current years. The main reason for this inexperienced and inadequacy may be the training programs do not adequately prepare teachers. In the current study, teachers criticized their unpreparedness to work with refugee children. Supporting this argument, in Smyth and Kum's (2010) study, teachers stated that the feeling of inadequacy they experienced was related to their teaching competencies and stemmed from the education process.

On the other hand, teachers criticized teacher education programs due to a mismatch between theory and practice, lack of preparation to work with refugee children and lack of language training in the current study. In this regard, Lash et al. (2020) questioned whether pre-service teachers acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to work with refugee children and families efficiently. Their study discusses that although teachers accept cultural competence as a critical skill, they fail to acquire enough knowledge and skills due to missing parts in teacher education programs (Lash et al., 2020). Further, other studies emphasized that teachers should be well

prepared to work in diverse settings for years (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Banks & McGee-Banks, 2001). Unfortunately, teachers still feel inexperienced, unprepared, and inadequate to teach refugee children (Molina, 2013). Pre-service teacher education programs especially need to prepare new teachers for today's diverse conditions. According to Deal and Peterson (1999), new teachers should learn the social and cultural structure of the region where they work. In another study conducted in the Turkish context, it was recommended that new teachers should have knowledge about the cultural and linguistic structure of the region in which they will work (Karademir & Yılmaz-Tam, 2022). At the same time, this preparation should not be specific to one culture, but should prepare teachers in particular for how to teach in different cultural contexts.

Nevertheless, the extent to which preschool teacher education programs support pre-service teachers working in diverse environments is controversial. In a study by Kamışlı et al. (2020) comparing the undergraduate programs of classroom teaching and preschool teaching, it was found that there were few courses on getting to know the child and for this reason, the teacher candidates' processes of getting to know children during the education process were limited more.

The findings from various studies, spanning multiple countries and years, underscore a persistent deficiency in the requisite knowledge, skills, and experience among educators for effective instruction in contemporary multicultural classrooms. This issue persists as a global challenge in the educational landscape. Therefore, matching teacher training programs with practical implementations and needs in the field can be a concrete step to further improve the competence of teachers working with special groups such as refugee children. On the other hand, the demographic situation of the class is highly variable in the preschool period. Preschool teachers may work with different groups every year. For this reason, one of the most basic requirements should be that the teacher should be trained not only on the basis of refugee children but also on the integration of different cultures in general and be ready to plan their program in this context. In this way, culturally sensitive and qualified education can be provided to all children from different cultures. For example, in the current study, teachers mentioned that they need to learn Arabic or



that refugee children should take Turkish course before enrolling preschool education. In this study, children from diverse cultures in teachers' classrooms represent the refugee group. However, when considered in a general framework, children from other countries who do not speak Turkish may also come to the classroom. Besides, Türkiye is home to many ethnic groups. Therefore, teachers can also teach children whose mother tongue is Kurdish and who do not speak Turkish. In this case, it is more critical that the training to be given to teachers should not be limited to the refugee context but should be on the axis of adaptation activities to be carried out in multilingual classes, and communication with multilingual or non-native Turkish-speaking children. In training programs to be designed in this way, the language problems that teachers are likely to experience can be addressed more inclusively.

#### **5.1.1.2. Teachers' Previous and Current Strengths**

In the current study, teachers previous and current strengths are investigated in the interviews. For both their previous and current years, teachers' strengths are categorized under two categories: professional skills and personal skills. Teachers described their professional and personal skills as their strengths in teaching refugee children. One remarkable finding revealed that teachers described their strength as being patient for the first years of teaching while they described it as being confident for the current years. This situation can be evaluated as teachers' self-confidence increased after spending at least three years with refugee children. Besides, currently, teachers identified their strengths as being experienced, having classroom management skills, good communication skills, and ability to observe. These strengths can be evaluated as teachers developed their practical theories while working with refugee children. Practical theory explains that teachers develop their own practical theories over the years as they are exposed to different conditions, backgrounds, and student-based situations (Dorovolomo, 2004). These theories are a unique system representing the values, experiences and knowledge associated with teachers' teaching practice at any given time (Handal & Lauvas, 1987). In the current study, teachers have been working with refugee children for at least three years. Over the years, they may have developed their own methods of communicating with

refugee children and their families, as well as their own methods of teaching and learning processes. The current study's data also revealed the teachers' current practices and methods in the teaching process. Based on all this information, it is unsurprising that teachers consider themselves more self-confident in the current situation.

From the perspective of Experiential Continuum, teachers stated that they have learned by themselves over the years and that their past experiences have shaped their future experiences. This may be the reason why they currently define themselves as more self-confident. For instance, depending on their past experiences, it is possible that they may discover how to do classroom management better in a classroom environment with refugee children today.

Another example is that teachers define currently being more experienced as a strength. There are other studies that show that this is related to experience over the years. Megalonidou and Vitoulis (2022) argue that teachers' lack of experience with refugee children can negatively affect the educational process. For this reason, preschool teachers need one-to-one experience. Besides, their study suggests a positive relationship between teachers' years of experience working with refugees and their multicultural attitudes. Experience as a strength is also a valuable finding for teacher education programs. It is clear that the experience gained in diverse contexts contributes to teachers' teaching competences.

Moreover, teachers identified characteristics such as strong observation skills or good communication skills as strengths. Good communication skills might represent teachers' social skills. Namro (2016) also stressed that social skills such as showing effort to build relationships is one of the competencies of teachers working with refugees. Correspondingly, Kardeş and Akman (2022) found that positive communication skills are required as teacher qualification. Therefore, supporting teachers' communication skills while providing culturally responsive training can make them feel more empowered and competent when working with refugee children.

### **5.1.1.3. Teachers' Previous and Current Needs**

One of the aims of the current study was to investigate teachers' previous and current needs in working with refugee children. The data of the current study showed that while some needs of teachers such as communication and professional development remained the same over the years. Narratives from teachers highlighted a consistent need for enhanced professional development, both initially and presently. Specifically, eight educators have articulated a necessity for further training to effectively navigate the complexities of multicultural and diverse educational environments. This finding is compatible with the previous studies (Richardson et al., 2018; Kanu, 2008). These studies also considered that training teachers to work in refugee context is a global issue. Similar to the current study, Mogli et al. (2020) also argued that teachers need more knowledge and training about diverse cultural and linguistic systems.

Additionally, some teachers in the current study stated that they need training to understand children who have refugee and traumatic experiences. This situation can be evaluated as necessary skills and needs for teachers because the works of Kolegija (2020) and Mogli et al. (2020) revealed that teachers need enough knowledge and skills to support and interact with traumatized refugee children and families. However, the situation in Türkiye can be assessed as insufficient to prepare teachers to work with children who have refugee and traumatic experiences as well because Özel and Erdur-Baker (2023) argued that teachers do not know how to work with these groups of children. Although all these studies were conducted in different countries with teachers who graduated from different teacher education programs, they reached similar results, showing that the support teachers need in working with refugee children is a common need. Especially in the Turkish context, revising teacher education programs to teach preservice teachers culturally diverse teaching and learning methods may not be sufficient for teachers working in the field. These studies reveal that teachers need to learn culturally sensitive practices as well as socio-emotional and psychological aspects of children. In this sense, it can be said that teacher education programs need revision.

Regarding teachers' current needs for professional development, three teachers talked about more practical education to solve problems because they now realize the gap between theory and practice. Providing experience-based training for teachers to work in diverse settings can be considered critical. Specifically, Kovinthan (2016) evaluates this training as necessary for today's multicultural society. Tanış and Özgün (2022) also asserted that teachers need multicultural experiences before graduation. The data from international literature also shows that the lack of teacher preparation and teachers' need for additional training are similar across countries. For example, it was found that Greek teachers are not effectively prepared to work with refugees (the International Step by Step Association, 2020). Besides, Lebanese teachers needed more support and training (El Ghali & Riggall, 2019). As mentioned above, the need for more knowledge, skills and experience of teachers should be considered as a universal situation, since the results of the studies conducted in countries with large refugee populations such as Greece (the International Step by Step Association, 2020) and Lebanon (El Ghali & Riggall, 2019) as well as the results of the current study conducted in Türkiye, found similar results.

All the studies mentioned above show that training is an important need globally and that teachers should be equipped with more competent knowledge and skills. On the other hand, Gay (2010) emphasizes that providing only pedagogical knowledge to teachers is not enough. The mere knowledge teachers will receive without self-assessment about their cultural and ethnic beliefs will remain superficial. Teachers' cultural and ethnic beliefs affect all educational practices, from teaching methods and techniques to communication methods. For this reason, it is important that the training given to teachers be designed to support their own cultural self-awareness as well as be psychological and experience-based.

Secondly, the data showed that teachers' communication needs still exist in the current years. Teachers still need translators or language training to communicate and interact with refugee children and families. Correspondingly, Shriberg et al. (2010) also found that teachers want to work with assistant teachers who are eligible to communicate with refugee children. These compatible findings are not surprising because, as Richardson et al. (2018) highlighted, language and communication are

the areas where teachers need the most support and help. In the current study, teachers expressed their desire for translators or even Syrian teachers to help in the communication process. Both the translator and the Syrian teachers support refugee children's Turkish language learning process while enabling them to use their mother tongue. For this reason, the teachers' desire is to promise that refugee children will keep their mother tongue and, thus, their cultural and national identity alive.

Besides, one of the reasons of communication-related needs can be the nature of Turkish Preschool Education Program. This program includes a lot of language-based activities. Teachers and children are engaged in verbally designed activities such as drama, music, Turkish and early literacy. Additionally, teachers need to convey instructions to refugee children in play, science, and art activities. That is why teachers still need support for communication. To support this argument, Günek (2020) also found that preschool teachers had the most difficulties implementing activities due to language differences because refugee children struggle to understand instructions. The works of Tanış and Özgün (2022) and Tarım (2015) also showed the preschool teachers' needs and challenges for communication.

To solve language-related problems, teachers in the current study recommended a Turkish training for both refugee children and families. Besides, some teachers have mentioned that refugee children should attain a Turkish course before enrolling preschool. The inclination among educators to prioritize the learning of Turkish prior to the commencement of preschool education emerges as a recurrent situation. This approach is corroborated by similar findings in the academic literature, where preschool teachers have consistently advocated for this preparatory measure. For example, Korkmaz (2019) also found that preschool teachers suggested Turkish language training before starting school. Similarly, studies by Günek (2020) and Saritaş et al. (2016) showed that teachers require additional Turkish language training for refugee children and families before school. In the study of Kardeş and Akman (2018), teachers discussed that refugee children need to receive Turkish courses before the school. Teachers in the work of Abide (2023) also offered language education for refugees to solve problems in the classrooms. The studies that produced common solutions for this similar need were conducted between 2016 and

2023, including the current study. This may indicate that despite the seven years, refugee preschool children still have deficiencies in speaking and understanding Turkish. Besides, preschool teachers still need additional support to interact with refugee families and children, although the first influx of refugees arrived in 2011.

Finally, the current study was conducted with teachers who had worked with refugee children for at least three years. So, some teachers started teaching refugee children in the first years of the mass influx. On the other hand, some teachers have experience in teaching refugee children in the last three years. This situation was reflected in their needs. For example, teachers who had experience working with refugee children in the first years of their arrival in Türkiye stated that refugee families should be provided with economic and material support, but in recent years they have not expressed such a need. Specifically, although Youn (2016) emphasized the importance of material resources for teachers to be effective in working with refugee children, teachers of the current study did not mention any need for educational materials in their current practices. On the contrary, the study of Günek (2020) yielded that preschool teachers still have material needs. These studies implied that no standardized materials are available to teachers for working with refugee children in classrooms in various regions. On the other hand, although teachers do not need additional material currently in the present study, culturally responsive materials should be considered necessary not only for teachers but also for children. These types of materials provide references to students' cultural and ethnic identities. Muniz (2021) argues that culturally responsive materials also help teachers build bridges between home and school that are free from prejudice. For this reason, it should be seen as an important step to equip the classroom environment with materials to provide culturally responsive education to diverse children and increase teacher competencies through teacher training.

### **5.1.2. The Change in Teachers Experiences, Strengths, and Needs**

The present study aims to investigate to what extent teachers' experiences, strengths and needs changed over time, if there is a change. In this sub-section, the change in

teachers' experiences, strengths and needs over time will be discussed separately based on the relevant literature.

#### **5.1.2.1. Change in Teachers' Experiences**

The data of the current study showed that while some experiences of teachers has changed over time (at least three years or more) while working with refugee children, others have not. Initially, when I look at teachers' cultural competency, the most noticeable change is the teachers' acceptance of diversity as a richness in their current experiences. These narratives cannot be found in their previous experiences. Instead, they had an attitude of cultural blindness in their previous years. They stated that a child is a child regardless of their cultural background. This change in teachers' perceptions can be explained by their one-on-one interaction with diverse children at least three years and more. According to Timoštšuk et al. (2022), having knowledge from textbooks and teacher education programs is not enough to raise teachers' cultural awareness. Teachers need to have direct experiences to understand diverse children. That is why teachers who have been working at least three years with refugee children might have a tendency to perceive diversity as color and richness in their classroom in the current study. Teachers have had the opportunity to interact with refugee children over the years, and this also alters their attitudes because teachers' attitudes in diverse classrooms stem from their classroom experiences (Guskey, 2002).

Besides, Miller and Fuller (2014) supported the abovementioned findings. They argued that teachers become culturally knowledgeable and competent when they interact with children from diverse backgrounds in classroom settings. Teachers interacting with diverse children in the classroom must find new ways to meet their needs. This can change their perspective over time. In the current study, teachers' current perception of diversity as richness can be explained by the fact that they have not had experiences with refugee children over the years.

Secondly, changes were also observed in teachers' practices in integrating culture into the curriculum. The past years in the study refer to the first years of teachers'

encounters with refugee children. In current years, teachers cited language diversity as the reason for the change in teaching methods and techniques. Since this language diversity was encountered in literacy activities, they went for diversity in their practices. However, when I look at their practices today, they mentioned reasons related to more culturally sensitive practices as the reason for their diverse practices. This shift is evidenced by the diversification of educational activities, which are deliberately designed to acquaint students with various cultures and to enhance the sense of belonging among refugee children. Moreover, more teachers (n=7) utilized children's funds of knowledge in this process.

This change can be considered as a personal growth of teachers through the Experiential Continuum. According to Dewey (1938), new teachers develop professionally through innovations and experiences in educational settings. Although some of the teachers in the current study were experienced teachers who had been teaching before working with refugee children, the arrival of refugee children in their classrooms was a new situation for them. This led them to change their Practical theories as well. Practical theories develop based on teachers' own experiences and practices (Munir, 2023). When teachers encounter new situations, they change their theories by finding new ways to teach (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986). Therefore, it can be said that experience also plays a role in this change in teachers' curriculum practices. It can be interpreted that teachers have developed a perspective on the needs of refugee children and how they can meet them more effectively over the years.

Upon examining the change of communication strategies among teachers, it becomes apparent that certain methods have remained consistent over time. Notably, enlisting assistance from others—siblings, translators, or bilingual educators—has been a persistent approach. Despite the utilization of body language and direct communication methods, the necessity for translation services emerges as a pivotal factor in bridging linguistic divides. This is substantiated by Kara and Başaran (2022), who identifies language barriers as a primary challenge in the interaction between teachers and refugee children. One of the most influential ways to solve this problem is to ask for help from bilingual students or translators. Further, in another



study, early childhood teachers stated that getting help from another bilingual person is one of their communication strategies with refugee children (Özer-Aytekin & Sönmez-Ektem, 2019). Teachers also got help from bilingual refugee children to be able to speak with monolingual refugee children (Bucak, 2021; Kara, 2020). These findings may suggest that the communication assistance teachers receive from third parties is an effective method for communicating with children who do not speak Turkish. In this case, bilingual staff or assistant teacher support can be provided to teachers in schools where refugee children are concentrated. At the same time, these findings show that teachers' communication needs have not changed over the years. Similar needs are also found in studies conducted in different years with different samples. This situation indicates that there is an ongoing language problem in the education process of refugee children. For this reason, effective initiatives should be taken to help refugee children learn the host country's language while respecting their mother tongue and cultural identity.

Turkish Preschool Education Program is a child-centered program. So, teachers are expected to use developmentally appropriate practices. However, data revealed that teachers used developmentally inappropriate communication practices in their previous years. For example, teachers used telling and instructing technique to teach some Turkish words. In current educational practices, a subset of teachers has embraced the use of music and play as mediums to facilitate communication and impart the Turkish language to refugee children. Such pedagogical choices are recognized for their alignment with the developmental stages of children's learning. This trend reflects a broader shift towards more child-centric methodologies in educational communication.

Fourthly, data revealed that teachers' communication strategies with refugee parents did not change over the years. Teachers still got language support from others and used technological tools. Especially the fact that teachers maintain communication with the help of bilingual people is a result that is still in the current situation. For example, in a study conducted by Kardeş & Akman (2018), teachers expressed that they had one-sided communication strategy with refugee families by using Turkish-speaking siblings. Considering that the first influx of refugees started in 2011, the

fact that refugee families still have one-way communication or encounter communication barriers shows that these families need language support in the integration process. On the other hand, there have been some changes in their parent involvement practices over the years. Teachers found more ways to involve refugee parents in education. In addition to school-based activities and home-visits, teachers currently designed home-based parent involvement activities. This is a promising finding because teachers still do not use direct communication methods with refugee families. Nevertheless, their indirect communication methods did not prevent them from designing family involvement activities. According to Brown (2011), families who do not speak the language of the country they live in have difficulty supporting their children's education. Yagan-Guder (2019) stated that this situation arises because families think that they cannot express themselves. In the current study, teachers found more ways of participation despite the communication difficulties. This means that refugee families and teachers interact more in their current experiences. This provides more opportunities for families to support their children's education. In the international context, Szente et al. (2006) reported that family engagement activities with refugee families are very low and that these families do not attend school at all. Grace et al. (2022) also argued that refugee parents who have different language and culture encounter many challenges such as language difference and these obstacles plays itself out in parent involvement practices. It is therefore promising that in the current study, teachers found more ways to engage and involved families through methods such as home visits and one-on-one meetings.

In discussing current experiences, teachers have articulated an expectation of collaborative engagement with families, aimed at enhancing the language acquisition and educational outcomes for children. In their past experiences, teachers did not have such expectations from refugee families. This can be interpreted as their practical theories are shaped in this way. The fact that teachers had to work and communicate with refugee families was a new situation for them, but it shows that they learned how to cope with this situation over time. On the other hand, the fact that teachers conducted more family involvement activities can also be explained in the context of practical theory. According to Pitkäniemi (2010), practical theories

provide teachers with a rationale for their teaching practices. Thanks to the practical theories teachers develop in the process, they determine practices such as what and how to teach using which method and technique. In the current study, teachers' expectation of collaboration might indicate that they know the importance of family involvement and engagement. Therefore, they offer more family involvement activities.

The data showed that there have also been some changes in the relationship between local and refugee children. The most noticeable change is that while in the early years teachers mentioned that refugee children were more often excluded, labeled, and subjected to prejudiced behavior, in their current experience some teachers (n=6) mentioned a closer relationship between the two groups. This is an important step for the adaptation of refugee children as it creates a welcoming environment. A few studies (Ofsted, 2003; Rutter, 2001) also emphasize the importance of a welcoming school environment for the education of refugee children. For example, one of the main lines of creating such an environment was identified as buddying the refugee child with the local child (Hek, 2005). A study also emphasized the importance of pairing two groups (Hek & Sales, 2002). In the current study, teachers stated that in their current experiences, they took the role of facilitator and paired two groups of children with each other in activities.

Lastly, one of the most striking changes has been in teachers' professional development. While in their early years they described themselves as inexperienced and inadequate in communication, teaching and working with families, they now describe themselves as more experienced in these areas. Again, this can be explained in the context of Experiential Continuum and Practical Theories. The Experiential Continuum states that past experiences shape and contribute to subsequent experiences to a certain extent (Dewey, 1983). It is obvious that teachers who have been working with refugee children and their families for at least three years know themselves as more experienced with the gains they have gained from their past experiences over time. For example, some teachers stated that when refugee children first came to their classrooms, they had never taught foreign children before and did not know how to do it, but they learned on their own by gaining experience over

time. The accumulation of professional experience has been instrumental in enabling teachers to refine their practical theories and perceive themselves as more adept practitioners. These practical theories are idiosyncratic to each teacher, evolving uniquely within their pedagogical journey. Dorovolomo (2004) posits that the ongoing act of teaching serves as a crucible for the continuous evolution of these theories. These theories provide teachers with guidelines on what to do and how to do it. For this reason, teachers now see themselves as more experienced in certain subjects. In the scope of this study, the teachers' review of their processes of working with refugee children also contributed to the realization of their own practical theories.

#### **5.1.2.2. Change in Teachers' Strengths and Needs**

There have also been some changes in teachers' strengths and needs. First of all, while in the past teachers mentioned characteristic traits such as being compassionate and patient as strengths, in their current experiences they accept personal traits such as being a good observer and being self-confident as strengths. This situation can be interpreted as reflecting teachers' experiences gained over time on their strengths. On the other hand, teachers' professional characteristics also appeared as strengths in their current experiences. Teachers who have developed their practical theories and guideline on teaching in a classroom with refugee children now accept characteristics such as having good communication skills or classroom management skills as strengths.

Secondly, when I look at teachers' needs over the years, teachers' needs for professional development and communication still persist. In the process, teachers still need language training or more qualified teacher training for working with refugee children. This result is not surprising because studies conducted in different countries and in different years show that teachers still have some needs in this regard (Kanu, 2008; Mogli et al., 2020). When I look at the changing needs of teachers, some teachers stated that the 2013 Preschool Education Program needs to be rearranged due to the multicultural structure of the classrooms. For example, one

teacher expressed that there should be objectives and indicators for refugee children. After data was collected, Preschool Education program was revised. More inclusive and culturally sensitive features, objectives and indicators were added to the new program. This can be interpreted as the new curriculum was prepared by considering the needs of teachers working in the field. Besides, it shows that in terms of education, there is a development and awareness in our country of multiculturalism, sensitivity and respect for diversity and culture. In this way, the new curriculum could better meet the needs of teachers in working with refugee children.

### **5.1.3. Teachers' Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

The third aim of the current study is to understand teachers' perceptions on Culturally Responsive Teaching. In the first and third interviews, teachers were asked to define CRT. The aim here was to examine whether the teachers' perceptions of CRT changed as a result of their self-evaluation and reflection on their practices and experiences while describing their narratives.

In the first interview, teachers described Culturally Responsive Teaching as a means to welcome diverse cultures, to teach cultural elements and to transfer culture. Concurrently, one educator regard CRT as a form of education that remains neutral, eschewing cultural content, while another disclosed a lack of familiarity with the concept. Secondly, I investigated teachers' last perceptions of CRT. It revealed that it is viewed as instrumental in teaching cultural elements and fostering a sense of belonging among students. Echoing earlier sentiments, one educator maintain the stance that CRT should be devoid of cultural components, whereas another express opposition to the adoption of CRT methodologies.

First of all, the findings regarding teachers' perceptions of CRT shows that teachers' had some level of knowledge of CRT. For example, T12 evaluated CRT as a means to introduce a culture that exists in society or the world. This situation is compatible with previous research findings (Başarrı et al., 2014; Matteis, 2022). Matteis (2022) discussed that teachers have a certain level of theoretical knowledge. They know CRT is related to embracing all culture. In the research conducted by Karataş and

Oral (2015), the perspectives of educators on CRT are scrutinized. The consensus among teachers emphasized the necessity for educational frameworks to be intricately crafted, reflecting the cultural contexts of the children. Complementing this, Başarır et al. (2014) probed into the teachers' understanding of multicultural education, which was delineated as an instructional approach tailored to a diverse student population. Corroborating these findings, teachers in the present study initially interpret CRT as an educational ethos that embraces and respects the multiplicity of cultures. Considering all findings, it can be argued that teachers realize some CRT components at the level of knowledge. It is valuable to take practical steps for culturally responsive practices because engaging with CRT provides intellectual and psychological benefits for diverse learners and whole communities (Gay, 2013).

On the other hand, this superficial knowledge of CRT implies that teachers still require additional support and training on the education of refugees. For instance, in the current study, T12 mentioned that teachers should be educated effectively to provide culture-based education. In previous studies, teachers also assert the need for training in culturally responsive teaching (Karataş & Oral, 2015). Teachers in the study of Karataş and Oral (2015) suggested that teacher education programs should be rearranged and organized to include culturally responsive education. This situation must be addressed today because teachers are the main people who will teach respect for different cultures and adopt cultural values (Günay & Aydın, 2015). Banks (2008) also discussed that teachers are more likely to design culturally responsive practices if trained enough. Therefore, teacher education programs and in-service training should be rearranged to empower teachers' knowledge and skills for CRT because all children had the right to education regardless of their cultural background (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In this sense, CRT is accepted as one of the most critical approaches to meeting the needs of diverse learners (Gay, 2002).

In the current study, except for two teachers who were against CRT or had no opinion, all teachers (n=12) had positive opinions about CRT. These teachers mentioned the benefits of CRT such as increasing refugee children's sense of

belonging and teaching respect for culture. This is in line with the findings of previous studies (Kotluk & Kocakaya, 2018; Robinson, 2010). In their study, teachers saw CRT as an effective and needed approach for culturally diverse countries like Türkiye (Kotluk & Kocakaya, 2018). Besides, Robinson (2010) stressed the necessity of CRT. In the current study, some teachers also approached CRT from this perspective and stressed that cultural activities should be designed based on their values if they have children from diverse cultures. This can be considered as a promising result for teachers to practice CRT. Because teachers' CRT practices are shaped by their views and beliefs (Kotluk & Kocakaya, 2018).

On the other hand, in the current study, although teachers have some knowledge of CRT, their self-reported practices revealed that their practices of CRT vary. While the practices of some educators align with their understanding of CRT, others engage in CRT-aligned methodologies without explicit knowledge of the concept. For instance, T13, initially unaware of CRT, advocates for the educational rights of refugee children, emphasizing the imperative to provide optimal education. Presently, T13 incorporates cultural elements into her pedagogy, crafting activities that celebrate the culinary traditions, communicative styles, and attire of refugee children. This situation is promising as it shows that teachers apply culturally sensitive practices in their most basic and superficial form, even if they are not aware of it.

Furthermore, some teachers' perceptions of CRT was found to be compatible with their practices. For example, while talking about her perceptions of CRT in the last interview, T12 agreed that Türkiye is a multicultural country, so children need to learn to respect diverse cultures. Besides, when I look at practices and activities of T12 in her current years, she also described that refugee children have different home environment, and they need to reflect on it in the classroom. In another example, T7 expressed her initial perceptions regarding CRT as expressing her opposite idea. She perceived CRT as an acculturation process and means to integrate two cultures. She stated that she is against culturally responsive teaching. When I look at practices of T7, she stated that she does not need to integrate the cultures of refugees into the education process.

#### **5.1.4. Methodological Discussion: Metaphor Cards and Educational Journey Mapping**

Researchers in the literature use techniques such as drawing timelines, modeling with Legos or photograph elicitation to collect qualitative data (Bagnoli, 2009; Mannay, 2010). Barbour (2014) claims that researchers have recently been excited to use visual methods such as data collection procedures. This is not a surprising argument because it was argued that visual methods empower the richness of the story, enrich the meaning of disclosure, and provide validity (Glaw et al., 2017). Visual methods enable researchers to gather more detailed data compared to traditional interviews. For instance, Pain (2012) conducted a literature review to investigate researchers' use of visual techniques. They conclude that visual techniques facilitate the communication process between researchers and participants and reveal more in-depth data.

On the other hand, visual methods are especially recommended for researchers, especially in cultural contexts and subjects where the privileged group's voices are heard more (Ademolu, 2021). In alignment with this methodology, the current study entails a triad of interviews with each educator. Seidman (2006) posits that the inaugural interview endeavors to unearth the life histories of the participants. The subsequent interview delves into the details of the participants' narratives. The third interview finalizes the process by getting data about reflection of participants on the meaning of their experiences. Employing metaphor cards and Educational Journey Mapping as investigative tools in the latter two interviews, this section elucidates the advantages of these methods in probing the depths of teachers' experiences.

The second interview commences with an examination of teacher' experiences through the selection of metaphor cards that encapsulate their professional journeys. Initially, teachers articulate their experiences verbally. Subsequently, they choose metaphor cards that resonate with their narratives and arrange them in a chronological sequence. This process facilitates a detailed discourse on their experiences. In some cases, it was understood that by using the cards, the teachers could convey information about their experiences more easily and in more detail.



The focus on educators' experiences with refugee children may necessitate the use of reflective methodologies. Karnieli-Miller et al. (2017) suggest that research topics that are abstract or sensitive, like ethnic and cultural diversity, often challenge participants in articulating their emotions, thoughts, and perspectives. Consequently, employing reflective tools, such as metaphor cards, is advocated for facilitating discourse on complex subjects (Barton, 2015).

Karnieli-Miller et al. (2017) emphasized that metaphor cards help participants to express more challenging experiences and emotions. In the current study, the metaphor cards enabled teachers to self-evaluate their past and current experiences, needs and strengths. After the teachers talked about their stories, they were asked to explain why they had chosen each card. In this case, teachers expressed their feelings and thoughts through self-evaluation. I asked teachers' opinions regarding the data collection techniques in the last interviews. Some teachers stated that metaphor cards enable them to express their feelings and experiences in another way.

This situation can be evaluated as the uniqueness of data collection techniques. As Catterall and Ibbotson (2000) highlighted, metaphor cards help participants reveal their experiences, which are hard to reach through direct interviewing. Besides, teachers in the current study provided more information about their experiences, strengths and needs by using metaphor cards. For example, T5 expressed that she described her process more easily with the facilitator role of metaphor cards. Some teachers also evaluated metaphor cards as productive tools. The findings of this study are corroborated by existing scholarly works. Lugina et al. (2004) implemented a card-sorting methodology to encapsulate the journey to motherhood. Their research posits that this approach engendered a more interactive and participatory experience for the subjects involved.

The utilization of metaphor cards enhanced the attentiveness of the interviewer, facilitating a deeper engagement during the sessions. This technique prompted educators to reflect more profoundly on their experiences, yielding richer, more nuanced data. Lee Ping (2012) also supports this and states that using cards strengthens the dialogue between the researcher and the participant. That is why

metaphor cards are suggested for researchers; they enrich participants' narratives (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2017). Another benefit of metaphor cards in the current study is that I found opportunities to validate participants' stories and fill the gaps. Karnieli-Miller et al. (2017) also state that researchers can reaffirm the story's content by using cards. For example, after teachers verbally talked about their experiences without selecting any card, they selected representative cards and repeated their stories in detail. This was a semi-structured interview, so I asked additional questions and learned details.

In the international literature, metaphor cards have been used by researchers in the field of education, specifically in refugee contexts. For example, Cunningham (2003) investigated teachers' instructional goals and practices by using metaphor cards. Similarly, I investigated teachers' instructional techniques. Besides, in GÖÇ-MAT Project conducted in Türkiye, these cards were used to understand multicultural attitudes and empathic understanding of teachers toward refugee children (Alexsaht-Snider et al., 2020). In another study, teachers were asked to select metaphor cards referring to the behavior and feelings of refugee children. In addition to the current study, the abovementioned studies show that metaphor cards are helpful and projective tools for studies conducted with teachers working with refugees.

Secondly, I used Educational Journey Mapping in the third interview because it is one of the visual methods to provide more opportunities for the participant to express their experiences. I asked teachers to draw their years of experience with refugee children chronologically. I asked them to include persons, experiences, materials, and every related aspect of teaching. As with the metaphor cards, teachers provided more detailed information as they had the opportunity to reflect during their drawings. As Annamma (2017) says, EJMs provided an opportunity for teachers and researchers to exchange experiences related to ethnic and cultural issues. Teachers had the opportunity to reflect on the details of their experiences, with more reflection and transfer than in the question-answer technique. This argument was also supported by Barton (2015). He emphasized that drawing causes in-depth conversations between participants and teachers. In the current study, teachers also found opportunities to re-evaluate their process during drawings. Some teachers

expressed that they realized the positive aspects of their process with refugee children over the years. For example, T13 stated that she said that when she looked at his drawing, she realized that her process was not as negative and unsuccessful as she thought. This situation can be summarized as the visual methods contributed to the teachers' self-evaluation process by considering their process from a different perspective.

The utility of EJM in validating teachers' narratives is noteworthy. Subsequent to the metaphor cards in the second interview, the third session involved teachers graphically delineating their experiences. The strategic preparation of reviewing prior recordings enriched the third dialogue, enabling a more thorough exploration of uncharted aspects. This methodological approach has solidified EJM as a cornerstone in educational research methodologies over the preceding decade. For example, as in the current study, Wagner (2019) used EJM to understand participants' past and present experiences. Similarly, Handy (2018) used EJM to ask teachers to draw their experiences in teacher education programs chronologically. Finally, Yu (2017) considers EJM a mediational method and suggests that it allows participants to narrate their experiences across place and time. As these studies show, in the current study, teachers had the opportunity to think, evaluate, and reflect on their experiences chronologically from past to present, thanks to EJM. T8 stated, "*Especially this drawing takes me to a different place.*" This provided me with data in line with my research questions.

In light of all this information, it can be said that classical methods alone may not be sufficient to investigate teacher experiences in more detail and to enable teachers to express themselves more easily, especially in complex subjects. Teachers stated that they conveyed their feelings and experiences in more detail by using visual methods in the current study. So, it can be suggested that researchers should investigate teacher experiences in more detail by using new techniques such as metaphor cards or EJM. On the other hand, visual methods also allowed teachers to self-evaluate. From this point of view, it can be considered that these methods can be useful not only for the researcher but also for the participant.

## **5.2. Limitations**

The current study has some limitations. This study examines teachers' perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching and focuses on their experiences, strengths and needs over the years in the refugee context. All the teachers' answers and experiences expressed their thoughts towards refugee children and families from countries such as Syria. For example, one teacher expressed her opposition to CRT when talking about the culture of refugee children. Since 2011, the rapid acceptance of refugees into the country, the sudden increase in the multicultural environment of the classroom, the lack of teacher training programs to meet this need, and the negative experiences of teachers due to language differences may negatively affect their thoughts about refugees. In other words, while the teachers expressed their opposition to CRT in general, they may have only spoken specifically about refugees and may not be against multiculturalism.

On the other hand, teachers evaluate the language situation in terms of the mother tongue of refugees and approach this issue from a limited perspective. Basically, for teachers, the fact that refugee families and refugee children do not speak Turkish is a negative situation in terms of classroom practices. Some teachers state that teachers should be taught Arabic or Arabic-speaking translators should be sent to the classroom. However, this is a limited consideration. The support that needs to be provided should be how to practice teaching in multilingual environments. Because the multilingual nature of the classroom is not only Arabic but also other languages such as Spanish, Russian, or Kurdish, in this case, teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to adapt to every situation.

## **5.3. Conclusion and Implications**

Although there is a vast body of research on teachers' experiences with refugee children, a gap persists in the longitudinal analysis of these experiences within Turkish context, to the best of author's current knowledge. Therefore, the current study contributed to the literature by showing how teachers experiences, strengths and needs changed over time while working with refugee children. These findings

have some implications for early childhood teachers, and authorities who are responsible for teacher education programs. The first implication of the current study revealed that pre-service and in-service teacher training programs should be redesigned to enable teachers to work effectively in diverse classroom settings. To begin with, the data showed that teachers still have partial cultural competency in working with refugee children even though they worked with this group for at least three years. This means that teachers still do not feel adequate and experienced in getting awareness of the cultural values of their refugee students (Mayfield, 2020). Both the current study and other studies with similar results attribute this situation to teachers' lack of knowledge (Acar-Çiftçi, 2016; Majzub et al., 2011). For this reason, the results of this study may be a ground for preparing teachers' pre-service and in-service trainings to match the demographic structure of today's classrooms. Secondly, Gay (2010) asserted that teachers are required to incorporate cultural references of diverse learners in the educational settings. In the current study, it was observed that teachers were insufficient in this regard. For example, teachers either do not reflect cultural values in the classroom or take a tourist approach and address them only a few times throughout the year. This again shows a lack of knowledge and experience. Moreover, teachers' unpreparedness in this regard is not only valid in the Turkish context. Several international studies highlighted teachers' need for additional knowledge and skills to work with refugee children (Richardson et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2022; Roxas, 2010; Kanu, 2008). For example, McNamee et al. (2002) also argue that teachers graduate from teacher education programs that do not provide sufficient information on curriculum adaptations. Therefore, the findings of these studies suggest that teachers should be involved in more effective training programs. For example, field-based multicultural courses can be integrated into teacher education programs so pre-teachers can gain experience before graduation. Further, teachers should find potential ways to include cultural references of refugee children on a daily basis. This can only be possible through their practice in the field. It is valuable to gain this experience at a certain level through pre-service education programs before working actively in the field to send teachers to multicultural classrooms more prepared. Considering that training teachers to be more qualified to make them powerful to work with refugee children is a global issue, these recommendations may offer short-term solutions. Teachers need sustainable

programs that do not limit working with different groups only in the context of refugees and address the issue from a broader perspective. In this regard, an international handbook can be prepared and guidelines for teacher training can be established. The findings of this study can be considered as a preliminary study.

Thirdly, it was understood that teachers need some support and knowledge in communicating with refugee children using developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive methods. For example, some strategies, such as using only instructing and telling in classroom environments, are not developmentally appropriate for refugee children. Besides, teachers only focused on limited aspects of cross-cultural communication. However, Gay (2010) argues that cross-cultural communication includes various factors such as communication styles and word usage of different cultural groups. Therefore, early childhood teachers should recognize how they effectively and appropriately communicate with refugee children. For this reason, communication courses should be considered an important component in pre-service and in-service training programs. In the content of these courses, communication strategies and cultural differences in communication should be addressed. Finally, teachers' professional competencies and development have been one of the prominent themes in this study. Teachers have always pointed to this issue when examining teachers' experiences over the years. In particular, teachers' inexperience in working with refugee children stems from inadequate training programs (Smyth & Kum, 2010). When all these results are considered, teacher training, professional support, and matching training programs with field experience will increase the quality of education.

The second implication of the current study is for early childhood teachers and authorities to cooperate with refugee parents. The study revealed that although teachers designed some parent involvement activities for refugee parents, they also perceived them as uncooperative and closed to communication. Since 2011 and working at least three years with refugee parents, some teachers stated that they still cannot reach refugee parents. Some reasons for this are that they have other children to look after or language differences. In this case, authorities should focus on the priority needs of families and find solutions to the factors that prevent them from

participating in school. Besides, teachers should be aware of different ways to involve refugee families in education. In particular, teacher training programs and family engagement courses could emphasize culturally sensitive family engagement practices. Further, pre-service teachers should be provided with multicultural experiences before graduation (Taniş & Özgün, 2020). The necessity for such experiences is pronounced for teachers destined for diverse educational environments (Kovinthan, 2016). It equips new and inexperienced teachers, particularly those unacquainted with instructing refugee children, to operate with heightened efficacy. Beyond initial training, the development of targeted projects and workshops could fortify familial-educator rapport, enhancing pedagogical outcomes. Teachers spending common and meaningful time with refugee families can provide positive changes in both parties' perspectives. In a study conducted by Karslı-Çalamak et al. (2020), multilingual family mathematics workshops were designed to provide shared experiences for teachers, refugee families and children. The data concluded that these meaningful meetings help teachers transform their understanding of refugee families. For instance, while teachers were expressing whether or how refugee families would participate in the education process of their children, they stated that at the end of the 2-year project, they noticed the efforts of the families in the education participation process. For this reason, family-teacher relationships can be strengthened with such projects, workshops, and studies.

The third implication of this investigation was to scrutinize teachers' understanding of CRT. The results indicate an awareness among teachers of various elements and methodologies inherent in CRT. This aligns with prior research (Karataş & Oral, 2015), which suggests that educators recognize the significance of tailoring educational content to the cultural contexts of the students. Such awareness may pave the way for teachers to implement CRT-oriented practices. At this point, teachers must receive courses or in-service training on the subject. For example, considering that Türkiye's demographic structure is becoming increasingly multicultural, teachers can be provided with practicum and internship opportunities to practice CRT in the field. CRT can be considered as an issue that should be addressed in teacher education programs. Teachers should also carry this awareness

to the knowledge dimension and look for ways to implement more culturally sensitive practices.

The fourth implication reveals that although the first influx of refugees arrived in 2011, teachers still have some needs in terms of communication and teaching. Both past and current experiences show that teachers can have conflicts not only with families but also with refugee children in their classrooms due to language barriers. This problem also indirectly leads to those mentioned above developmentally inappropriate methods of communication or the family being closed to communication / not being able to involve the family in the process. At this point, the solutions offered by the teachers in the current study can be put on the agenda by the authorities. The outputs of this study can be considered a needs analysis, and other support mechanisms teachers need, especially language support, can be provided. For example, as stated by teachers in the current study, preschool education programs emphasizing Turkish language education can be provided for refugee children so that they will not forget their mother tongue but simultaneously learn the Turkish language. One of the most concrete and effective examples in this regard is the Summer School Project of the Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) (Erdemir & Diri, 2019). Within the project's scope, a 10-week early intervention program was organized to increase the primary school readiness of 5–6-year-old children. The program was also adapted for refugee children. For example, the language structure of the program was adapted so that refugee children could maintain their mother tongue while learning Turkish. The evaluation conducted at the end of the project showed a significant increase in the Turkish receptive and expressive language skills of the children who participated in the program. Children could follow complex instructions in Turkish and understand complex sentences better. These Turkish language skills of refugee children will also support teachers in preschool education programs. Refugee families can attend Turkish courses. As another solution, teachers requested translator support in their classrooms. Translator support can be provided especially for regions where refugee children are concentrated. Deal and Peterson (1999) stressed that new teachers should learn the social and cultural structure of the region where they work. For this reason, teachers



can be provided with training, even at a basic level, about the cultural and linguistic structure of the region where they will work.

The final implication is a methodological one. The current study utilized metaphor cards and Educational Journey Mapping to collect data from participant teachers. The data revealed that these techniques provided in-depth data about their experiences. Specifically, while they were talking about their experiences with refugee children and their parents, they gave more examples, talked about more stories, mentioned their emotions and ideas, and provided more details. As Karnieli-Miller et al. (2017) emphasized, metaphor cards helped participants to express more challenging experiences. On the other hand, EJMs gave me more opportunities to re-evaluate teachers' experiences as a researcher. Therefore, researchers might use these techniques to investigate teachers' experiences for future studies.

#### **5.4. Recommendations for Future Studies**

The current study has some recommendations for future studies. These recommendations are related to sampling, data collection tools, and research topics. To begin with, the data was collected from teachers working in some districts of İstanbul, one of the cities with the highest number of refugees and the highest concentration of refugees in classrooms. Based on the nature of qualitative research, it was not intended for generalization across time and place. Therefore, future studies could focus on teachers' experiences, strengths and needs in other regions to understand if these experiences are common and widespread among teachers. On the other hand, the maximum number of refugee children in the classrooms of the teachers in this study was three. As the scope of this research did not encompass the potential impact of the number of refugee children in the classroom on teachers' experiences, strengths and needs, future studies may focus on this issue.

The current study focuses on teachers' experiences over a specific period. Some of the participating teachers' first experience with refugee children was in Şanlıurfa, a city in the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Türkiye. Şanlıurfa is one of the cities with a large migrant population due to its border with Syria. It was noticed that when

these teachers talked about their past experiences, they often referred to their experiences in Şanlıurfa compared to the teachers whose first experience was in Istanbul. Since it was not one of the aims of the study, it was not analyzed, but it is anticipated that regional differences may have an impact on teaching experiences and practices. Future studies can investigate how regional differences shape the experience of working with refugee children.

In the current study, teachers talked about their self-reported experiences, strengths, and needs. The extent to which teachers practiced culturally responsive practices in the field was not observed because the focus of the study was to investigate the change in teachers' experiences over time. Therefore, future studies could plan a more longitudinal study to observe the change in teachers' experiences over time. Finally, in the current study, some teachers requested curriculum change as a need. After the data collection phase, the Preschool Education Program was revised. In this curriculum, the issue of cultural differences is addressed in more detail compared to the previous curriculum. Considering that the curriculum change is a need for working with refugee children, future studies can look at the impact of the new curriculum on teacher practices.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**B. APPROVAL OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION ETHICS  
COMMITTEE**



## C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### First Interview:

1. Yaş
2. Hangi bölümden mezun oldunuz?
3. Toplamda kaç yıldır öğretmenlik yapıyorsunuz?
4. Bu okulda kaç yıldır öğretmenlik yapıyorsunuz?
5. Daha önce nerelerde öğretmenlik yaptınız?
6. Bu şehirlerde/okullarda sınıfınızda mülteci çocuk var mıydı?
7. Toplamda kaç yıldır mülteci çocuklara öğretmenlik yapıyorsunuz?
8. Öğretmen olmaya nasıl karar verdiniz? Neden okul öncesi eğitim alanını tercih ettiniz?
9. Öğretmen olarak sınıfta yapmayı en çok sevdiğiniz şey nedir?
10. Ailelerle çalışma ve eğitimde aile katılımı konusunda ne düşünüyorsunuz?
11. Okul öncesi grubuna öğretmenlik yapmak size ne hissettiriyor?
12. Türkçe dışında bildiğiniz/konuştduğunuz diller var mı?
13. Mezuniyet sonrası hizmet içi eğitimler dışında kendinizi alanla ilgili geliştirmek için katıldığınız eğitim/kurs/seminer var mı?
14. Şu an sınıfınızda kaç yaş grubu bulunuyor?
15. Sınıf mevcudu nedir?
16. Kaç tane mülteci çocuk var?
17. Sınıfınıza ilk kez ne zaman mülteci çocuk geldi?
18. Mülteci çocuklarla X yıldır çalıştığınızı ifade ettiniz. Bu süre boyunca konuyla ilgili herhangi bir eğitim aldınız mı?
19. X yıllık öğretmen olarak kendi bireysel eğitim anlayışınızı/felsefenizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
  - a. Mülteci çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptığınız X yıl boyunca eğitim anlayışınızda bir değişiklik oldu mu? Evet ise nasıl? Açıklayabilir misiniz?

- b. Mülteci çocuklarla çalışmak sizin öğretmenliğe bakışınızı değiştirdi mi? Evet ise nasıl ?
20. Geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptığınız ilk seneyi düşündüğünüzde çocuklarla veya aileleriyle olan ve aklınızda kalan bir iki anınızı isim kullanmadan paylaşabilir misiniz?
21. Eğitim sürecinde çocukların kültürleri sizce önemli mi? Neden? Neden değil?
22. Çocukların kültürlerini eğitime dahil etmeyle ilgili düşünceleriniz nelerdir?
23. Kültüre Duyarlı Eğitim'i hiç duydunuz mu? Sizce ne olabilir?

### **Second Interview – Metaphor Cards**

Prompt: Daha önceki görüşmemizde X yıldır geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklarla çalıştığınızı ifade ettiniz. Bu görüşmemizde veriler kartlar aracılığı ile toplanacaktır. Bu görüşmemizdeki sorulara yönelik kart veya kartlar seçerken öğretmenlik deneyiminizin yıllar içindeki değişimini düşünmenizi istiyorum. Yıllar içerisinde öğretmenlik ve eğitim anlamında eğer varsa yaşadığınız değişimler, gelişimler, olumlu veya olumsuz noktalar ve bütün deneyimleriniz bu görüşmenin odak noktasını oluşturmaktadır. Kart seçiminden sonra kartlar üzerinde soru cevap ve tartışma bölümü olacaktır.

1. Geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklara öğretmenlik yapan bir öğretmen olarak sizi temsil eden kart hangisidir?
2. Geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptığınız X yılı düşündüğünüz zaman, geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklarla iletişim kurma yönteminizde bir değişim oldu mu?
3. Geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptığınız X yılı düşündüğünüz zaman, geçici koruma statüsündeki çocukların aileleriyle iletişim kurma yönteminizde bir değişim oldu mu?
4. Geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptığınız X yılı düşündüğünüz zaman, geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklar ve yerel çocuklar arasındaki ilişkide bir değişim oldu mu?

5. Geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptığınız X yıl içinde eğitim yaklaşımınızda/öğretmenlik uygulamanızda bir değişim oldu mu?
6. Geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptığınız ilk yıl ihtiyaçlarınız nelerdi? İlk sene keşke böyle olsaydı dedğiniz/istedğiniz durumlar oldu mu? Yaşadığınız zorluklar nelerdi?
  - a. X yılı içinde değişen ihtiyaçlarınız oldu mu?
7. Geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptığınız ilk yıl bireysel veya mesleki olarak hangi yönleriniz size yardım etti? Daha etkili öğretmenlik yapabilmek için kendinizde gördüğünüz güçlü yanlar nelerdi?
  - a. X yıl içinde kendinize güçlü gördüğünüz yönlerde bir değişim oldu mu?

Sorulara verilen cevap;

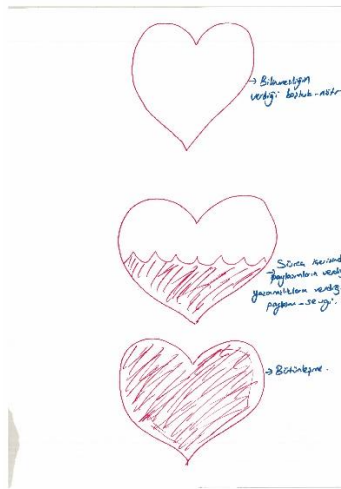
- 1 a. Evet ise
  - Bu değişimden biraz bahseder misiniz?
  - Şimdi önünüze kartlar koyacağım. Kartları dikkatlice incelemenizi istiyorum. Bu kartlar arasından geçmişten günümüze yaşadığınız değişimi ifade eden en az 3 en fazla 5 kart seçerek kronolojik olarak sıralamanızı istiyorum.
  - Neden bu kartları seçtiğinizi açıklar mısınız?
- 1 b. Hayır ise;
  - Mevcut deneyiminizle ilgili en az 3 en fazla 5 kart seçer misiniz?
  - Neden bu kartları seçtiğinizi açıklar mısınız?

### **Third Interview – Educational Journey Mapping**

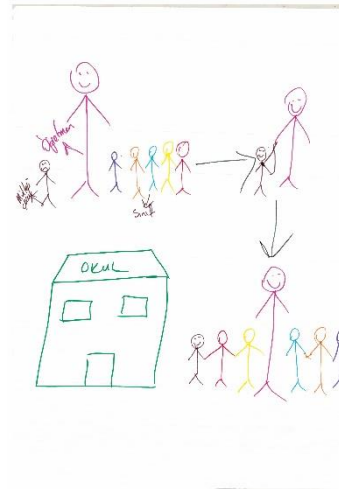
1. Bu çizim size ne ifade ediyor? Bana açıklayabilir misiniz?
2. Hangi yılları kapsıyor?
3. Burada çizdikleriniz arasında sizin için en çok öne çıkan şey/anı nedir?

4. Eđer kiři çizilmişse; bu insanlarla ilişkinizi tanımlar mısınız? a. Geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklarla çalıştığınız yıllar boyunca bu kişiler ile yaşantınızı anlatır mısınız?
5. Çiziminizde geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklarla çalışma konusunda güçlü yönünüzü yansıtan bir yer var mı? Var ise açıklayabilir misiniz?
6. Çiziminizde geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklarla çalışma konusundaki ihtiyaçlarınızı belirttiğiniz bir yer var mı? Var ise açıklayabilir misiniz?
7. Geçici koruma statüsündeki çocuklara öğretmenlik yapma konusundaki yeterliliğinizi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Yıllar içinde kendinizde profesyonel anlamda bir deęişim fark ettiniz mi? Evet ise açıklar mısınız?
8. Profesyonel anlamda kendinizi geliştirmek için nelere ihtiyaç duyuyorsunuz?
9. Sizinle öğretmenlik deneyimleriniz hakkında üç görüşme gerçekleştirdik. Bu görüşmeler sonunda konuyla ilgili fikirleriniz ve farkındalığınız deęiřti mi?
10. Uyguladığımız görüşme yöntemleri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
11. Tüm bu süreç boyunca konuştuklarımızı ve yaptıklarımızı düşünün lütfen. Sizce Kültüre Duyarlı Eğitim ne olabilir? Size ne ifade ediyor?

## D. EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY MAPPINGS OF TEACHERS



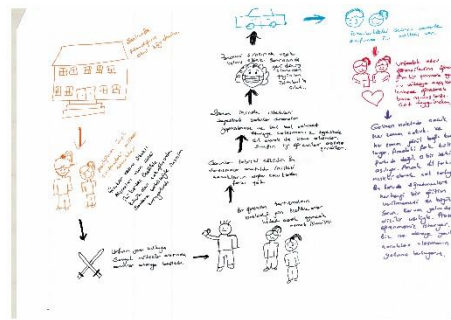
EJM of T1



EJM of T2



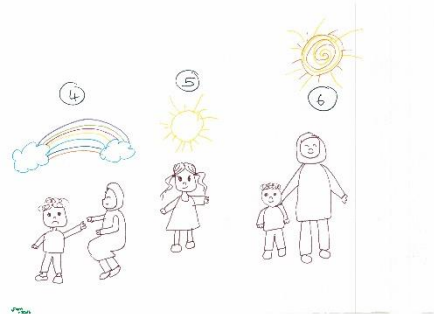
EJM of T3



EJM of T4

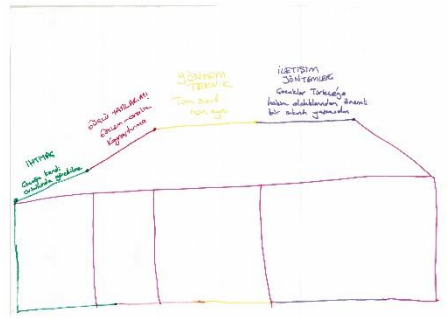


EJMs of T5





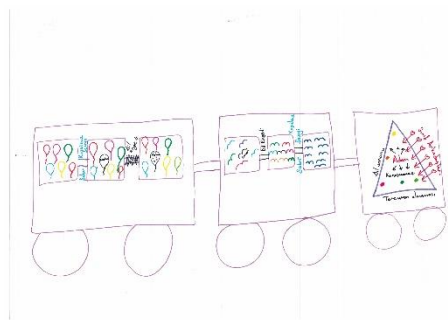
EJM of T6



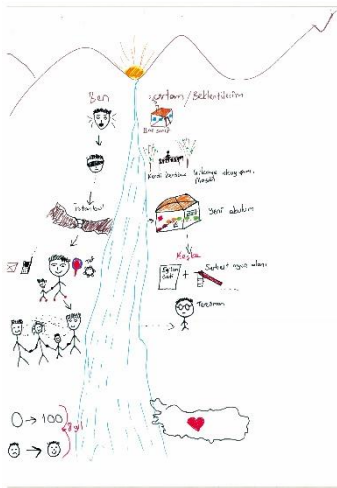
EJM of T7



EJM of T8



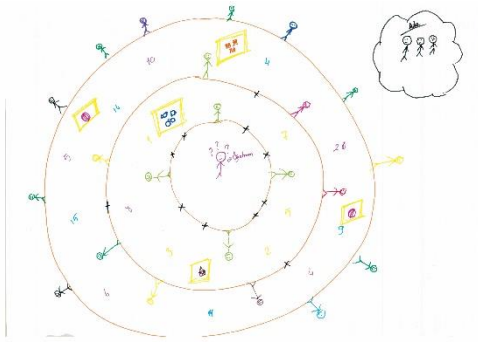
EJM of T9



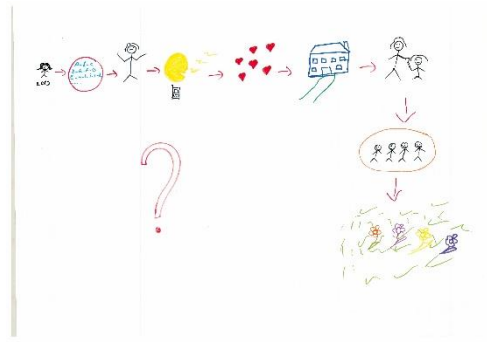
EJM of T10



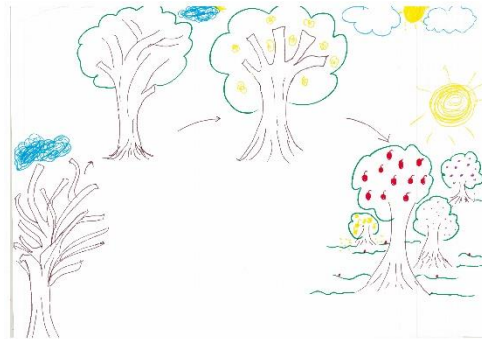
EJM of T11



EJM of T12



EJM of T13



EJM of T14

## E. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

### 1. GİRİŞ

Son yıllarda küreselleşme, ekonomi ve savaş gibi faktörler uluslararası göç hareketlerine neden olmuştur (Dubey ve Mallah, 2015). Göç, bireylerin ya da grupların başka bir yerde kalıcı olarak yaşamak üzere yer deęiştirmesi olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Birleşmiş Milletler, 2015, aktaran Akdeniz, 2018). Türk Dil Kurumu Sözlüğü de göçü "ekonomik, toplumsal ve siyasal nedenlerle bireylerin veya toplulukların bir ülkeden başka bir ülkeye, bir yerleşim yerinden başka bir yerleşim yerine gitmesi" olarak tanımlamaktadır. Göç kavramından söz edildiğinde akla gelen ülkelerden biri de Türkiye'dir çünkü jeopolitik konumu nedeniyle onlarca yıldır göçmenlere ve mültecilere ev sahiplięi yapan ülkelerden biridir (Akyıldız, 2022). Akyıldız (2022), yaşanan göç dalgaları sebebiyle Türkiye'nin demografik özelliklerini şekillendiğini savunmaktadır. Özellikle Suriye'den gelen göç dalgaları, uluslararası anlamda son yılların en yaygın sorunu olarak değerlendirilmektedir (Keskin & Yanarışık, 2021). 2011 yılında başlayan iç çatışma kısa süre sonra savaşa dönüşmüş ve binlerce Suriyelinin Türkiye'ye göç etmesine neden olmuştur. Bu noktada Türkiye, gelen mülteci ve göçmenler için "açık kapı politikası" benimsemiştir. Bu, Türkiye'nin insani değerlere öncelik verdiği ve krizin ilk yıllarında sınıra ulaşan herkesi kabul ettiği anlamına gelmektedir (Bayır & Aksu, 2020). Günümüzde, 2024 yılında ise Suriye, Afganistan ve diğer ülkelerden gelen üç milyondan fazla yabancı Türkiye'de yaşamaktadır. Öte yandan Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı verilerine göre 22 Şubat 2024 tarihi itibarıyla ülkemizde ikamet izni ile bulunan yabancı sayısı 1.114.307'dir. Bunların 79.854'ü Suriye, 42.103'ü Afganistan uyruklu iken diğerleri Rusya, Azerbaycan, Türkmenistan gibi ülkelerin vatandaşlarıdır. Bu yüksek göçmen ve mülteci sayısını göz önünde bulundurduğumuzda, Türkiye toplumun her alanında sosyal dönüşümle karşı karşıya kalmaktadır (Akın & Bozbaş, 2020).



İlk etapta Suriyeli mülteciler misafir olarak kabul edilse de ilerleyen yıllarda mültecilerin ülkede kalıcı hale geldiği genel olarak kabul görmüştür (Akın & Bozbaş, 2020). Bu durum mültecilerin uyum ve entegrasyonu için yeni yasal düzenlemeler yapılmasını veya var olan politika ve uygulamaların yeniden düzenlenmesini gerektirmektedir. Örneğin, 2013 yılında Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu (YUKK) çıkarılmış ve Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı kurulmuştur. Bu gibi düzenlemeler ülkemize gelen mültecilerin ihtiyaçlarından da doğmuştur. Barınma ve beslenme gibi temel ihtiyaçlar öncelikli olsa da ülkemizde artık misafir olarak kabul edilmeyen mülteci çocukların eğitim ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması zorunlu hale gelmiştir. Bu nedenle bu anlamda geliştirilen politikalardan en önemlisinin eğitim alanında olduğu kabul edilmektedir (Günek, 2020).

### **1.1. Problem Durumu**

Eğitim, mülteci çocukların topluma uyumunu kolaylaştırmak için güçlü bir araçtır (Kardeş ve Akman, 2022). Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı'na göre Suriyeli göçmen çocukların büyük çoğunluğunu okul çağındaki çocuklar oluşturmaktadır. Bu mülteci çocuklar geçmiş travmaları ve dezavantajları ile okula devam etmektedir. Bu nedenle okul ortamı travmaları iyileştiren ve güven inşa eden bir yer olarak kabul edilmelidir (Charles & Denman, 2013). Bu sayede mülteci çocukların okullaşması sağlanarak kayıp nesillerin de önüne geçilmektedir (Gencer, 2017).

Bu bağlamda Türkiye, mülteci çocukların eğitimi için bazı düzenlemeler yapmıştır. Öncelikle eğitim faaliyetleri, 2011-2013 yılları arasında insani yardım kuruluşları tarafından sağlanmıştır. 2013 yılında Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB) Yabancılar Yönelik Eğitim ve Öğretim Hizmetlerini genelgesini yayınlamış ve Geçici Eğitim Merkezleri (GEM) kurulmuştur. Bu merkezlerin temel amacı, mültecilerin kendi ülkelerine döndüklerinde eğitim açısından yıl kaybını önlemektir. İlerleyen süreçte mültecilerin uzun süre ülkemize kalacağı fikri kabul edilmiş ve mülteci öğrencilere devlet okullarına kayıt yaptırma hakkı sağlanmıştır. 2016 yılında ise mültecilerin okul ortamına entegrasyon süreci, önyargı ve ayrımcılıkla baş etmek için ana konu haline gelmiştir. Suriyeli Çocukların Türk Eğitim Sistemine Entegrasyonu Projesi

(PICTES) gibi projeler yürütülerek, mülteci çocukların eğitime erişimini desteklemek ve uyum ve entegrasyon süreçlerini geliştirmek hedeflenmiştir.

Tüm bu düzenlemeler, politikalar ve genelgeler mülteci çocukların eğitim ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak için önemlidir. Aynı zamanda, mülteci çocukların eğitime erişimini desteklediği için sınıf ortamındaki mülteci çocuk sayısının artmasına da neden olmuştur. Bu nedenle, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocukların eğitiminde kritik paydaşlardan biri olarak görülmesi kaçınılmaz hale gelmiştir. Birleşmiş Milletler Mülteciler Yüksek Komiserliği (UNHCR) Küresel Eğitim Stratejisi, mülteci öğrencilerin eğitiminde öğretmenlerin öğretme ve öğrenme sürecinde diğer faktörlerden daha önemli olduğunu vurgulamıştır. Ayrıca, sınıflardaki mülteci çocuk sayısının artması, Türkiye'de öğretmenlerin rol ve sorumluluklarını genişletmiştir (Demir-Başaran, 2021). Öğretmenlerden mülteci çocukların fiziksel, sosyal ve bilişsel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayarak sürekliliği ve normalliyi sağlamaları beklenmektedir (Kirk ve Winthrop, 2007). Szente ve diğerlerine (2006, aktaran Erdem, 2017) göre, öğretmenlerin önemli sorumluluklarından biri, mülteci çocukların travmalarıyla başa çıkmalarına ve sağlıklı öğretmen-çocuk ilişkisi kurmalarına yardımcı olmaktır. Bu yeni roller ve sorumluluklar, öğretmenler için mülteci çocuklar ve ailelerle iletişim gibi yeni deneyimlere ve değişen sınıf dinamiklerine yol açmıştır. İlk olarak, İçduygu ve Şimşek (2016) öğretmenlerin en zorlu deneyimlerinin öğretme ve öğrenme sürecinde sorun yaratan dil engelinden kaynaklandığını belirtmiştir. Günek'in (2020) okul öncesi öğretmenleriyle yaptığı çalışmada katılımcılar, iletişim kaynaklı sorunların okul öncesi eğitim müfredatını uygulamalarına engel olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Öğretmenlerin bu zorlu deneyimleri, onları dil engelini aşmak için yeni çözümler, yöntemler ve teknikler bulmaya zorlamıştır. Örneğin, bazı öğretmenler mülteci çocuklarla iletişim kurmak için beden dilini veya çeviri programlarını kullanırken (Özoruç ve Dikici-Sığırtmaç, 2022), bazı öğretmenler çift dilli okul personelinden veya öğrencilerden destek almıştır (Özer-Aytekin ve Sönmez-Ektem, 2019). Diğer yandan, öğretmenler öğretim tekniklerini de mülteci çocukların eğitim ihtiyaçlarını karşılayacak şekilde uyarlamak zorunda kalmıştır. Örneğin, okul öncesi öğretmenleri, mülteci çocukların Türkçeyi anlamalarını geliştirmek için oyun temelli etkinlikler ve şarkılar kullanmaya başladıklarını ifade etmişlerdir (Yanık-Özger ve Akansel, 2019).

İkinci olarak, öğretmenlerin bir diğer yeni deneyimi de mülteci ailelerle ilgilidir. Öğretmenlerin mülteci ailelerle çalışmaları, yerel ailelerle çalışmalarına kıyasla farklı dinamiklere sahiptir. Kovacevic ve diğerlerine (2018) göre, mülteci ailelerin yeni çevreye, kültüre ve ülkenin yasalarına uyum sağlama süreci bazı karışıklıkları da beraberinde getirmektedir. Örneğin, mülteci aileler çocuklarının eğitimini desteklemek ve öğretmenle iletişim kurmak isteseler bile dil engeliyle karşılaşmakta ya da nasıl iş birliği kuracaklarını bilememektedirler (Kovacevic vd., 2018).

Üçüncü olarak, sınıf yapıları çok kültürlü hale geldikçe, eğitim pedagojilerinin ve öğretmen eğitimi programlarının yeniden incelenmesi gerekli hale gelmiştir (Alborton-Gunn vd., 2015). Bu nedenle öğretmenler, gelişimsel olarak uygun uygulamalara paralel olarak mülteci çocukların kültürünü entegre edebilecek yeni eğitim programları ve pedagojilerle karşılaşmışlardır. Çünkü çocuk merkezli okul öncesi eğitim programları, öğretim sürecinin sadece çocuklara çeşitli öğretim yöntemleriyle bilgi vermektense ibaret olmamasını, çocuğun ve ailesinin sosyo-kültürel geçmişleriyle birlikte bütün olarak ele alınmasını gerektirmektedir. Bu anlamda Kültüre Duyarlı Eğitim (KDE), farklı öğrencilerin kültürel referanslarını ve yaşam deneyimlerini eğitime entegre ederek öğrenme süreçlerini daha anlamlı ve etkili hale getirmeye yönelik pedagojik bir yaklaşımdır (Gay, 2010). Çocuk merkezli bu yaklaşımda öğretmenlerden çocukların kültürel referansları eğitim sürecinde kullanmaları beklenir (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Kültüre duyarlı eğitim uygulamalarının hayata geçirilmesiyle, çocuklar kendi özelliklerini, güçlerini, tutumlarını ve yeteneklerini güçlendirme fırsatına sahip olurlar.

Mcbrien (2005)'a göre, Suriye'deki çatışmaların sebep olduğu göç dalgasından önce de göç alan ev sahibi ülkelerin çoğu öğretmenler için bu anlamda kaliteli hizmetiçi ve hizmet öncesi eğitim ve destek sistemi sağlamamaktadır. Bunun yerine, öğretmenler mülteci çocuklar ve ebeveynlerle yaşadıkları kendi kişisel deneyimlerinden öğrenmek zorunda kalmışlardır (Mcbrien, 2005). Özellikle Türkiye bağlamında bu konu 2011 yılından beri gündemdedir. Özellikle 6458 sayılı Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu'nun yürürlüğe girmesinden sonra, mülteci çocuklar devlet okullarına kayıt yaptırarak yerel arkadaşlarıyla birlikte eğitim göreceklarini belirtmişlerdir. Dolayısıyla öğretmenler her yıl sınıflarında

mülteci çocuklarla karşılaşmaya başladılar. Bu durum onlara her yıl mülteci çocuklar ve aileleriyle sürekli deneyim sağlamaktadır. Beard & Wilson'a (2013) göre öğrenme ve deneyim birbirinden ayrı değildir. Bu, öğretmenlerin her yıl edindikleri deneyimin mülteci çocuklar ve ailelerle öğretim uygulamalarına katkıda bulunduğu anlamına gelmektedir. Örneğin, okul öncesi öğretmenleri geçmiş deneyimlerinin kültürlerarası duyarlılıklarını değiştirdiğini anlatmışlardır (Strekaloca-Hughesa & Wangb, 2017). Dolayısıyla, bu durumun mülteci çocuklarla çalışan öğretmenlerin kendilerini bir eğitim yolculuğunda bulmaları olarak değerlendirilebilir. Öğretmenlerin yolculuğunda, az veya çok, beceri, bilgi ve deneyim kazandıkları için gelişimsel ilerleme kaydettikleri, ancak üstesinden gelinmesi gereken birçok zorlukla da karşılaştıkları vurgulanmıştır. Buna ek olarak, öğretmenler önceki deneyimlerinden öğrenmiş ve gelecekteki deneyimlerini şekillendirmişlerdir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amacı, erken çocukluk öğretmenlerinin yıllar boyunca mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken yaşadıkları deneyimler, güçlü yönleri ve ihtiyaçları açısından yolculuklarını incelemektir.

## **1.2. Çalışmanın Amacı**

Bu çalışma, erken çocukluk öğretmenlerinin yıllar boyunca mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken yaşadıkları deneyimler, güçlü yönleri ve ihtiyaçları açısından yolculuklarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Buradaki yolculuk, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklar ve ailelerle çalışırken tüm olumlu ve olumsuz deneyimlerden nasıl geçtiklerini, güçlü yönlerinin ve ihtiyaçlarının yıllar boyunca buna göre nasıl şekillendiğini gösteren bir süreci temsil etmektedir. Bu çalışmada öğretmenlik deneyimi, öğretmenlerin mülteci ebeveynler ve çocuklarıyla çalışırken gerçekleştirdikleri uygulamalar olarak kabul edilmiştir. Katılımcı öğretmenlerin deneyimlerini, güçlü yönlerini ve ihtiyaçlarını aktarmaları beklendiğinden, bu çalışma kapsamında en az üç yıl ve üzeri öğretmenlik deneyimi olan öğretmenler seçilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacına ulaşmak için aşağıdaki araştırma soruları araştırılmıştır:

1. Okul öncesi öğretmenleri mülteci çocuklarla yaşadıkları öğretmenlik deneyimlerini nasıl tanımlamaktadır?

- a. Mülteci çocuklarla çalışma deneyimi olan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin geçmiş öğretmenlik deneyimleri nelerdir?
  - b. Mülteci çocuklarla çalışma deneyimi olan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin mevcut öğretmenlik deneyimleri nelerdir?
  - c. Eğer bir değişim varsa, öğretmenlerin öğretim deneyimleri ne şekilde değişmiştir?
2. Okul öncesi öğretmenleri mülteci çocuklarla çalışma sürecindeki güçlü yönlerini ve ihtiyaçlarını nasıl tanımlamaktadır?
- a. Mülteci çocuklarla çalışma deneyimi olan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin geçmiş güçlü yönleri ve ihtiyaçları nelerdir?
  - b. Mülteci çocuklarla çalışma deneyimi olan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin mevcut güçlü yönleri ve ihtiyaçları nelerdir?
  - c. Eğer bir değişim varsa, öğretmenlerin güçlü yönleri ve ihtiyaçları ne şekilde değişmiştir?
3. Mülteci çocuklarla çalışma deneyimi olan öğretmenlerin Kültüre Duyarlı Eğitim hakkındaki algıları nelerdir?

### **1.3. Çalışmanın Önemi**

Literatüre baktığımız zaman mülteci çocuklarla çalışan okul öncesi öğretmenleriyle yapılan çeşitli çalışmalar olduğu görülmektedir (Günek, 2020; Mercan-Uzun ve Bütün, 2016; Özoruç ve Dikici-Sığırtmaç, 2022; Gerokosta, 2017; Megalonidou ve Vitoulis, 2022). Ancak bu araştırmacılar, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin mülteci çocuklara öğretim sürecinde yaşadıkları zorluklara odaklanmıştır. Bu nedenle bu çalışmanın örneklem grubu, mültecilerle ilk temas eden grubun doğrudan deneyimlerini aktarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu sayede öğretmen uygulamalarının iyileştirilmesi, güçlü yönlerinin desteklenmesi ve ihtiyaçlarının giderilmesi için pratik adımlar atılabilir ve mülteci çocukların entegrasyon sürecinde öğretmenlere destek olunabilir.

Öte yandan, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin deneyimleri üzerine yapılan çalışmalar sınırlı bir zaman dilimine odaklanmış ve öğretmenlerin deneyimlerinin doğasının zaman içinde nasıl ve hangi koşullar altında değiştiğine vurgu yapmamıştır (Günek,

2020; Mercan-Uzun ve Bütün, 2016; Özoruç ve Dikici-Sığırtmaç, 2022; Gerokosta, 2017; Megalonidou ve Vitoulis, 2022). Bu çalışma, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken yıllar içinde geçirdikleri yolculuğa odaklanmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, 13 yıllık bir durumu tasvir ederek öğretmenlerin deneyimleri, ihtiyaçları ve güçlü yönleri hakkında tarihsel ve güncel veriler sunmaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, öğretmenlerin deneyimlerindeki değişimi, değişimin nasıl gerçekleştiğini ve değişimi etkileyen faktörleri ortaya koyması açısından değerlidir.

İkinci olarak, ilk olarak 2011 yılında ülkemize gelen mülteci çocuklar, birkaç yıl sonra devlet okullarına kaydolma hakkı kazandılar. 2024 yılı itibariyle anaokuluna başlayan mülteci çocukların büyük olasılıkla Türkiye'de doğmuş ve büyümüş olmaları beklenmektedir. Bu da öğretmenlerin karşılaştığı mülteci çocukların özelliklerinin yıllar içinde değiştiği anlamına gelmektedir. İlk yıllarda daha çok savaştan kaçan, savaştan etkilenen ve hiç Türkçe bilmeyen mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken, bugün Türkiye'de doğan mülteci çocuklara da eğitim vermektedirler. Bu durum, öğretmenlerin ihtiyaçlarında yıllar içinde bir farklılaşmaya yol açabilir. Bu nedenle, yukarıda bahsedilen çalışmalara ek olarak, bu çalışma, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken yıllar içindeki ihtiyaçlarına odaklanmıştır. Öğretmenlerin süreç içerisindeki ihtiyaçlarının araştırılması, bu ihtiyaçların karşılanmasını sağlayarak eğitimi daha kaliteli hale getirebilir.

Öte yandan, bu çalışmanın bir diğer odak noktası da öğretmenlerin yıllar içinde güçlü yönlerini araştırmaktır. Öğretmenler, mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken, zorlukların üstesinden gelmek veya öğretim uygulamalarını güçlendirmek için bazı yetkinliklerini kullanmış veya beceriler edinmişlerdir. Örneğin, güvenli ve sağlıklı bir ortam yaratma ve mülteci çocuklarla etkileşim, mülteci çocuklarla çalışan öğretmenlerin sahip olduğu kritik bir yetkinlik olarak bulunmuştur (Namro, 2016). Her ülkenin farklı öğretmen yetiştirme programları, öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimini desteklemeye yönelik farklı gündemleri ve mülteci çocuklar için farklı eğitim bağlamları vardır. Bu nedenle, öğretmenlerin güçlü yönleri bağlama göre değişebilir. Taranan literatürde, Türkiye bağlamında mülteci çocuklarla çalışan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin geçmiş ve mevcut güçlü yönlerine odaklanan herhangi bir çalışmaya rastlanmamıştır. Bunun yerine, Türkiye'deki çalışmaların çoğunluğu öğretmenlerin

mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken karşılaştıkları zorluklara, deneyimlerine ve ihtiyaçlarına odaklanmıştır. Ancak, öğretmenlerin güçlü yönlerini anlamak, yeteneklerini ve becerilerini teşvik etmek ve geliştirmek için değerlidir.

Dördüncü olarak, bir diğer önemli nokta ise bu çalışmanın yapıldığı bölgelerdeki okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin deneyimlerini, güçlü yönlerini ve ihtiyaçlarını yansıtmaktır. Literatürde öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklarla ilgili deneyimleri üzerine çalışmalar olsa da (Erden, 2017; Gömleksiz ve Aslan, 2018; Şahin ve Doğan, 2018; Kılıç-Özmen, 2020) her çalışmanın yapıldığı bölge farklı bir sosyo-kültürel durumu yansıtmaktadır. Sınıftaki farklılıkların çeşitliliği, öğretmenlerin uygulamalarını, deneyimlerini, güçlü yönlerini ve ihtiyaçlarını da etkilemektedir. Mevcut çalışma, İstanbul ilinin en çok göç alan dört ilçesinde bulunan okullarda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sultanbeyli, Pendik, Çekmeköy ve Sancaktepe, Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı'nın verilerine göre geçici koruma altındaki kişilerin en fazla yaşadığı ilçelerdir. Bu nedenle, bu ilçelerdeki okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin deneyimlerini, güçlü yönlerini ve ihtiyaçlarını yansıtmak değerli olacaktır.

Beşinci olarak, literatürde sık kullanılmayan ancak kullanıldığında veri açısından iyi örnekler sunan iki veri toplama yöntemi, metafor kartları ve Eğitim Yolculuğu Haritaları, bu çalışmada kullanılmıştır. Karnielli-Miller (2017) deneyimlerin sözel olarak aktarılmasının her zaman yeterli ve etkili olmadığı savunmaktadır. Özellikle araştırma konusunun tartışılması zor ya da hassas olduğu durumlarda katılımcılar deneyimlerini detaylı bir şekilde ifade edemeyebilirler. Bu gibi durumlarda, sözlü görüşmeler yerine başka tekniklerin yararlı olduğu görülmüştür. Bunlardan biri de son yıllarda araştırmacılar tarafından eğitim ortamlarında kullanılan metafor kartlarıdır (Karnielli-Miller, 2017). Bu kartlar, iletişimi güçlendirmek ve katılımcıların kendilerini ifade etmelerini teşvik etmek için kullanılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, öğretmenler yıllar içinde değişen deneyimlerini, güçlü yönlerini ve ihtiyaçlarını ifade etmek için metafor kartlarını kullanmışlardır. Metafor kartlarını tek tek göstererek deneyimlerini anlatmışlardır. Bu teknik onlar için daha katılımcı bir yöntem sağlamıştır. Öte yandan, bir başka veri toplama tekniği olan Eğitim Yolculuğu Haritalama (EYH) tekniğini kullanılmıştır. EYH aracılığıyla katılımcılar, mülteci çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptıkları yılları çizerek deneyimlerinin çeşitli

boyutlarını temsil edebildiler. Mevcut çalışmanın konusu mülteci çocuklarla ilgili deneyimler, güçlü yönler ve ihtiyaçlar olduğundan, EYH katılımcı öğretmenlere insanların ırksal, etnik ve siyasi sınırlarla karşılaşma ve bunları inşa etme yollarını sunmaktadır (Annamma, 2017). Sonuç olarak, özellikle hassas konularda özel ve hassas gruplarla çalışırken literatüre yeni veri toplama teknikleri sunmak değerlidir.

Son olarak, Türkiye 2011 yılından bu yana mülteci çocukların eğitimi için bazı adımlar atmaktadır. Geçici Eğitim Merkezleri ile başlayan bu süreç, mülteci çocukların devlet okullarına kayıt hakkı kazanması ve PICTES gibi projelerin hayata geçirilmesi ile devam etmektedir. Bu nedenle, sürekli güncellenen ve yenilenen proje ve politikaların oluşturulması sürecinde öğretmenlerin deneyimlerinin, ihtiyaçlarının ve güçlü yönlerinin dikkate alınması önemlidir. Bu çalışma, hizmet içi ve hizmet öncesi öğretmen eğitimi programları aracılığıyla öğretmenlerin ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması ve güçlü yönlerinin desteklenmesi için politika yapıcılara bazı çıkarımlar sunabilir.

## **2. YÖNTEM**

### **2.1. Araştırma Yöntemi**

Bu çalışmada mülteci çocuklarla en az üç yıl çalışma deneyimi olan öğretmenlerin yolculuğunun, deneyimleri, ihtiyaçları ve güçlü yönleri açısından incelenmesi hedeflenmiştir. Bu sebeple de bu çalışma, nitel araştırma metodolojileri arasında eğitimde en yaygın olarak kullanılan fenomenolojik araştırma olarak tasarlanmıştır (Hatch, 2017). Fraenkel ve diğerleri (2023) fenomenolojik araştırmada verilerin derinlemesine görüşmeler yoluyla toplandığını belirtmiştir. Güncel çalışmada da katılımcılarla geçmiş ve mevcut deneyimleri, ihtiyaçları ve güçlü yönleri hakkında bilgi edinmek amacıyla görüşmeler yapmak için Üçlü Görüşme Serisi kullanılmıştır. Üçlü Görüşme Serisi fenomenolojik görüşme olarak da bilinmektedir (Seidman, 2006). Seidman (2006) fenomenolojik görüşmenin, katılımcıların hikayelerinden güç alarak onların benzer durumlarını anlamaya yönelik bir araç olduğunu vurgulamıştır.



## 2.2. Katılımcılar

Amaçlı örnekleme, araştırmacının katılımcıları kişisel yargılarını kullanarak araştırmanın belirli bir amacına göre seçtiği durumlarda kullanılır (Fraenkel vd., 2023). Bu çalışmada amaç, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken yaşadıkları deneyimler, ihtiyaçları ve güçlü yönleri açısından yolculuklarını incelemektir. Bu amaca ulaşmak için belirli özelliklere sahip öğretmenlere ulaşmak gerekmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu anaokullarında mülteci çocuklarla çalışma deneyimi olan öğretmenlere ulaşmak için amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi seçilmiştir.

Çalışmanın amacına uygun katılımcılar seçilirken bazı dahil etme kriterlerinin belirlenmesi gerekmektedir. Bu çalışma için, katılımcıları seçmeden önce iki dahil edilme kriteri belirlenmiştir. İlk dahil edilme kriteri, mülteci çocuklarla üç veya daha fazla yıl çalışmış olmaktır. İlgili akademik çalışmalar, deneyimli öğretmenlere atıfta bulunarak çeşitli yıllar belirtmektedir. Bu aralık 2 ila 33 yıl arasındadır (Caspari-Sadeghi & König, 2018). Ayrıca, Jensen'e (2012) göre, deneyimli öğretmenler iki yıldan fazla öğretmenlik deneyimine sahip olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı öğretmenlerin yolculuğunu incelemek olduğundan, deneyimlerini, ihtiyaçlarını, güçlü yönlerini ve bu konuda yaşadıkları değişimleri anlatabilmeleri için mülteci çocuklarla çalışma konusunda belirli bir deneyime sahip olmaları hedeflenmiştir. Bu nedenle 3 yıl ve üzeri bir süre kriter olarak seçilmiştir. İkinci dahil edilme kriteri ise sınıfta en az bir mülteci çocuğun bulunmasıdır çünkü bu çalışma aynı zamanda öğretmenlerin mevcut deneyimlerine, ihtiyaçlarına ve güçlü yönlerine de odaklanmaktadır.

Bu çalışma için, İstanbul'un Anadolu yakasındaki dört ilçede (Sultanbeyli, Pendik, Çekmeköy ve Sancaktepe) bulunan anaokulları ziyaret edilerek dahil edilme kriterlerini karşılayan öğretmenlere ulaşılmıştır. Öncelikle, Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı'nın verilerine göre Sultanbeyli, Sancaktepe ve Pendik, İstanbul'un Anadolu yakasında en fazla geçici koruma altındaki kişinin yaşadığı ilçelerdir (Özaslan, 2019). Kalkınma Ajansı Genel Müdürlüğü İstanbul'un ilçelerinin sosyo-ekonomik gelişmişlik sıralaması üzerine bir araştırma yapmıştır (2021). İstanbul ilçelerinin gelişmişlik sıralamasına baktığımızda Çekmeköy'ün çalışmaya dahil

edilen diğer üç ilçe ile birlikte gelişmişlik sıralamasında son onda yer aldığı görülmektedir. Bu nedenle, Çekmeköy ilçesi de göçmen nüfusu ve benzer sosyo-ekonomik düzeyi nedeniyle çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. İlçe Milli Eğitim Müdürlüklerinden mülteci çocukların bulunduğu okulların listesi alınmış ve ziyaretler bu listeye göre gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sancaktepe, Sultanbeyli, Çekmeköy ve Pendik'teki anaokulları ziyaret edilmiştir. Sınıfında mülteci çocuk bulunan öğretmenlerle bir ön görüşme yapıldı. Ön görüşmede öğretmenlere toplamda kaç yıldır öğretmenlik yaptıkları, kaç yıldır mülteci çocuklara eğitim verdikleri, İstanbul'dan önce hangi illerde çalıştıkları ve şu anda sınıflarında kaç mülteci çocuk olduğu sorulmuştur. Mülteci çocuklarla çalışma deneyimi 3 yıl ve üzeri olan ve sınıfında en az bir mülteci çocuk bulunan okul öncesi öğretmenleri çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir.

### **2.3. Veri Toplama Araçları**

Fenomenolojik çalışmalarda görüşmeler etkileşimli bir süreç olarak gerçekleşmekte ve açık uçlu sorular içermektedir. Ayrıca Merriam ve Tisdell (2015), araştırmacının durumu veya olguyu gözlemleyemediği durumlarda, görüşmenin gerekli bir adım haline geldiğini vurgulamıştır. Bu çalışmada, görüşmeler aracılığıyla öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken yaşadıkları deneyimler, ihtiyaçları ve güçlü yönleri açısından yolculuklarının incelenmesine odaklanılmıştır. Bu amaçla veri toplamak için Üçlü Görüşme Serisi (Seidman, 2006) kullanılmıştır.

#### **2.3.1. Üçlü Görüşme Serisi**

Aynı deneyimleri paylaşan katılımcılardan bilgi toplamak için fenomenolojik görüşme yöntemi olarak bilinen Üçlü Görüşme Serisi kullanılmıştır. Seidman'a (2006) göre Üçlü Görüşme Serisi, katılımcılardan derinlemesine bilgi toplamak için kullanılan bir yöntemdir. Bu nedenle dönem boyunca her bir okul öncesi öğretmeniyle üç görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu şekilde araştırmacı ve katılımcılar arasında bir ilişki gelişimi de söz konusudur (Seidman, 2006). Üçlü görüşme serisinde, her görüşme farklı bir amaca hizmet etmektedir. İlk görüşmenin ana odağı, katılımcıların geçmişleri ve bugüne kadarki yaşamları hakkında demografik veri

toplamaktır. Bu çalışmada, ilk görüşmede bu amaca yönelik olarak yüz yüze görüşmeler yoluyla veri toplanmıştır. Örneğin, öğretmenlere öğretmenlik felsefeleri, sınıflarında kaç mülteci çocuk olduğu, mülteci çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptıkları ilk yılları ilgili anıları ve çocukların kültürlerini eğitim sürecine dahil etme konusundaki düşünceleri hakkında sorular sorulmuştur. İkinci görüşmede ise katılımcıların mülteci çocuklarla yaşadıkları deneyimlerin detaylarına odaklanılmıştır. Seidman'a (2006) göre, araştırmacılar soruları katılımcıların deneyimlerinin ayrıntılarını yeniden yapılandırmalarına yardımcı olacak şekilde tasarlaması gerekmektedir. Katılımcılara konuyla ilgili görüşlerini sormak yerine, deneyimlerin ayrıntılarının araştırılması hedeflenir. Bu çalışma için, öğretmenlerin yıllar boyunca mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken yaşadıkları deneyimler hakkında derinlemesine veriler metafor kartları kullanarak toplanmıştır. Örneğin, öğretmenlere "Mülteci çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptığınız X yılı düşündüğünüzde, mülteci çocuklarla iletişim kurma şeklinizde bir değişiklik oldu mu?" gibi sorular sorulmuştur. İlk yıllarında mülteci çocuklarla nasıl iletişim kurduklarını, şu anda mülteci çocuklarla nasıl iletişim kurduklarını, bu süreçte yaşadıkları iletişim zorluklarının neler olduğunu irdelenmiştir. Üçüncü görüşme için, araştırmacının katılımcılardan deneyimlerinin anlamı üzerine düşünmelerini istemesi beklenir (Seidman, 2006). Veriler, son görüşme için Eğitim Yolculuğu Haritalaması yoluyla toplanmıştır. Öğretmenlerden, iletişim yöntemlerini, mülteci ebeveynlerle ilişkilerini, yerel ve mülteci çocuklar arasındaki ilişkiyi, ihtiyaçlarını ve güçlü yönlerini göz önünde bulundurarak mülteci çocuklara öğretmenlik yaptıkları yılları çizimlerini istenmiştir. Daha sonra çizimleri hakkında görüşme gerçekleştirilerek öğretmenlere çizimler arasında en çok öne çıkan yeri, çizimin ne ifade ettiğini, çizimde bir kişi çizdilerse o kişinin kim olduğunu ve o kişiyi neden çizdiklerini gibi sorular sorulmuştur. Ayrıca öğretmenlere çizimlerin yanı sıra mülteci çocuklara eğitim verme konusundaki yeterliliklerini nasıl değerlendirdikleri ve daha profesyonel olmak için nelere ihtiyaç duydukları gibi ek sorular da sorulmuştur.

Özetle, öğretmenlerin yıllar içindeki öğretmenlik deneyimleri, ihtiyaçları ve güçlü yönlerine ilişkin araştırma sorularını yanıtlamak için her üç görüşmede de öğretmenlerin deneyimlerine, ihtiyaçlarına ve güçlü yönlerine odaklanılmıştır. Üç

farklı kaynaktan veri toplayarak bu konuda daha derinlemesine veri elde etmek amaçlanmıştır. Her bir görüşmeye dair daha detaylı bilgi aşağıda sunulmuştur.

**Birinci Görüşme.** İlk görüşmede, araştırmacı ve katılımcı, katılımcıların geçmişlerini öğrenmek için yüz yüze bir görüşme yapmıştır. Bu nedenle görüşme soruları, mülteci çocuklarla çalışma deneyimi olan öğretmenlerin bağlamı hakkında bilgi toplamak üzere tasarlanmıştır. Ayrıca, toplam deneyim yılı, mezuniyet, eğitim geçmişi gibi demografik bilgi sorularına da yer verilmiştir. İlk görüşme aynı zamanda araştırmacı olarak benle katılımcılar arasında bir buz kırıcı görevindedir. Katılımcıların çalışmanın konusunu anlamalarına ve daha sonra ikinci görüşme için yıllar boyunca mülteci çocuklar ve aileleriyle olan anılarını hatırlamalarına yardımcı olmuştur.

**İkinci Görüşme.** İkinci görüşmede, anaokulu öğretmenlerinin mülteci çocuklar ve aileleriyle çalışırken yaşadıkları deneyimlerin, ihtiyaçlarının ve güçlü yönlerinin ayrıntılarını anlamak için metafor kartları kullanılmıştır. Öğretmenlere, mülteci çocuklar ve aileleriyle iletişim yöntemleri, yerel ve mülteci çocuklar arasındaki ilişkiye dair gözlemleri, mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken kullandıkları öğretim yöntem ve teknikleri, bu süreçteki ihtiyaçları ve kendilerinde gördükleri güçlü yönler soruldu.

Sosyal çalışmalarda, etnik ve kültürel konular ile ilgili araştırmalarda, katılımcıların deneyimlerini aktarmaları bazen güç olabilir (Karnieli-Miller vd., 2017). Katılımcılar, araştırmanın konusu nedeniyle hikayelerini ifade etmekte zorlanabilirler. Bu nedenle metafor kartları gibi teknikler katılımcıların hikâyelerini ifade etmeleri için etkili araçlar olarak kabul edilmektedir (Karnieli-Miller, 2017). Çünkü bu kartlar, katılımcıların doğrudan soru sorma teknikleriyle ulaşılması zor olan deneyimlerini ve düşüncelerini anlamaya yardımcı teknikler olduğu için yansıtıcı araçlar olarak da kabul edilmektedir (Catterall ve Ibbotson, 2000). Metafor kartları, katılımcıların kartlar aracılığıyla anlatılan deneyimler hakkında kendilerini daha derinlemesine ifade etmelerine olanak tanıdığı için araştırmacıların çok kültürlü ortamlarda çalışma yapmalarına da olanak sağlar. Ayrıca farklı etnik ve kültürel gruplara da uyarlanabilir (Lee Ping, 2012). Kartlar, araştırmacıların ve katılımcıların dinleme ve yanıt verme, yargılamadan veya rekabet etmeden birbirlerini gerçekten

duyma kapasitelerini genişletir. Görüşmelerde metafor kartlarının kullanılmasıyla araştırmacılar görüşülen kişilerin hikayelerini daha derinlemesine anlayabilmekte ve görüşülen kişiler de hikayelerini anlamlı bir şekilde ifade edebilmektedir. Öte yandan katılımcılar da kartlara atıfta bulunarak hikayelerini daha net ve kapsamlı bir şekilde ifade edebilmektedir (Karnieli-Miller, 2017).

Bu çalışmada, metafor kartları için önceden belirlenmiş anlamlar veya bir puanlandırma tablosu bulunmamaktadır. Stockton'a (2018) göre, katılımcıların anlatıları kendi deneyimlerine dayalı olarak oluşturulur, bu nedenle kartlar için doğru veya yanlış kabul edilen cevaplar veya yorumlar yoktur. Bunun yerine, öğretmenlerin metafor kartları aracılığıyla aktardıkları fikirler değerlendirilmiştir. Ayrıca, metafor kartlarını kullanmak için bir dizi teknik vardır. Bir seçim ya da sıralama tekniği olarak kullanılabilirler. Katılımcılar kart destelerinden seçim yapabilir ya da kartları belirli bir şekilde sıralayabilirler (Levin-Rozalis, 2006). Mevcut çalışmada bu kartlar hem seçme hem de sıralama tekniği olarak kullanılmıştır. Öğretmenler hem hikâyelerine uygun kartları seçmiş hem de deneyimlerinde bir değişiklik varsa kartları kronolojik olarak sıralamışlardır.

**Üçüncü Görüşme.** Üçüncü görüşmede, çalışmayı sonlandırmak ve süreci özetlemek amacıyla "Eğitim Yolculuğu Haritalama (EYH)" yoluyla veri toplanmıştır. Görüşme soruları buna göre tasarlanmıştır. EYH, insan deneyiminin çeşitli boyutlarını temsil eden ve daha sonra metin ve konuşma yoluyla açıklanan bir tekniktir. Annamma'ya (2017) göre haritalar, hassas konular içeren çalışmalarda kullanılmaktadır. Ayrıca Barton (2015), katılımcılar ve öğretmenler arasında derinlemesine konuşmalara neden olduğu için çizimin değerli bir veri toplama tekniği olduğunu vurgulamıştır.

Eğitim Yolculuğu Haritalaması, eğitim alanındaki bazı çalışmalarda veri toplama aracı olarak kullanılmıştır. Örneğin, Wagner (2019) farklı ırk, sınıf ve cinsiyet gruplarından engelli öğrencilerin hikâyelerini anlamak için bir araştırma yürütmüştür. Temel veri toplama aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme ve EYH kullanmıştır. Katılımcılara eğitim yolculuklarını kronolojik olarak çizmeleri için yeterli zaman vermiştir. Katılımcılar, başlangıçtan günümüze kadar olan okul deneyimlerini tanımlamak için bir harita çizmişlerdir.

Bu çalışma için yapılan üçüncü görüşmede, öğretmenlere renkli kalemler ve A3 boyutunda kağıt vererek yıllar boyunca yaptıkları yolculuğu çizmelerini ve görselleştirmelerini istedim. Başlamadan önce öğretmenlere üçüncü görüşmenin amacını ve çizimlerinde neleri çizmelerinin beklendiğini açıklayan bir yönerge verilmiştir. Katılımcılardan mülteci çocuklarla çalıştıkları yıllara ilişkin eğitim yolculuğu haritası çizmeleri beklenmektedir. Çizim bölümü bittikten sonra, öğretmenlerin çizimleri hakkında bir görüşme bölümü yer almaktadır.

Yukarıda bahsedilen görüşmelerin amaçlarını ve kullanılan yöntemleri göz önünde bulundurarak görüşme sorularının ilk formunu oluşturulmuştur. Daha sonra soruların niteliği ve içeriği konusunda erken çocukluk eğitimi alanındaki uzmanlardan görüş alınmış ve birinci, ikinci ve üçüncü görüşmelerdeki mülakat sorularına uzman görüşleri doğrultusunda son hali verilmiştir. Ayrıca, ikinci görüşme için veriler metafor kartları aracılığıyla toplanacaktır. Bu nedenle metafor kartları ile çalışma konusunda uzman bir psikologdan da uzman görüşü alınmıştır. Bu uzman görüşüne göre araştırmanın amacına uygun olarak soruların katılımcıya sorulma biçimi ve soruların içeriği hakkında geri bildirim alınmıştır. Böylece ikinci görüşmenin soruları uzman görüşlerine göre tekrar revize edilmiştir. Son olarak pilot çalışma ve ana çalışmada kullanılacak görüşmelerin içeriği ve soruları bu şekilde belirlenmiştir. Ana çalışma öncesinde, mülteci çocuklarla çalışma deneyimi olan dört erken çocukluk eğitimcisi ile bir pilot çalışma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Pilot çalışma sonrası sorular tekrar revize edilerek son hali oluşturulmuştur.

#### **2.4. Veri Toplama Süreci**

Bahar döneminin ilk haftasında öğretmenlere ulaşılarak ilk görüşme için randevu alınmıştır. Öğretmenlere çalışmanın sınıf ortamında yapılamayacağını ve odaklanmalarını sağlamak için görüşmelerin ayrı bir ortamda yapılması gerektiği anlatılmıştır. Görüşmeler boş bir sınıfta, okul kütüphanesinde ya da boş olduğu zamanlarda mutfak bölümünde gerçekleştirildi. İlk görüşmelerden önce öğretmenlere onam formları verildi ve çalışma için izinleri alınmıştır. İlk görüşmeler 3 hafta sürmüş ve tüm görüşmeler ses kaydına alınmıştır. İlk görüşmenin sonunda her

öğretmenle ikinci görüşme için tekrar randevu alınmıştır. Bu şekilde her bir görüşme arasında yaklaşık 3 hafta oldu.

İkinci görüşme öncesinde Kim Psikoloji tarafından düzenlenen ve psikolog Ceren Sarı tarafından verilen Metafor Kart Kullanımı Eğitimi'ni tamamladım. Bu eğitimde metaforik kartların tarihçesi, kart kullanım amacının belirlenmesi ve çalışmalarda metaforik kartların nasıl kullanıldığı üzerinde durulmuştur. Randevu günü öğretmenle boş bir sınıfta görüşme yapılmıştır. Öğretmenlere çalışmanın amacını ve kartlarla ne yapacağımızı açıklayan bir yönerge okunarak yöntemle ilgili anlaşılmayan bir şey varsa açıklanmıştır. Daha sonra tüm kartlar öğretmenin önüne açık bir şekilde yerleştirildi. İlk adım olarak, öğretmen görüşme sorusuna sözlü yanıt vererek deneyimini aktarmıştır. Bir sonraki adımda ise deneyimleriyle ilgili çağrışım yapan en az 3, en fazla 5 kart seçmesini istenmiştir. Eğer deneyimlerinde bir değişiklik varsa, kartları kronolojik olarak ilk yıllardan son yıllara doğru sıralamalarını istenmiştir. Daha sonra hangi kartı neden seçtiklerini ve başlangıçtan sona kadar yaşadıkları deneyimle ilgili neyi çağrıştırdığını konuşulmuştur. Yıllar içinde herhangi bir değişiklik olmadıysa sıralama yapmadan aynı sürece devam edilmiştir. Bu şekilde tüm sorular tamamlanmış oldu.

İkinci görüşmenin sonunda üçüncü görüşme için randevu alındı ve boş bir sınıfta bir masada tekrar bir araya gelinmiştir. Öğretmenlere A3 kâğıt ve renkli kalemler dağıtılmıştır. Yine çalışmanın amacını ve onlardan beklentilerimi belirten bir yönerge okunarak yöntemle ilgili soruları varsa yanıtlanmıştır. Bu süreçte öğretmenlere çizimi bitirmeleri için kesin bir süre verilmemiştir. Çizimler bittikten sonra öğretmenlerle çizimleri hakkında üçüncü bir görüşme yapılmıştır. Görüşmenin bu bölümünde mülteci çocuklarla yaşadıkları süreçler özetlenmiş ve görüşme sonlandırılmıştır.

## **2.5. Verilerin Analizi**

Creswell'e (2007) göre, veri analizi verilerin düzenlenmesi ve hazırlanması ile başlar. Bu aşamada bütün ses kayıtları deşifre edilmiştir. İkinci adım olarak, veriyi anlamak için bütün deşifreler birkaç kez okunmuştur. Analizin üçüncü adımı kodlamadır.

Charmaz (2006) görüşme dökümlerini analiz etmek için araştırmacılar için en uygun yöntemin açık kodlama olduğunu belirtmiştir. Bu çalışmada, öğretmenlerin yıllar boyunca anlattıkları hikayeler arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıkları kavramsallaştırmak için veriler açık kodlama ile kodlanmıştır. Kodlama sürecinin başında, toplam 42 görüşmeden 658 ayrı kod üretilmiştir. Rubin ve Rubin'e (1995) göre, eğer kodlar bir ya da iki veri parçasında bulunuyorsa, bunlar elenebilir. Bu nedenle bu kodları analizden çıkarılmıştır. Analizde 431 kod kalmıştı. Daha sonra bazı kodların aynı konulara atıfta bulunduğu tespit edilerek birleştirilmiştir. Son haliyle çalışmada 126 kod kalmıştır.

Bu çalışmada, öğretmenler ikinci görüşmede yıllar boyunca yaşadıkları deneyimleri temsil etmek üzere metafor kartları seçmişlerdir. Ayrıca, öğretmenler üçüncü görüşmede mülteci çocuklarla yaşadıkları deneyimleri görselleştirmek için kendi EYH'lerini çizmişlerdir. İkinci görüşmede, öğretmenin hangi kartı seçtiğine odaklanmak yerine, kart aracılığıyla ne aktardığı kritik önem taşımaktadır (Popova ve Miloradova, 2014). Aynı durum EYH'ler için de geçerlidir. EYH'ler ve metafor kartları öğretmenlerin deneyimlerini aktarmak için kullandıkları araçlardır. Bu nedenle analiz kısmında öğretmenlerin metafor kartları ya da Eğitim Yolculuğu Haritalaması kullanarak aktardıkları anlatıları kodladım. Ancak bulgular ve tartışma bölümlerinde verileri desteklemek amacıyla öğretmenlerin kart seçimleri ya da çizimleri sunulmuştur.

Kodlama bölümünde, bulguların güvenilirliğini sağlamak için ikinci bir kodlayıcı ile çalışılmıştır. İkinci kodlayıcı 14 görüşmeden rastgele beşini seçerek ve MAXQDA Programını kullanarak verileri açık bir şekilde kodlamıştır. Daha sonra, kodlar üzerinde tartışarak uzlaşmaya varılmıştır. Kodlayıcılar arası güvenilirlik Miles-Hubermann formülü (1994) kullanılarak hesaplanmıştır. Güvenirlik .93 olarak bulunmuştur.

Dördüncü adımda, tüm kodları listelenmiş ve benzer kodları aynı kategoriler altında kümelendi. Ayrıca, tüm kategorileri tekrar okunarak araştırma sorularına dayalı olarak alt tema ve kategoriler oluşturulmuştur. Sonuç olarak, verileri kod, kategori, alt tema ve tema olarak etiketlenmiştir.



### 3. BULGULAR VE TARTIŞMA

Bu kısımda özet bulgular ve tartışma bir arada sunulmuştur.

#### 3.1. Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Mülteci Çocuklarla Öğretmenlik Deneyimlerini Açıklayan Bulgular

İlk araştırma sorusu, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin yıllar içinde mülteci çocuklarla yaşadıkları öğretmenlik deneyimlerini nasıl tanımladıklarını araştırmaktadır. Alt sorularda, öğretmenlerin geçmiş ve mevcut öğretim deneyimlerine ve bu deneyimlerin zaman içinde ne şekilde değiştiğine odaklanılmıştır. Mülteci çocuklarla ilgili geçmiş ve güncel deneyimler şu sorularla araştırılmıştır:

- Öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklar ve ebeveynleri ile iletişim süreci
- Öğretim uygulamaları
- Yerel ve mülteci çocuklar arasındaki ilişkiye dair gözlemleri

Veri analizi sonucunda altı ana tema belirlenmiştir. Bu temalar: Öğretmenlerin Kültürel Yeterliliği, Müfredatta Kültürel Çeşitlilik, Mülteci Çocuklarla İletişim Süreci, Mülteci Ebeveynlerle Ortaklık Kurma, Yerel ve Mülteci Çocuklar Arasındaki İlişki ve Mesleki Yeterlilikler ve Gelişimdir. Her ana tema, öğretmenlerin geçmiş deneyimleri, güncel deneyimleri ve varsa değişimi açıklayan alt temaları içermektedir. Bu alt temalar da kodlar ve alt kodlardan oluşan kategoriler içermektedir. İlk dört ana tema Gay'in (2010) Kültüre Duyarlı Eğitim bileşenleri ile uyumludur. Beşinci tema, öğretmenlerin yerel ve mülteci çocuklar arasındaki ilişkiye dair gözlemlerine dayanarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Son tema olan Mesleki Yeterlilikler ve Gelişim ise öğretmenlerin hizmet öncesi ve hizmet içi eğitimleri de dâhil olmak üzere yıllar boyunca mesleki gelişim süreçlerine ilişkin anlatılarını yansıtmaktadır.

##### 3.1.1. Öğretmenlerin Kültürel Yeterliliği

Öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklarla ilgili deneyimlerine ilişkin ilk tema kültürel yeterlilikleridir. Mayfield'e (2020) göre kültürel yeterlilik, kültürel değerler, inançlar

ve algılar hakkında farkındalık kazanma sürecidir. Araştırmanın bulguları öğretmenlerin hem geçmiş hem de şimdiki yıllarında kısmi kültürel farkındalığa sahip olduklarını ortaya koymuştur. Öncelikle öğretmenlerin geçmiş kültürel yeterliliklerine baktığımızda yedi öğretmenin coğrafi yakınlık nedeniyle Türk ve Suriyeli kültürlerinin oldukça benzer olduğunu varsaydığını görülmüştür. Özellikle, yakın coğrafi bölgelerde bulunmaları ve iki kültürün ortak dini değerleri paylaşmaları nedeniyle iki kültürün aynı olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Bunun öğretmenlerde kısmi bir kültürel farkındalık oluşturmasının nedeni, öğretmenlerin bu algıya dayalı kültürel uygulamaları sınıflarında uygulamamalarıdır çünkü Türk kültüründeki dini unsurlarla ilgili etkinlikleri öğretirken Suriyelilerin kültürüne de hitap ettiklerini düşünmektedirler. Kısaca öğretmenlerin kültürel bilgi eksikliğinin kısmi kültürel farkındalıklarına katkıda bulunduğu tartışılabilir. Ancak Gay (2010), öğretmenlerin farklı ortamlarda verimli çalışabilmeleri için kültürel bilgi temeline sahip olmaları gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Bu bilgi; gelenekler, kültürel değerler ve iletişim tarzları gibi farklı grupların kültürel özellikleriyle ilgilidir (Gay, 2010). Dolayısıyla öğretmenlerin ilk yıllarında mülteci çocuklarla çalışma konusunda yeterli bilgiye sahip olmadıkları görülmektedir.

Güncel deneyimlere bakıldığında öğretmenlerin kısmi kültürel farkındalıklarının bilgi eksikliğinden kaynaklandığı görülmektedir. Veriler, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocukların öğrenimi için kültürün önemini farkında olmalarına rağmen, kültürel bilgi eksikliği nedeniyle kısmi kültürel farkındalığa sahip olduklarını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu duruma literatürdeki benzer çalışmalarda da rastlanmaktadır. Örneğin Acar-Çiftçi (2016) de okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin çokkültürlü eğitim yeterliklerini belirlemek amacıyla bir çalışma yürütmüştür. Araştırması, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin bilgi açısından kısmi kültürel farkındalığa sahip olduklarını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Halbuki bilgi, öğretmenlerin kültürel yeterliliğinin kritik bir bileşeni olarak kabul edilmektedir (Acar-Çiftçi, 2016). Bu nedenle, öğretmenlerin kültürün eğitim üzerindeki etkilerinin bilincine varmaları beklenmektedir. Başka bir çalışmada ise Vedder ve ark. (2006) ayrıca öğretmenlerin farklı sınıf ortamlarında çalışabilme bilgisine sahip olmadıklarını da tespit etmiştir. Bu durum da öğretmenlerde kültürel yeterlilik eksikliği yaratmaktadır. Tüm bu bulgular, öğretmenlerin yıllar sonra bile mülteci çocuklarla çalışabilmek için hâlâ ek desteğe

ve eğitime ihtiyaç duyduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca bu çalışmalar farklı ülkelerde farklı bağlamlarda yürütülmüştür. Dolayısıyla bu, öğretmenlerin ek bilgi ve becerilere olan ihtiyacının günümüzün çok kültürlü bağlamında küresel bir sorun olduğu anlamına gelmektedir.

Yıllar içindeki değişime baktığımız zaman en göze çarpan değişiklik, öğretmenlerin çeşitliliği mevcut deneyimlerinde bir zenginlik olarak kabul etmeleridir. Bu anlatılara önceki deneyimlerinde rastlanmamaktadır. Bunun yerine, önceki yıllarda kültürel körlük gibi bir tutumları vardır. Bir çocuğun kültürel geçmişi ne olursa olsun çocuk olduğunu ifade ediyorlardı. Öğretmenlerin algılarındaki bu değişim, en az üç yıl ve daha uzun süredir farklı çocuklarla birebir etkileşimde bulunmalarıyla açıklanabilir. Timoštšuk ve diğerlerine (2022) göre, öğretmenlerin kültürel farkındalığını artırmak için ders kitaplarından ve öğretmen eğitimi programlarından bilgi sahibi olmak yeterli değildir. Öğretmenlerin farklı çocukları anlamak için doğrudan deneyim sahibi olmaları gerekir. Güncel çalışmada da öğretmenler mülteci çocuklarla en az üç yıldır çalışmaktadır. Bu süreç boyunca edindikleri deneyimler sonucu sınıflarındaki farklılıkları renk ve zenginlik olarak algılama eğiliminde olabilirler.

### **3.1.2. Müfredatta Kültürel Çeşitlilik**

İkinci ana tema, öğretmenlerin müfredatta kültürel çeşitliliğe ilişkin uygulamalarıdır. Gay (2010), öğretmenlerin müfredatı ve öğrenme deneyimlerini tasarlarken farklı kültürden gelen çocukların kültürel unsurlarını kullanmaları gerektiğini vurgulamıştır. Bu çalışmada, öğretmenlerin anlatıları, müfredatta kültürel çeşitliliğe ilişkin geçmiş ve mevcut uygulamalarını ortaya koymuştur. Her iki dönemde de bazı öğretmen grupları farklı nedenlerle etkinliklerini mülteci çocukların kültürlerine göre uyarlamamıştır. Örneğin, bazı öğretmenler şu anda kültürel uygulamalara önem vermelerine rağmen bu etkinlikleri nasıl tasarlayacaklarını bilmediklerini vurgulamıştır. Öğretmenlerin bilgi eksikliği önceki araştırmalarla da uyumludur. Alabay ve Ersal'ın (2020) çalışması da öğretmenlerin farklı kültürden gelen çocuklar için yeni etkinlikler tasarlamadığını veya uyarlamadığını göstermiştir. Öğretmenlerin kısmi kültürel yetkinliklerine paralel olarak, bu durum da bilgi eksikliğine bağlanabilir. İlk tema ile birlikte değerlendirildiğinde, öğretmenlerin kültürel bilgi

eksikliđinin hem kültürel yeterliliklerini hem de kültüre duyarlı öğretim uygulamalarını olumsuz etkilediđini söylemek mümkündür. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocukların kültürünü sınıfın ve müfredatın her alanında kullanmak yerine sınırlı bir bakış açısıyla ele aldıklarını göstermektedir. Mevcut çalışmada kültürel etkinlikler tasarlayan öğretmenler, etkinliklerde mülteci çocukların müzik ve yemek gibi bilgi kaynaklarını kullandıklarını veya kullanmakta olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca bu tür etkinlikleri sadece Yerli Malı Haftası gibi özel günlerde tasarlamışlardır. Derman Sparks ve diđerleri (2010) bunun farklı grupların öğretiminde yanlış bir adım olduğunu ileri sürmüş ve turist müfredatı olarak adlandırmıştır.

### **3.1.3. Mülteci Çocuklarla İletişim Süreci**

Mevcut çalışmanın bulguları, öğretmenlerin mültecilerle iletişim kurabilmek için bazı stratejiler kullandıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Örneđin, önceki iletişim stratejilerinde beden dilini, göstererek anlatmayı ve teknolojik araçları kullanmışlardır. Ayrıca, mevcut iletişim stratejilerinde rol modeli olma, hatırlatma ve ikinci dili kullanmaktadırlar. Önceki çalışmalara paralel olarak, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklarla iletişim kurarken ortak yöntemler geliştirdikleri söylenebilir. Örneđin bir çalışmada öğretmenler dil sorunlarına çözüm olarak rol model olma, tekrarlama ya da Türkçe kelime öğretme yöntemlerinden bahsetmişlerdir (Karademir ve Yılmaz-Tam, 2022). Mevcut çalışmadaki bir diđer ortak strateji de beden dilinin kullanımüdür. Beden dili, uluslararası çalışmalarda öğretmenler tarafından mülteci çocuklarla iletişim kurmak için kullanılan yaygın bir tekniktir. Örneđin Burgos'un (2021) çalışmasında öğretmenler beden dilinin çok önemli bir iletişim aracı olduğunu ve mülteci çocukların dil edinim sürecini desteklediđini belirtmiştir. Görüşmeler sırasında öğretmenler, mülteci çocuklarla iletişim sürecinden bahsederken kullandıkları tekniklerden ve iletişim açısından yaşadıkları zorluklardan bahsetmişlerdir. Ancak, farklı gruplarla iletişimin birçok farklı boyutu vardır. Örneđin Gay'e (2001) göre iletişim, farklı kültürel grupların iletişim tarzları ve kelime kullanımları gibi çeşitli faktörleri içermektedir. Mevcut çalışma ve önceki çalışmalara (Çelik-Dođu,2021; Burgos, 2021) dayanarak, öğretmenlerin iletişimi sadece mülteci çocuklara talimatları iletme ve sorunlarını anlama açısından

değerlendirdikleri söylenebilir. Gay'in (2010) kültürler arası iletişim olarak ifade ettiği boyutları kapsamamaktadır. Öğretmenlerin geçmiş ve şimdiki iletişim stratejilerini karşılaştırdığımda, bazı stratejilerin ortak olduğu görülmektedir. Bunlardan biri kardeşler, çevirmenler veya iki dilli öğretmenler gibi diğer kişilerden yardım almaktır. Öğretmenlerin beden dilini ya da diğer doğrudan iletişim kanallarını kullanmalarına rağmen, bir noktada çevirmen rolünü üstlenebilecek birine ihtiyaç duydukları söylenebilir.

### **3.1.4. Mülteci Ebeveynlerle Ortaklık Kurma**

Hem mevcut hem de geçmiş deneyimler, öğretmenlerin mülteci ailelerle iletişim kurarken ortak iletişim yöntemlerini (teknolojik araçlar ve başkalarının yardımı gibi) kullandıklarını ve benzer zorluklarla karşılaştıklarını göstermektedir. Öğretmenlerin bakış açılarına göre bu zorluklar dil engellerinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu durum, literatürdeki benzer çalışmalarla da desteklenmektedir (Kardeş & Akman, 2018; Karademir ve Yılmaz-Tam, 2022). Kardeş'in (2020) çalışmasında, öğretmenler yaşadıkları sorunlardan biri olarak aile duyarlılığı eksikliğini göstermiştir. Bir başka çalışmada da öğretmenler benzer şekilde Türkçe konuşmayan ailelerle iletişim güçlüklerinden bahsetmiştir (Karademir ve Yılmaz-Tam, 2022). Öte yandan, bu çalışmadaki bazı öğretmenler, mülteci ebeveynleri ve aileleri iletişime kapalı ya da işbirliğine isteksiz olarak algılamışlardır. Bu bulgular, hükümetin entegrasyon politikaları açısından değerlendirilebilir. Entegrasyonun en önemli anahtarlarından biri eğitimidir (Ager & Strang, 2008). Bu nedenle, mülteci ailelerin sisteme dahil edilmesi mülteci çocukların entegrasyonunu desteklemektedir. Ancak bu çalışma, öğretmenlerin mülteci aileleri hâlâ sistem dışı olarak algıladıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Bu nedenle, bu gibi stratejik planlara ek olarak daha pratik adımlar atılması gerekmektedir.

Öte yandan öğretmenlerin aile katılımı deneyimlerine bakıldığında, mevcut deneyimlerinde ailelerden iş birliği bekledikleri görülmektedir. Bu beklenti daha çok mülteci çocuğun eğitim sürecinin desteklenmesi ve Türkçe öğreniminin sağlanması yönündedir. Bu şaşırtıcı bir sonuç değildir çünkü benzer çalışmalar da benzer sonuçlara ulaşmaktadır. (Yanık-Özger & Akansel, 2019; Savaşkan, 2019).

Veriler, öğretmenlerin mülteci ebeveynlerle iletişim stratejilerinin yıllar içinde değişmediğini ortaya koymuştur. Öğretmenler hâlâ başkalarından dil desteği almakta ve teknolojik araçları kullanmaktadır. Özellikle öğretmenlerin çift dilli kişilerin yardımıyla iletişimi sürdürmesi, halen güncel durumda olan bir sonuçtur.

### **3.1.5. Yerel ve Mülteci Çocuklar Arasındaki İlişki**

Mülteci ve yerel çocuklar arasındaki ilişki, mülteci çocukların eğitimi ve adaptasyonu için yadsınamaz derecede önemlidir (Correa-Velez vd., 2010). Özellikle yeni bir ülkeye geldikleri ilk yıllarda kuracakları sosyal bağlar bu anlamda kilit bir rol oynamaktadır (Beirens vd., 2007). Bununla birlikte, çeşitli çalışmalar mülteci çocukların bu konuda karşılaştıkları zorlukları ele almıştır (Kara ve Başaran, 2022; McBride, 2018). Mevcut çalışmada ise öğretmenlerin geçmiş deneyimlerinden elde edilen önemli bulgulardan biri, mülteci çocukların yaşadığı dışlanmadır. Bu bulguya paralel olarak Kardeş ve Akman (2022) de yerel öğrencilerin dışlama gibi davranışlar sergilediğini tespit etmiştir. Diğer yandan, mevcut çalışmadaki öğretmenler, önceki deneyimlerinde yerel ebeveynlerin yerel ve mülteci çocuklar arasındaki ilişki için engeller oluşturduklarından bahsetmişlerdir. Yalçın ve Simsar (2020) tarafından belirtildiği gibi, Türkiye bağlamında yerel ebeveynlerin mülteci çocuklara ve ailelere karşı önyargıları olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Yerel ebeveynler, mülteci çocuklar hakkında olumsuz algılara sahip olma eğilimindedir (Yanık-Özger ve Akansel, 2019). Güncel deneyimlerinde ise öğretmenler yerel ailelerin olumsuz tutumlarından bahsetmemiştir. Türkiye bağlamında, mülteciler 2011 yılından bu yana Türkiye'de yaşamaktadır. Mevcut durumda ve aradan geçen 13 yıllık süreçte ailelerin arkadaşlık ilişkilerinde olumsuz bir rol oynamadığını gösteren bulgular, iki grup çocuk arasındaki etkileşim için umut verici olarak değerlendirilebilir. Öğretmenler mevcut deneyimlerinden bahsederken benzer bir örüntü tarif ederek mülteci ve yerel çocuklar arasındaki ilişkinin gelişiminden bahsettiler. Öğretmenlere göre, mülteci çocuklar yılın başında dışlanıyor, ancak yılın sonuna doğru arkadaşlıklar kuruyorlar. Arkadaşlık dinamik ve öznel bir deneyim olsa da (Bergnehr vd., 2020), bu örüntü başka çalışmalarda da ortaya çıkmıştır. Örneğin bir başka çalışmada, mülteci çocukların okulun ilk günlerinde aynı oyunu oynamadıkları, ancak dönem sonuna doğru birbirlerinin oyunlarına dahil oldukları tespit edilmiştir.

(Yanık-Özger ve Kozandağı, 2021). Belli bir süre sonra mülteci çocukların Türkçe seviyesi geliştikçe arkadaşlık ilişkisinin de geliştiği belirtilmektedir (Yanık-Özger ve Akansel, 2019).

Veriler, yerel ve mülteci çocuklar arasındaki ilişkide de yıllar içerisinde bazı değişiklikler olduğunu göstermiştir. En dikkat çekici değişiklik, ilk yıllarda öğretmenler mülteci çocukların daha sık dışlandığını, etiketlendiğini ve önyargılı davranışlara maruz kaldığını belirtirken, şu anki deneyimlerinde bazı öğretmenler (n=6) iki grup arasında daha yakın bir ilişkiden bahsetmiştir. Bu, sıcak bir ortam yarattığından mülteci çocukların entegrasyonu için önemli bir adımdır.

### **3.1.6. Mesleki Yeterlilikler ve Gelişim**

En dikkat çekici bulgu, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklara öğretmenlik yapmaya başladıkları ilk yıllarda kendilerini deneyimsiz ve yetersiz olarak değerlendirirken, ilerleyen yıllarda daha özgüvenli ve deneyimli hissetmeleridir. Bu deneyimsizliğin ve yetersizliğin temel nedeni, öğretmenlerin eğitim programları tarafından yeterince hazırlanmamış olması olabilir. Bu savı destekler nitelikte olan Smyth ve Kum'un (2010) çalışmasında da öğretmenler yaşadıkları yetersizlik hissini öğretmenlik yeterlikleriyle ilgili olduğunu ve eğitim sürecinden kaynaklandığını belirtmişlerdir. Öte yandan, mevcut çalışmada öğretmenler, teori ve uygulama arasındaki uyumsuzluk, mülteci çocuklarla çalışmaya hazırlık eksikliği ve dil eğitimi eksikliği nedeniyle öğretmen eğitimi programlarını eleştirmiştir. Özellikle öğretmen yetiştirme programlarındaki yetersiz noktalar başka çalışmalarda da vurgulanmıştır. Örneğin, Lash ve diğerleri (2020), öğretmen adaylarının mülteci çocuklar ve ailelerle verimli bir şekilde çalışmak için gerekli bilgi ve becerileri edinip edinmediğini sorgulamıştır. Son olarak, en çarpıcı değişikliklerden biri de öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimlerinde yaşanmıştır. İlk yıllarında kendilerini iletişim, öğretim ve ailelerle çalışma konularında deneyimsiz ve yetersiz olarak tanımlarken, şimdi kendilerini bu alanlarda daha deneyimli olarak tanımlamaktadırlar.

### **3.2. Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Mülteci Çocuklarla Çalışma Sürecindeki Güçlü Yönlerini ve İhtiyaçlarını Açıklayan Bulgular**

Yıllara göre, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken ihtiyaçları ve güçlü yönleri ve varsa değişimler araştırıldı. Her üç görüşmede anlatılanlardan, kart seçimlerinden ve çizimlerden elde edilen verilere dayanarak öğretmenlerin genel olarak güçlü yönleri ve ihtiyaçları iki tema altında kategorize edildi. Bu temalar: Öğretmenlerin Güçlü Yönleri ve Öğretmenlerin İhtiyaçları olarak isimlendirilmiştir. Her tema, öğretmenlerin geçmiş ve güncel ihtiyaçları ile güçlü yönlerini ve varsa değişimi açıklayan üçer alt temaya aittir.

#### **3.2.1. Öğretmenlerin Güçlü Yönleri**

Öğretmenler, güçlü yanlarını öğretmenliğin ilk yıllarında sabırlı olmak olarak tanımlarken, sonraki yıllarda özgüvenli olmak olarak tanımlamaktadır. Bu durum, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklarla en az üç yıl geçirdikten sonra özgüvenlerinin arttığı şeklinde değerlendirilebilir. Diğer yandan, öğretmenler geçmişte şefkatli ve sabırlı olmak gibi karakteristik özellikleri güçlü yön olarak kabul ederken, mevcut deneyimlerinde iyi bir gözlemci olmak ve özgüvenli olmak gibi kişisel özellikleri güçlü yön olarak kabul etmektedirler. Bu durum, öğretmenlerin zaman içinde edindikleri deneyimlerin güçlü yönlerine yansımaları olarak yorumlanabilir.

#### **3.2.2. Öğretmenlerin İhtiyaçları**

Mevcut çalışmanın verileri, öğretmenlerin iletişim ve mesleki gelişim gibi bazı ihtiyaçlarının yıllar içinde aynı kaldığını, materyal ihtiyaçları gibi bazı ihtiyaçlarının ise zaman içinde değiştiğini göstermiştir. Öncelikle, öğretmenlerin anlatıları, ilk ve mevcut yıllarda öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişim ihtiyaçlarını dile getirdiklerini ortaya koymuştur. Sekiz öğretmen, çok kültürlü ve çeşitlilik içeren eğitim ortamlarında çalışabilmek için daha fazla eğitime ihtiyaç duyduklarını belirtmiştir. Bu bulgu, önceki çalışmalarla uyumludur (Richardson vd., 2018; Kanu, 2008). Bu çalışmalarda, öğretmenlerin mülteci bağlamında çalışabilmeleri için eğitilmelerinin



küresel bir mesele olduğu da göz önünde bulundurulmuştur. İkinci olarak, veriler öğretmenlerin iletişimle ilgili ihtiyaçlarının içinde buldukları yıllarda da devam ettiğini göstermiştir. Öğretmenler, mülteci çocuklar ve ailelerle iletişim ve etkileşim kurmak için hâlâ çevirmen veya dil eğitimine ihtiyaç duymaktadır. Buna paralel olarak, Shriberg ve diğerleri (2010) de öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklarla iletişim kurmaya uygun yardımcı öğretmenlerle çalışmak istediklerini tespit etmiştir. Bu uyumlu bulgular şaşırtıcı değildir çünkü Richardson ve diğerlerinin (2018) de vurguladığı gibi, dil ve iletişim, öğretmenlerin destek ve yardıma en çok ihtiyaç duyduğu alandır. Mevcut çalışmada öğretmenler, iletişim sürecinde tercüman ve hatta Suriyeli öğretmenlerin yardımcı olmasını istediklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Dil ile ilgili sorunları çözmek için, mevcut çalışmadaki öğretmenler hem mülteci çocuklar hem de aileler için bir Türkçe eğitimi önerdi. Ayrıca bazı öğretmenler, mülteci çocukların anaokuluna kaydolmadan önce Türkçe kursu almaları gerektiğini belirtmiştir. Çocukların okul öncesi eğitimden önce Türkçe öğrenmelerini istemeleri, öğretmenlerin ürettikleri ortak çözümlerden biri olarak değerlendirilebilir. Alanyazındaki benzer çalışmalarda da okul öncesi öğretmenleri aynı çözümü önermişlerdir. Örneğin Korkmaz (2019) da okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin okula başlamadan önce Türkçe dil eğitimini önerdiklerini tespit etmiştir.

### **3.3. Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Kültüre Duyarlı Eğitime İlişkin Algılarını Açıklayan Bulgular**

Bu çalışmada öğretmenlerle üç görüşme yapılmıştır. İlk ve son görüşmede Kültüre Duyarlı Eğitimin ne olduğu sorulmuştur. Öğretmenlerin Kültüre Duyarlı Eğitime ilişkin algılarının ilk görüşmeden son görüşmeye kadar nasıl değiştiği incelenmiştir. Bu soruya ait iki tema ortaya çıkmıştır: KDE'ye Yönelik İlk Algılar ve KDE'ye Yönelik Son Algılar.

İlk görüşmede, öğretmenler Kültüre Duyarlı Eğitimi farklı kültürleri hoş karşılama (n=3), kültürel unsurları öğretme (n=8) ve kültürü aktarma (n=2) aracı olarak tanımlamıştır. Ayrıca, bir öğretmen bunu herhangi bir kültürel öge içermeyen nesnel bir eğitim olarak değerlendirirken, bir başka öğretmen de KDE hakkında hiçbir fikri

olmadığını belirtmiştir. İkinci olarak, öğretmenlerin CRT'ye ilişkin son algılarını araştırdığımızda, öğretmenler KDE'yi kültürel unsurları öğretmek (n=10) ve aidiyet duygusunu artırmak (n=2) için bir araç olarak algılamışlardır. Mevcut çalışmada, KDE'ye karşı olan veya fikri olmayan iki öğretmen dışında, tüm öğretmenler (n=12) CRT hakkında olumlu görüşlere sahiptir. Bu öğretmenler, KDE'in mülteci çocukların aidiyet duygusunu artırma ve kültüre saygıyı öğretme gibi faydalarından bahsetmiştir. Bu, önceki çalışmaların bulgularıyla uyumludur (Kotluk ve Kocakaya, 2018; Robinson, 2010). Bu çalışmada öğretmenler, CRT'yi Türkiye gibi kültürel çeşitliliğe sahip ülkeler için etkili ve ihtiyaç duyulan bir yaklaşım olarak görmüştür (Kotluk ve Kocakaya, 2018).

### **3.4. Sonuç ve Öneriler**

Bu çalışma, öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklarla çalışırken deneyimlerinin, güçlü yönlerinin ve ihtiyaçlarının zaman içinde nasıl değiştiğini göstererek literatüre katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu bulguların erken çocukluk öğretmenleri ve öğretmen eğitimi programlarından sorumlu yetkililer için bazı çıkarımları bulunmaktadır. Öncelikle, veriler öğretmenlerin en az üç yıl boyunca bu grupta çalışmış olmalarına rağmen mülteci çocuklarla çalışma konusunda hala kısmi kültürel yeterliliğe sahip olduklarını göstermiştir. Bu durum, öğretmenlerin mülteci öğrencilerinin kültürel değerlerine ilişkin farkındalık kazanma konusunda hâlâ kendilerini yeterli ve deneyimli hissetmedikleri anlamına gelmektedir (Mayfield, 2020). Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, öğretmenlerin hizmet öncesi ve hizmet içi eğitimlerinin günümüz sınıflarının demografik yapısına uygun olarak hazırlanması için bir zemin oluşturabilir. Örneğin, öğretmen eğitimi programlarına saha deneyimi sunan çok kültürlü dersler entegre edilerek öğretmen adaylarının mezun olmadan önce deneyim kazanmaları sağlanabilir. Bu tür bir deneyim, farklı ortamlarda çalışacak öğretmenler için bir ihtiyaçtır (Kovinthan, 2016). Bu, yeni mezun öğretmenlerin veya daha önce mülteci çocuklarla çalışma deneyimi olmayan öğretmenlerin sahada daha verimli bir şekilde ders vermesini sağlayacaktır. Ayrıca öğretmenler, mülteci çocukların kültürel referanslarını günlük hayata nasıl dahil edebileceklerinin potansiyel yollarını bulmalıdır. Bu da ancak sahada yapacakları uygulamalarla mümkün olabilir.

İkinci olarak, erken çocukluk öğretmenleri ve yetkililer mülteci ebeveynlerle iş birliği yapmaları gerekmektedir. Çalışma, öğretmenlerin mülteci ebeveynler için bazı aile katılım etkinlikleri tasarımlarına rağmen, onları iş birliğine yanaşmayan ve iletişime kapalı olarak algıladıklarını ortaya koymuştur. 2011 yılından bu yana en az üç yıldır mülteci ebeveynlerle çalışan bazı öğretmenler, mülteci ebeveynlere hâlâ ulaşamadıklarını belirtmiştir. Bunun nedenlerinden bazıları olarak mülteci ailelerin bakması gereken başka çocukları olduğunu veya dil farklılığını öne sürmüşlerdir. Bu durumda yetkililer, ailelerin öncelikli ihtiyaçlarına odaklanmalı ve okula katılımlarını engelleyen faktörlere çözüm bulmalıdır.

Üçüncü sonuç olarak, bu çalışmanın amaçlarından biri de öğretmenlerin KDE'ye ilişkin algılarını araştırmaktır. Bulgular, öğretmenlerin KDE'nin bazı bileşenlerini ve uygulamalarını fark ettiklerini ortaya koymuştur. Diğer çalışmaların bulgularıyla (Karataş ve Oral, 2015) uyumlu olarak öğretmenler, KDE'nin diğer çocukların kültürel geçmişlerine göre eğitim sağlayan pedagojik bir yaklaşım olduğunu farkındadır. Bu farkındalık, öğretmenlerin KDE odaklı uygulamaları hayata geçirmelerinin önünü açabilir. Bu noktada öğretmenlerin konuyla ilgili kurs ya da hizmet içi eğitim almaları önemlidir. Örneğin, Türkiye'nin demografik yapısının giderek çok kültürlü hale geldiği düşünüldüğünde, öğretmenlere KDE'yi sahada uygulayabilecekleri uygulama ve staj olanakları sağlanabilir. CRT, öğretmen eğitimi programlarında ele alınması gereken bir konu olarak değerlendirilebilir. Öğretmenler de bu farkındalığı bilgi boyutuna taşınmalı ve kültüre daha duyarlı uygulamalar gerçekleştirmenin yollarını aramalıdır.

Dördüncü olarak, ilk mülteci akını 2011 yılında gerçekleşmiş olsa da öğretmenlerin iletişim ve öğretim açısından hala bazı ihtiyaçları olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Hem geçmiş hem de mevcut deneyimler, öğretmenlerin sadece ailelerle değil, sınıflarındaki mülteci çocuklarla da dil engelleri nedeniyle çatışmalar yaşayabildiğini göstermektedir. Bu sorun da dolaylı olarak gelişimsel olarak uygun olmayan iletişim yöntemlerine ya da ailenin iletişime kapalı olmasına/aileyi sürece dahil edememesine yol açmaktadır. Bu noktada, mevcut çalışmada öğretmenler tarafından sunulan çözüm önerileri yetkililer tarafından gündeme alınabilir. Bu çalışmanın çıktıları bir

ihtiyaç analizi olarak değerlendirilebilir ve başta dil desteği olmak üzere öğretmenlerin ihtiyaç duyduğu diğer destek mekanizmaları sağlanabilir. Örneğin, mevcut çalışmada öğretmenlerin de belirttiği gibi, mülteci çocuklar için anadillerini unutmayacakları ama aynı zamanda Türkçeyi de öğrenecekleri Türkçe dil eğitimi ağırlıklı okul öncesi eğitim programları sağlanabilir. Bu konudaki en somut ve etkili örneklerden biri Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı'nın (AÇEV) Yaz Okulu Projesi'dir (Erdemir ve Diri, 2019).

Son çıkarım ise metodolojik bir çıkarımdır. Mevcut çalışmada, katılımcı öğretmenlerden veri toplamak için metafor kartları ve Eğitim Yolculuğu Haritalaması kullanılmıştır. Veriler, bu tekniklerin öğretmen deneyimleri hakkında derinlemesine veri sağladığını ortaya koymuştur. Özellikle, mülteci çocuklar ve ebeveynleriyle yaşadıkları deneyimlerden bahsederken daha fazla örnek vermişler, daha fazla hikayeden bahsetmişler, duygu ve düşüncelerinden bahsetmişler ve daha fazla ayrıntı sunmuşlardır. Karnieli-Miller ve diğerlerinin (2017) vurguladığı gibi, metafor kartları katılımcıların daha zor deneyimleri ifade etmelerine yardımcı olmuştur. Öte yandan, EJM'ler bir araştırmacı olarak bana öğretmenlerin deneyimlerini yeniden değerlendirmek için daha fazla fırsat vermiştir. Bu nedenle, araştırmacılar gelecekteki çalışmalarda öğretmenlerin deneyimlerini araştırırken bu teknikleri kullanabilirler.

## F. CURRICULUM VIRTUE

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

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### EDUCATION

<b>Degree</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Year of Graduation</b>
MS	Early Childhood Education Middle East Technical University Ankara, Turkey	2018
BS	Preschool Education Boğaziçi University İstanbul, Turkey	2015
High School	Child Development Zübeyde Hanım Anatolian Vocational School İstanbul, Turkey	2010

### WORK EXPERIENCE

<b>Year</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Duty</b>
2017 – 2023	İstanbul Biruni University Vocational School Child Development Program	Lecturer
2016 – 2017	İstanbul Esenyurt University Faculty of Health Sciences Assistant Department of Child Development	Research

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### YAZARIN / AUTHOR

**Soyadı / Surname** : İŞIKCI  
**Adı / Name** : GÖZDENUR  
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