

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING (OPAL):
ACTION-BASED PRACTICES

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(OPAL): ACTION-BASED PRACTICES**

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ABSTRACT

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING (OPAL): ACTION-BASED PRACTICES

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The purpose of this study was to enrich the involvement of parents in outdoor play and learning (OPAL) through action-based practices. Conducted with the qualitative design, this participatory action research benefited from data collection tools, which are semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. The study was conducted in a private preschool located in Çankaya, Ankara, and was selected by convenience sampling method. The first step was the need and context analysis conducted with 12 volunteer preschool teachers and 17 volunteer parents. After understanding the context and determining the needs, one volunteer teacher and five volunteer parents whose children are in this teacher's classroom participated in also other steps of the study. Five action cycles, which are Worm Hotel, Flower Life Cycle, Animals Go Wild, Hexie's Mud Story, and Water Drops, were created and implemented based on needs. The study was concluded with the overall evaluation of the whole process. The data were analyzed through content and thematic analysis. The findings demonstrated that action-based practices, which are parent-teacher meetings

and volunteer parent-involved activities, helped to enrich OPAL perspectives, and supported the involvement of parents more in OPAL. Therefore, the implemented practices offering a distinct way to minimize the OPAL barriers resulted from the parental involvement lack and concerns related to OPAL. In light of these findings, it was suggested that volunteer activities could be done more and also in poor weather conditions.

Keywords: Outdoor Play, Outdoor Learning, Parental Involvement, Early Childhood Education, Action Research

ÖZ

DIŞ MEKÂN OYUN VE ÖĞRENMEDE EBEVEYN KATILIMI (DMOÖ): EYLEME DAYALI UYGULAMALAR

KANDEMİR, Melike

Doktora, Temel Eğitim, Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Bölümü

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, ebeveynlerin okul bahçesinde gerçekleşen dış mekân oyun ve öğrenimine (DMOÖ) katılımını eylem temelli uygulamalar yoluyla zenginleştirmektir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, katılımcıların DMOÖ'e ebeveyn katılımı konusundaki bakış açılarını ve deneyimlerini zenginleştiren çeşitli eylem temelli uygulamaları hayata geçirmeyi amaçlamıştır. Nitel desenle yürütülen bu katılımcı eylem araştırmasında yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, gözlemler ve doküman analizi gibi nitel veri toplama araçlarından yararlanılmıştır. Çalışma, Ankara Çankaya'da bulunan ve kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen özel bir anaokulunda yürütülmüştür. Çalışmanın ilk adımını 12 gönüllü okul öncesi öğretmeni ve 17 gönüllü ebeveyn ile yapılan ihtiyaç ve bağlam analizi oluşturmaktadır. Bağlamın anlaşılması ve ihtiyaçların belirlenmesinin ardından, bir gönüllü öğretmen ve çocukları bu öğretmenin sınıfında bulunan beş gönüllü ebeveyn çalışmanın diğer adımlarına da katılmıştır. Çalışmanın

ikinci adımı eylem döngülerinin planlanması ve uygulanması şeklinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Solucan Oteli, Çiçek Yaşam Döngüsü, Hayvanlar Vahşileşiyor, Hexie'nin Çamur Hikâyesi ve Su Damlaları olmak üzere beş eylem döngüsü ihtiyaçlar doğrultusunda oluşturulmuş ve uygulanmıştır. Toplanan veriler içerik ve tematik analiz yoluyla analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, ebeveyn-öğretmen toplantıları ve gönüllü ebeveyn katılımlı etkinlikler gibi eylem temelli uygulamaların DMOÖ perspektiflerini zenginleştirmeye yardımcı olduğunu ve ebeveynlerin DMOÖ'e daha fazla katılımını desteklediğini göstermiştir. Dolayısıyla, bu uygulamalar ebeveyn katılımı eksikliğinden ve katılımcıların DMOÖ ile ilgili endişelerinden kaynaklanan DMOÖ'in önündeki engelleri en aza indirmek için farklı ve yeni bir yol sunmaktadır. Bu bulgular ışığında, gönüllü ebeveyn katılım etkinliklerinin daha fazla ve ayrıca kötü hava koşullarında da yapılabileceği önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dış Mekânda Oyun, Dış Mekânda Öğrenme, Ebeveyn Katılımı, Okul Öncesi Eğitimi, Eylem Araştırması

To my family...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECE	Early Childhood Education
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
OPAL	Outdoor Play and Learning
PBE	Place-based Education

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Play is a pleasurable activity in which the child voluntarily and actively engages with intrinsic motivation (Garvey, 1990). The child can express her identity and desires through play involving diverse forms: pretend, rough and tumble, constructive, and functional (Johnson et al., 2005). Some researchers describe play as children's work since it assists children in learning about the world through the agency of their interaction with the environments (Tassoni & Hucher, 2005). Children can use play, imagination, and appropriation to challenge how adults perceive and intend the spaces around them, allowing them to reshape and redefine the different environments they live in (Helleman et al., 2023).

When it comes to learning, the definition could be done by emphasizing experienced-based change that occurred in either skill or knowledge (Bredekamp, 2016). Therefore, it could be highlighted that learning needs to occur within real-life experiences (Fazey et al., 2005). Regarding real-life experience, a child constructs knowledge to learn through the agency of encountering the world in the early years (Wortham, 2015). To enrich these real-life experiences in the preschool, play-based learning is a valuable approach according to Taylor and Boyer (2019). Therefore, the researchers argued that play should be considered as an approach to a task, based on the child's perspective. This finding suggests that learning in early childhood involves active engagement and exploration through play. In addition to learning, teaching is another concept that needs to be focused on. Mac Naughton and Williams (2009) described teaching as “a process through which early childhood staff assists and

encourage children's learning" (p.xi) Considered not only science but also art, teaching requires to be modified and improved according to diverse environments (Rajagopalan, 2019). To illustrate the outdoors requires teachers to facilitate a sense of autonomy making children to freely explore the outer world while motivating them to gain new experiences through interacting with natural materials (Burçak, 2024; Yılmaz-Bolat, 2022)

While play and learning have been discussed in early childhood education, outdoor play and learning have gained importance in education lately due to the recognition that outdoor environments play a crucial role in supporting a child's overall development (Engdahl et al., 2006). The abbreviation "OPAL" started to be used to explain outdoor play and learning by diverse educators working in the field. To illustrate, Follet founded the community interest company, whose name is OPAL, in 2011 to encourage the play experiences of children in British primary schools (OPAL, 2021). Alongside the usage of some abbreviations, outdoor environments need to be taken into consideration. Outdoor environments are efficient opportunities to support learning to be more permanent and deeper since the child experiences the whole process more freely through the agency of exploration and usage of senses (Hopwood-Stephens, 2015). Furthermore, outdoor play and learning carry richer quality compared to indoor prepared environments (Wilson, 2012). An outdoor environment combined with an exploratory teaching approach can significantly improve motor skills and social development in preschoolers compared to indoor or non-exploratory methods (Keshavarz et al., 2020).

As a part of the outdoor environment, the schoolyard could be described as the closest gateway to real life so the child can associate education with real life through rich learning opportunities (Çetin, 2022). Depending on the philosophy of the school, a schoolyard can involve plants; areas such as a sand pool and botanic garden; and materials like planting tools and sand toys (Tantekin-Erden & Yalçın, 2017). Learning and playing in an outdoor environment allows children to discover both the world and themselves since OPAL facilitates children what it means to be human in nature and their responsibilities towards nature (Değirmenci, 2023).

Although outdoor play and outdoor learning share similarities in terms of providing children with opportunities for exploration and engagement with the natural world, they differ in their purposes and outcomes. Outdoor play is characterized by spontaneous characteristic and its promotion of physical and mental well-being, while outdoor learning is focusing on educational goals and objectives of the structured activities to support development (Cooper, 2015; Nature Play WA, 2023). Moreover, outdoor play primarily focuses on promoting physical activity, social interaction, and imaginative play, while outdoor learning aims to facilitate cognitive development, problem-solving skills, and knowledge acquisition (Waller et al., 2010).

Despite the slight differences, outdoor play and learning (OPAL) are closely intertwined and mutually beneficial for children's development since they contribute to children's physical and mental health, providing them with a sense of control and promoting their overall well-being (Hinkley et al., 2018). Outdoor play and outdoor learning can comprise each other with careful planning by the teacher. For instance, a science lesson about plants can involve observing and categorizing different plant species outdoors, followed by a period of free exploration where children can playfully interact with the plants (Ärlemalm-Hagsér & Hambraeus, 2013). Bilton (2010) states that outdoor play and learning (OPAL) offer an easier process of understanding knowledge due to different reasons like enabling a child to do free movements within the usage of the whole body in diverse ways in comparison with the indoor environments. Moreover, outdoors support children to reach answers for their wonders through their senses so these children can develop their inquiry-based skills while they are having outdoor time (Power & Williams-Ridge, 2019). Throughout history, diverse historical figures have discussed outdoor play and learning (OPAL). Rousseau (1712-1778) was one of the pioneers arguing the significance of the outdoors in young children's development and learning processes. According to Rousseau, hands-on experiences needed to be provided for young children while offering nature as the source of learning. Besides learning, teachers and parents should not restrict the naturalistic development of young children by focusing too much on the process of education (Morrison, 2015).

His ideas on learning and development inspired other pioneers like Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Frobel (1782-1852). By following Rousseau's arguments associated with

learning and development in nature, Pestalozzi opened his school following a play-based learning program (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000) Pestalozzi emphasized the significance of sensory experiences for the learning and development processes of young children, and he also developed object lessons enabling children to learn via their senses (Morrison, 2015). Moreover, Froebel was the historical figure who established the first kindergarten (Tassoni & Hucker, 2005). In addition to stressing the importance of play, Froebel also emphasized the importance of nature in inspiring children to learn (Hinitz, 2013). Furthermore, Froebel developed gifts and occupations supporting the child to work with forms of nature. The gifts include materials such as strings and blocks while occupations involve sticks and clay (Tovey, 2020).

Different theories construct the basis for the significance of outdoor play and learning. For instance, Gibson's theory of affordances (1977) describes how individuals interpret outdoor affordances, namely outdoor advantages. To illustrate, a muddy surface could be a learning opportunity for a teacher who advocates the significance of outdoor experience for the learning process but the same physical quality could be a limitation for a teacher who is concerned with safety and hygiene during outdoor experiences. Another theory can be considered Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) to support outdoor play and learning in early childhood education. The theory of ecological systems was constructed on the argument that the learning and development process occurs through the interaction of diverse ecological systems and that the child is placed at the center of these systems. To give an example related to the current study, the collaboration between teachers and parents on OPAL experiences directly affects the learning and development of children even though children are not active participants in this collaboration.

Implications of the Vygotsky's sociocultural theory sheds light on the teaching leader role of parents in this participatory action study. As more knowledgeable others, parents could be the source of knowledge and guide for OPAL. Similarly, the dual capacity building framework and parents as teachers (PAT) model emphasizes the significance role of parents as teaching leaders for children and partners for the teachers to shape OPAL experiences for the best benefit of children. Moreover, place-based education (PBE) can assist participants to fortify their connection with the

schoolyard which can be described as a local place while helping them to learn through exploration as they gain real life experiences by cooperation.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The connection between children and the outdoors is weakening as opportunities for outdoor play and learning (OPAL) decrease. As a result, children are spending less time outdoors compared to previous generations worldwide (Louv, 2017). For the current study, this change could be explained by diverse factors related to teachers, parents, and society.

Adults can motivate children to interact with nature as much as they can restrict children from interacting with nature by limiting the time they spend in nature or kind of their natural activities. To give an example, a preschool teacher can prevent outdoor time because of poor weather conditions while a parent can limit her child from touching mud because of her hygiene concern (Dönmez, 2023). Diverse studies also demonstrated some teacher-related barriers like lack of outdoor education background, insufficient in-service training on outdoor education, feeling inadequate to teach in the outdoors, lack of classroom management skills, concerns about safety and hygiene, inadequate cooperation with parents, and so on (e.g., Bilton, 2020; Kandemir & Sevimli-Celik, 2021; Hunter, 2019; Akpınar&Kandır, 2022).

In another study, Frost and others (2004) emphasized that teachers have a misconception that OPAL is solely for discharging energy, supporting gross motor skills, and a break time for not only children but also teachers (as cited in Bullard, 2014). To examine the preschool teachers' experiences and perspectives related to parental involvement, Kutlu-Abu and Kayar (2020) conducted a qualitative study that data collected from seven teachers through semi-structured interviews. The conducted study revealed that teachers do not prefer to organize parent-involved activities in outdoor environments because of reasons like concerns about ensuring safety, changing weather conditions, concerns and biases of parents regarding outdoor play and learning, inadequate cooperation between teachers and parents, and also not providing enough information about outdoor play and learning activities to parents.

Along with the impact of teachers on how outdoor play and education are evolving, parents also play a significant role through their positive attitude regarding outdoor play and learning to support the outdoor experiences of children (Ernst, 2018; Kalburan, 2014; Little, 2010; Aktaş-Arnas&Sarıbaşı, 2020). Parents' interaction with nature can also be decisive for children. To illustrate, if the parent is afraid of dogs, she or he may unintentionally reflect this fear onto the child (Dönmez, 2023). Çığ (2022) also argues that understanding parents' experiences and perspectives is a necessity to increase children's nature experiences and ensure that outdoor is accepted by parents as an effective learning environment.

How teachers and parents shape OPAL practices was also demonstrated by the qualitative research conducted by Kandemir and Sevimli-Celik (2021) who explored outdoor play and learning practices in a private preschool located in Çankaya, Ankara. The researchers found that preschool teachers change outdoor play and learning practices according to the demands and concerns of parents. Based on the findings of their study, the researchers recommend that teachers needed to collaborate with parents through different parent-involved activities. Therefore, it was emphasized that parents need to be involved in outdoor play and learning experiences in the school through diverse activities so their concerns about the weather, hygiene, and safety can be minimized. As one of the key findings of their mixed-method study examining parents' perspectives on outdoor play and learning, Parsons and Traunter also (2019) demonstrated that there is a lack of communication between parents and teachers on the school's outdoor policy so parents generally do not know what school aims to do in terms of outdoor education.

Apart from the changes affected by the teacher and parental factors, changes such as increasing urbanization, development of technology, usage of screens in daily life, and society's cultural norms on safety and hygiene could be given as examples (Louv, 2017; Loebach et al., 2021; Dowdell et al., 2011; Oksal, 2005; Kalburan, 2014). Tantekin-Erden and Yalçın (2017) pointed out that children live in an era where they are exposed to too many environmental stimuli, mostly from technology. Hence, the researchers recommend that forest schools can heal the broken bond between nature and children by providing them with real-life experiences supporting diverse developmental skills.

Furthermore, rapid urbanization was also proposed as one of the reasons for decreasing outdoor space and indirectly limiting outdoor experiences of children (Andal, 2023). Similarly, Bilton (2010) also stated that concerns related to car crash accidents, stranger danger, and too much usage of technological devices like playing games on computers limit children to play in outdoor environments.

Various researchers have been studied the incremental change in the outdoor play and learning. Aktaş-Arnas and Sarıbaşı (2020) compared the outdoor play experiences of 398 Turkish parents with their children who are between 3 and 6 years old. The researchers concluded that today's children play less in outdoor environments than their parents because of aspects like lack of outdoor activities, concerns about safety and health, and excessive usage of technology. Similarly, Loebach et al. (2021) highlighted that today young children play less outdoors because they are more interested in screens and digital play especially if they do not have suitable outdoor environments to be active and interact with peers based on the findings of a study conducted with 826 children and their parents in Canada. The researchers also emphasized that parents' and children's perception of outdoor play besides the physical and social conditions of the living environment; affect the opportunities for outdoor play.

Even though there is a decline in outdoor experiences, spending time outdoors protects its significance as a need for a child to be healthy since the child becomes more active and benefits from the sun as well as fresh air (Bilton, 2010). To make children benefit more from the outdoors and fortify the connection between children and the outdoors, schools follow nature pedagogies, like bush and beach schools, motivating children to play and learn outdoors (Barrable & Booth, 2020). Warden (2019) described nature pedagogy as an approach to caring and learning processes for children in environments embracing nature.

As constructed on play, these nature pedagogies aim to fortify the bond between the child and nature in a safe nature environment where children explore their competencies through teachers as their guides (Yılmaz-Uysal, 2021) In Australia, bush kinder are early childhood education programs offering opportunities for

children to learn through play occurring in diverse outdoor environments like local bushlands or beaches (Victorian Government, 2024).

The demands of parents are significant elements influencing the development of practices, according to a study by Sevimli-Celik, Kirazci, and Ince (2011). While different schools try to follow nature pedagogies, it was demonstrated that some schools shape their outdoor practices depending on parents' attitudes toward outdoor play and learning. Especially, parental concerns on diverse outdoor aspects like hygiene and safety have been emphasized by these studies (e.g., Erbay& Saltalı, 2012; Ernst, 2018; Kalburan, 2014; Little, 2010; Yalçın, 2015).

Furthermore, the negative attitudes of parents are emphasized as one of the barriers, that negatively affect teachers' perspectives toward outdoor play and learning in the study conducted by Tunçeli and Şenöz (2022). In this study, the researchers highlighted those parents limit their children's outdoor play opportunities via their demands to shape children's outdoor experiences because of their concerns related to safety and health. In another study, it was illustrated that New Zealand parents believe the benefits of risk play but most of them do not allow their children to have the experiences associated with risky play (Jelleyman et al., 2019). Sandseter (2010) described risky play as involving "thrilling and exciting forms of physical play that involve uncertainty and a risk of physical injury" (p. 22)

All in all, it is important to conduct studies on how children's connection with nature can be supported and maintained through effective outdoor practices (Yılmaz-Uysal, 2023). The mentioned studies in this part demonstrated the necessity of enriching perspectives and experiences regarding OPAL. For this reason, the participatory action research design was selected to implement the research to enrich perspectives and experiences of parents regarding OPAL in this study. McNiff (2016) emphasized that action research could be a great tool to support sociocultural change in the society through inspiring individuals to think critically regarding their assumptions what they accept about life. Action research is able to influence perspectives and encourage participants to reflect on their experiences in education settings while supporting the process through combination of theories and practices (Bolton, 2010).

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to enrich the involvement of parents in outdoor play and learning (OPAL) in the schoolyard through action-based practices. In this context, the study aimed to implement diverse action-based practices enriching the perspectives and experiences of participants on parental involvement in OPAL. In parallel to this study's aim and described statement of the problem, participatory action research was conducted with a focus on the following questions;

1. How do teachers and parents perceive and interpret parental involvement in OPAL?
2. What are the experiences of teachers and parents with parental involvement in OPAL?
3. What are the characteristics of action-based practices enhancing the involvement of parents more in OPAL?
4. How has parental involvement changed through action-based practices regarding OPAL?
 - How do teachers perceive and interpret changes regarding parental involvement in OPAL?
 - How do parents perceive and interpret changes regarding parental involvement in OPAL?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The current study was conducted to enrich parental involvement for OPAL in the schoolyard through action-based practices. The current study is believed to have the potential to be significant in different ways. First, the study that was conducted is believed to be significant in terms of contributing to early childhood education research. When the literature was examined, it was seen that diverse studies investigated the topic of OPAL but it was also seen that most of the participants consisted of one group like teachers or children (e.g., Ata, 2016; Mart, 2018; Cooley, 2019; Kim, 2021). Based on the findings of their meta-analysis study, Öztürk and Özer (2021) stated that outdoor-related studies conducted in Türkiye mostly include

just a group of teachers or parents so involving just one group of participants can set up a limitation to understanding experiences and perspectives on the outdoors. According to qualitative researchers, events' meaning is influenced by their context which generally involves different subgroups. Hence, involving subgroups into a qualitative study can assist the researcher in reaching the most insights possible into examined phenomena (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In addition to this, most of the action research studies were found to be conducted through the participation of children according to Kaptan and Dinç (2023) who examined 47 conducted action research studies between the years of 2011 and 2021 in Türkiye. Therefore, the current study has the potential to contribute to the existing literature on outdoor play and learning by involving two different participant groups. Using data from two different participant groups simultaneously, namely data triangulation, provides a more comprehensive and detailed picture of participants' experiences and perspectives (Patton, 2015; Denzin, 2017).

Furthermore, it was reached that doctoral studies related to OPAL are less than master theses conducted in Türkiye according to a meta-analysis study conducted by Korkmaz and Erdemir (2021). This finding was also supported by Özgürsoy and Yıldırım (2021) who examined master and doctoral theses published between the years 2003 and 2020. Based on their findings, the researchers pointed out that there are few doctoral studies compared to master studies, and most of the examined studies were found to be implemented to examine perspectives on OPAL. Hence, the researchers recommend that further studies focus on the implementation of outdoor applications. In addition to this, it was demonstrated that most of the parental involvement studies conducted in Türkiye consisted of quantitative studies according to findings of the study conducted by Çopur and Tezel-Şahin (2022) who examined 123 articles, master and doctorate studies conducted between the years of 2000 and 2021. Moreover, Çalışkan and Serçe (2018) found that early childhood education-related action studies were the least common among the 80 studies examined between the years 2010 and 2015. Hence, it is believed that the current study carries importance as being the initial postgraduate thesis exploring outdoor play and learning experiences of both teachers and parents in the context of Türkiye through the agency of participatory action research conducted with the qualitative design.

While being encouraged to be continuous learners, teachers can benefit from this study by gaining a critical perspective on their educational practices to improve these practices and support the learning and development outcomes of children (Penton-Herrera, 2018). Through the agency of this action study, teachers can see how parent involvement could be strengthened in early childhood education regarding the OPAL. Besides this, this study can demonstrate what kind of problems arise while strengthening this involvement and how these problems can be solved. In this way, teachers and school administrations can be motivated to conduct a similar process in their schools to build and enrich parental involvement to improve OPAL practices in early childhood education.

Secondly, the study that was conducted is believed to be significant in terms of contributing to practices of parental involvement and OPAL in early childhood education. Çağlar (1981) emphasized that the early years of childhood are generally the period in which the child acquires a large portion of the behaviors and habits that she must learn and that will affect her throughout her life (as cited in Şahin-Karapınar, 2015). “Each and every outdoor environment needs to be seen as a unique resource for practitioners to make the most of what a particular setting affords” (Nugent, 2016, p. 238) The role of the teachers is crucial as they prepare the outdoor experiences of children to meet their developmental needs so teacher need to fully understand the significance of the OPAL. Therefore, teachers need to provide planned and daily OPAL time they scaffold the learning experiences of children while supporting different developmental skills in the outdoor environment (Bullard, 2014). Adults need to pay attention to the preparation of the outdoor environment, the language they use, and their interactions with children during outdoor experiences to support the child's bond with nature (Dönmez, 2023).

“When children engage in outdoors in a supportive context and similarly motivated adults encourage meaningful interactions, they are likely to better placed to make sense of environmental challenges, live healthily and develop a lasting appreciation of outdoor environments”(Nugent, 2016, p. 243). The collaboration among the teacher, parents, and school principal supports learning and development more in OPAL practices (Burçak, 2024). Çabuk et al., (2020) recommend that children need

parent and teacher role models demonstrating positive behaviors toward the environment, to develop a positive perception of the environment.

Family and school are two key institutions with different educational functions that complement each other for the socialization of the child. The holistic development of the child in school will be able to reach its goal (potential) at a high level with the active participation of the parents in the school (Yazgın, 2021). Children are affected by their family members' relationships with nature while laying the foundations of their relationships with nature (Değirmenci, 2023). If the family has a habit of spending time in nature, the child also is acquiring this habit but if the family has a weak connection with the outdoors the child's connection becomes weak (Remmers et al., 2014; Spurrier et al., 2018). Families who are not sufficiently aware of the impact of outdoor learning on children's development often they may be very anxious about their children being outside. Therefore, it is very important to convey to families the compatibility of outdoor play with early learning goals and the benefits it provides to children in light of scientific research results (Burçak, 2024).

“School staff and parents are intrinsic partners in facilitating children's access to the outdoors and the associated learning opportunities” (Parsons & Traunter, 2019, p.699). In this context, Kandemir and Sevimli-Çelik (2021) demonstrated the need to involve parents in OPAL to make OPAL more transparent to them so they can effectively understand why children need to have regular OPAL time in schools. The need to enhance OPAL practice is also illustrated by Aysu and Aral (2024) who pointed out that teachers generally use the schoolyard to support physical development through free play practices since they do not consider the schoolyard as a learning environment, and these outdoor practices change with weather conditions, inadequate time, lack of materials, and limitations of school principal. As one of the researchers who studied outdoor experiences in the early years, Kanat (2020) emphasized that teachers need a development program to support professional skills in outdoor learning.

Furthermore, Cooley (2019) conducted action research to enrich children's learning experiences. The researcher suggested that further studies needed to be conducted to understand how teachers and administrators can develop the school curriculum by

integrating outdoor learning activities. Algarvio and Leal (2016) pointed out the necessity of supporting the communication skills of professionals to communicate better with parents to address their concerns because extreme concern could negatively affect the well-being of children.

In a sociocultural framework, this action research study can contribute to the area of early childhood education by helping to minimize the concerns of parents regarding learning and playing outdoors. The healthy development of a child depends on the nature and behavior of all adults who are in contact with the child, especially the parents (Tantekin-Erden, 2021). The examined literature demonstrated that there is a need for a study contributing to the development of perspectives and practices in OPAL not only for teachers but also for parents whose children are in the early childhood period (e.g. Fidan, 2021; Burçak, 2018; Cooley, 2019; Kanat, 2020; Lungu & Matafwali 2020; Sezgin, 2016; Bough, 2018; Vogt et al., 2018). Ata-Aktürk and Demircan (2024) highlighted the need for the development of parental involvement programs making sure that parents feel valuable through their contributions to support their children's learning experiences. In another study conducted on the beliefs and practices of teachers on outdoor learning and outdoor play, Burçak (2018) recommended the involvement of parents in studies via interviews as well as the usage of observations and document analysis to provide a deeper perspective on outdoor play and learning. In another participatory action research conducted by Gessiou (2022) to enhance OPAL in a preschool, the researcher demonstrated the need to inform parents about outdoor benefits to involve them in the process more. Similarly, Fidan (2021) highlighted the need for the implementation of parent seminars to increase the parental attitude toward outdoor experiences in early childhood education.

The usage of outdoor environments to meet the traditional environments' inadequacies, such as overloaded schedules and physical inadequacies, in supporting parental involvement. Parents can be provided with the opportunity to observe their children in nature and be involved in learning experiences with them to understand how their children learn in nature. In addition, programs that include semi-structured learning experiences can be used to reinforce the importance of children's connection with nature, and parents can be involved in the learning process of their children.

Parents actively become a part of the child's education and share the learning experience with the child. In particular, parents should be made aware of the abilities that children develop in nature during early childhood. Various environments can be created so that families can attribute the same value to experiences gained in nature with their children (Çiğ, 2022).

Due to all of these reasons explained in this section, the current study is believed to have the potential to contribute to the existing literature on early childhood education. In this way, the current study is expected to enhance teachers' and parents' perspectives and practices about parental involvement in OPAL that could be shared with the relevant parties in the field. Teachers and parents can follow these practices to reduce the barriers and enrich the outdoor experiences for children in their early years.

1.5. Definition of Important Terms

Early Childhood Education (ECE): “The education process focuses on the development and learning processes of children from birth to eight” (Morrison, 2015, p.65).

Play: Play is any behavior characterized by “nonlinearity, intrinsic motivation, process orientation, free choice, and positive affect” (Johnson et al., 1999)

Learning: Learning is “a permanent behavior change” (Cicceralli & White, 2013, p.135).

Outdoor Play: Outdoor play can be defined as activities of play that take place outdoors and support hands-on experiences, active learning, and independence skills ((Maynard&Waters,2014)

Outdoor Learning: Outdoor learning refers to experiences occurring outdoors that result in learning (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2023).

Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL): In the current study, outdoor play and learning refer to play and learning activities that are held in the schoolyard (eg making mud pies, looking for insects)

Parent: A parent is a person who is responsible for the care of the child even if he/she is biologically related or not (Berger Riojas-Cortez, 2015).

Parental Involvement: Parental involvement could be described as the support and involvement of individuals who are caregivers and guardians. Parental involvement could be exemplified with activities like being a classroom volunteer, being involved in special events like birthday parties, and so on (Collins & O'Brien, 2011)

Parent-involved Activity: The parent-involved activity was used to describe action-based practices in which parents are only involved in the implication, not the preparation process.

Perspective: “a way of thinking about something, especially one which is influenced by the type of person you are or by your experiences” (Longman, 2011, p.1297). In the current study, it was used to examine participants’ thinking on the effects of OPAL on development and learning processes.

Practices: It is a “particular way of doing something” (Longman, 2011, p.1358). The current study refers to activities that teachers and parents do with children for outdoor play and learning experiences.

Action-based practices: The current study refers to action-based practices as activities like parent-teacher meetings, communication with parents by messaging, and implementation of parent-involved activities, done to involve parents more in the process.

1.6. Summary of the Introduction

Throughout the years, outdoor play and learning (OPAL) has been gaining significance by diverse studies exploring the benefits of outdoor environments on children’s learning and development experiences in the light of theorists who are Froebel, Pestalozzi and Rousseau. These theorists became some of the pioneers of OPAL by emphasizing the role of nature on the significant development experiences of children in the early years (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000; Morrison, 2015).

Some of the OPAL benefits were emphasized as moving freely in the area (Bilton, 2010), promoting overall well-being (Hinkley et al., 2018) and development of inquiry-based skills (Power & Williams-Ridge, 2019). Even though diverse studies illustrated the benefits of OPAL for children's learning and development experiences, there are still factors shaping OPAL practices in the school. Some of these factors were highlighted as to be related to teachers. To illustrate misconceptions that teachers have about OPAL can limit their OPAL practices (Frost et al., 2004) or teachers' safety concern can restrict them to conduct parental involvement activities in the outdoor (Kutlu-Abu & Kayar, 2020).

Furthermore, parents are also important to shape perspectives and experiences of children regarding OPAL. To give an example, Kandemir and Sevimli-Çelik (2021) reached that parental concern limits teachers to conduct OPAL activities regularly in the school. The lack of cooperation between teachers and parents was also indicated by this study. In addition to this, Bilton (2010) exemplified barriers like car accidents, too much technological usage or stranger danger as society-related barrier for OPAL in the early years. In the light of the given information, the relevant study aiming to enrich the parental involvement in OPAL through diverse action-based practices which are focusing to enrich perspectives and experiences of the preschool teachers and parents. Based on this research aim, this study was conducted with the guidance of following research questions which are (i) How participants perceive and interpret parental involvement in OPAL? (ii) What are the experiences of participants with parental involvement in OPAL? (iii) What are the characteristics of action-based practices enhancing the involvement of parents more in OPAL? And (iv) How has parental involvement changed through action-based practices regarding OPAL?

The conducted study is believed to be significant for diverse reasons. Firstly, the study is expected to contribute the literature by involving not only teachers but also parents to provide a broader perspective on OPAL. In addition to this, the current study is believed to be important by its methodology which is participatory action study. Secondly, the current study is believed to be significant by contributing to the practices of early childhood education. To illustrate, the findings of this study can shed light to enrich OPAL practices, and also parental involvement practices. The study can also direct teachers who they want to minimize the barriers that they encounter while

implementing OPAL time. Lastly, the study is believed to demonstrate an effective way to involve parents in OPAL to enrich OPAL experiences for the best benefit of children.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to provide a review of the literature on outdoor play and learning experiences as well as parental involvement in early childhood education. For this purpose, the chapter includes six different sections demonstrating a systematic literature review. The first section focuses on demonstrating a historical background for outdoor play and learning experiences in the period of early childhood education. In the second section, diverse theories are explained and argued on how they construct a base for the current study. The third section aims to construct a perspective on why outdoor experiences need to be involved in early childhood. Furthermore, the fourth section summarizes the needs and benefits of parental involvement in early childhood education. In the fifth section, the experiences and professional knowledge of the researcher are described to emphasize how these components are used to construct and conduct the current study. The last section provides a brief summary of the whole chapter.

2.1. Historical Background of Outdoor Experiences in Early Childhood Education

Throughout the long history of humanity, individuals and societies have been a part of the outdoors while trying to survive and live together, so not only the body but also the mind is shaped via the outdoors to live in harmony with nature (White, 2014).

When the history and philosophy of child development were examined, the connection of nature and ideas about how children should be raised and educated could be seen. As associated with child development, the historical background of outdoor

experiences, which are outdoor play and outdoor learning, involves lots of diverse pioneers and their approaches. The first of these pioneers could be considered as Rousseau (1712-1778). Rousseau focused on naturalism which emphasizes raising children based on their nature without any societal effects, and he put forward nature as one of the sources of education. (Erdiller, 2016). Naturalistic education facilitates children to grow without not only restrictions but also interferences. Additionally, naturalistic education supports and motivates children to be happy, spontaneous, and curious related to childhood (Morrison, 2015). From Rousseau's viewpoint, play is a tool for learning and development since the child constructs knowledge when she explores, tests, and solves problems through play experiences (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). In his book *Emile*, in which he describes the raising of a hypothetical child from birth to adolescence, the innate goodness was emphasized to be corrupted by society so the book offers a way to raise a child based on their nature without damaging their innate goodness (Morrison, 2021). Rousseau's arguments on the significance of sensory experiences affected the ideas of Pestalozzi and Frobel (Hinitz, 2013).

“Rousseau established a way of thinking about young children that is reflected in the educational practice of Pestalozzi and Froebel” (Morrison, 2015, p.131). The second pioneer could be considered as Pestalozzi (1746-1827) who opened a school for children according to their abilities that enabled each child to succeed in their way through play-based school programs. His school was established on the ideas of Rousseau's back to nature (Morrison, 2015). Pestalozzi attached importance to providing sensory experiences to facilitate the learning process of children. As well as sensory experiences, exploring and discovering were also emphasized for children in the learning process (Hinitz, 2013). Pestalozzi advocated observation in teaching to increase the quality of processes (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). He emphasized that education should be focused on experiences with senses to assist children in reaching their natural potential. With the guidance of this idea, Pestalozzi developed object lessons proposing that children efficiently learn concepts if they use senses via manipulative materials. He also affected modern education with the development and implementation of family-centered approaches (Morrison, 2015).

The third pioneer could be considered as Frobel (1782-1852). He is described as the “father of the kindergarten” (Hinitz, 2013). For children, who are under the age of

seven, he organized his ideas and developed a method and philosophy for early education and named it kindergarten, namely “child garden” (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Froebel emphasized that a child is born good and the adult’s role is to help the child to make this goodness develop by providing suitable activities as well as environments. In this way, the child also will be protected from gaining evil tendencies, namely bad habits (Tassoni & Hucker, 2005). He believed that outdoor environments also needed to be provided for children’s learning processes, and outdoor activities needed to be conducted to support interests in learning (Dilek, 2022).

Froebel highlighted play as a tool to develop children from within outwards (Hinitz, 2013). Education needs to advance within a continuous and orderly growth as in nature according to Froebel. Development occurs in stages and each stage is significant to be built in the next stage so earlier stages are significant for the proper development of the next stages. Froebel suggested that parents involve their children in their occupations and provide space for play experiences. He emphasized that play needs to be compatible with not only nature but also the ability of the child. Learning needs to be directed by the child having the freedom to move without restrictions. With the help of play experiences, the child learns about the external world, and physical materials so play helps the child to develop the mind and make a connection with the wider world (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000).

In terms of play, Froebel emphasized the significance of imaginative and symbolic play since they are signs of high-quality learning. Ideas of this pioneer have some significant effects on modern early childhood education, like child-centered education programs and learning through exploring and discovering (Tassoni & Hucker, 2005). Froebel developed “Gifts and the Occupations” to enable children to work with nature forms representing knowledge and beauty. Gifts consist of 3d and open-ended materials such as wooden blocks and rings that were formed to recreate the objects that are observed in different environments. Besides Gifts, Occupations consisted of activities such as clay modeling, paper folding, painting, sewing, and drawing (Hinitz, 2013). The gifts and occupations form the kindergarten’s not only method but also the curriculum. In other words, they were used for the development of children alongside nature studies and music (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). He was the first philosopher who systematically planned a curriculum and educational methodology for children

compared to Pestalozzi who was just advocating a teaching system for children. He compared a child to a growing flower, and a teacher to a gardener (Morrison, 2015).

2.2. Theoretical Background of the Study

Reviewing the related literature can be regarded as one of the ways for identifying and establish the theoretical background for a qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). Regarding this, the current study was supported within diverse theories, models and frameworks as to be related to outdoor play, outdoor learning, and parental involvement so the theoretical background guided the whole participatory action research process.

2.2.1. Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979) brought forward that describing development needs more than observation of changing behaviors so the ecological systems theory was constructed to meet this requirement to explain children's development process which occurs through the interaction of different systems involving more than one setting and person. Doherty and Hughes (2014) argued that ecological systems theory delivers benefits to understanding the development of children through incorporating ecological environments into their social and cultural life. These environments were exemplified as community, school, and home where the child lives and that are in interaction to shape the development process. "The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls." (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.3)

The theory consists of four different systems: "microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem". The first system, which is the microsystem, is the ecological system involving patterns of specific direct relations experienced by the child who is at the center of this system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The current study regards microsystems as relations among children, teachers, parents, and physical qualities of the outdoor environment. The child stays in the center while she constructs direct relations with teachers and also the outdoor environment. The attitude of adults affects

children's practices in the outdoor environment. To illustrate, a teacher or a parent who embraced a co-player role in outdoor play may encourage the child to have more qualified outdoor play experiences.

The second system, which is named mesosystem, consists of relations among more than two settings where the child is actively involved (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Teacher and parent collaboration on increasing the quality of outdoor experiences in school could be given as an example in the framework of the current study. The third system is an exosystem which is described as a system affecting the child who does not actively be a part of it. In parallel to current research, the exosystem can be exemplified through the agency of setting school policies on the outdoor experiences of children. In other words, the child is not an active person while shaping school policy on outdoor experiences but the child is affected by these relations. Another example of an exosystem could be given from the study of Cevher-Kalburan and Ivrendi (2016) who were exploring parental attitudes as associated with outdoor play. The researchers illustrated the over-protective style of parents as a barrier to the development of risk-taking skills during outdoor play experiences.

The fourth system, which is the macrosystem, is described as consistent patterns among subcultures, cultures, systems of belief, ideologies, and values of society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As associated with the current study, teachers' and parents' cultural values on safety and hygiene concerns in outdoor experiences could be given as examples for macrosystems. Another example could be given through the study of Sandseter et al. (2020). The researchers illustrated that Norwegian preschool teachers and parents are less concerned about experiences of outdoor play compared to other participants living in Eastern Europe. This finding demonstrated that societies could have different cultures toward the outdoor experiences of children in their early years. Morrison (2015) stated that the ecological system theory affected modern education in terms of diverse aspects. Firstly, teachers become more conscious of the effects of a diverse environment on shaping the lives of children. Secondly, teachers-parents collaboration became more significant to deliver positive effects and minimize negative effects in the development and learning processes. Not only teachers but also parents have increased their awareness that the development process is dependent on the environments and natures of children.

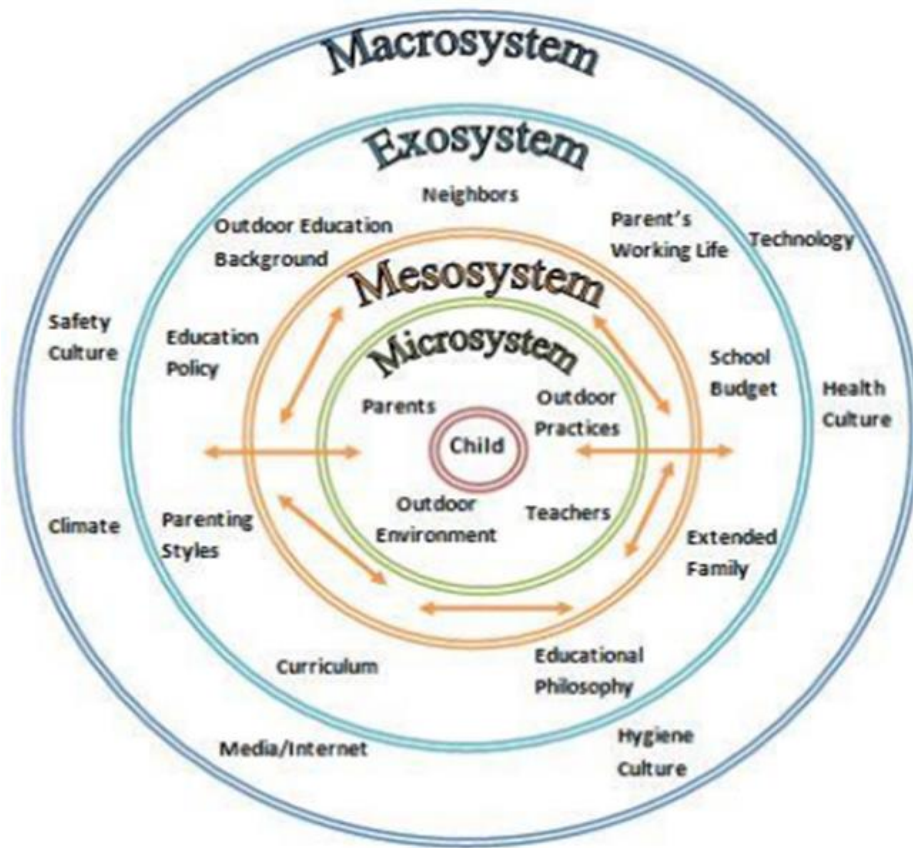


Figure 2.1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems in Outdoor Experiences

Note. From “Outdoor Time Practices in Early Childhood Education: Parent and Teacher Views” by M.Kandemir, 2020, [Master Thesis, METU], p.26.

2.2.2. Affordances Theory

The affordances theory was constructed by Gibson in 1977. Affordances are defined as offerings of the environment to animals and humans for good or not good. An example of a surface, where it is flat, horizontal, wide, and rigid, could be given as one of the affordances that humans can easily walk and run on. In this example, the environment provided a good affordance for humans but a water surface provides not good affordance for humans to walk and run, maybe it can provide good affordances for animals to move. Affordances could not be interpreted as either objective or subjective properties since they cut across the subjectivity and objectivity dichotomy to assist humans to understand the inadequacy of the environment. Therefore,

affordances involve both the environment and the observer's behaviors so the observer's behaviors are directed according to the observer's perception and interpretations of the environment's inadequacies (Gibson, 1977).

The affordances theory of Gibson was adapted to the literature related to children's environments via studies of prominent researchers like Heft (1988) and Kytta (2002). In the review article of Heft (1988), the researcher further developed the theory of affordance by forming a taxonomy to understand the function of the environment in terms of the perception of children and their behaviors that were based on psychological aspects like fear and strength so functions of physical qualities were used instead of their forms to properties of an outdoor environment for children. Kytta (2002) benefited from the affordances taxonomy developed by Heft (1988) to analyze the affordances of the outdoor environment in two different countries for children who are 8-9 years old. The data was collected from 98 children from Finland and 143 children from Belarus via semi-structured interviews involving questions related to the taxonomy of Heft (1988). The analysis of SPSS demonstrated significant differences among affordances for the two countries in terms of availability, level, location, and distribution for outdoor experiences.

The theory of affordances is widely used in studies related to risky play experiences in the early years. Little and Stapleton (2021) provided a critical viewpoint about outdoor play experiences related to the belonging component and risky play while benefiting from the theory of affordance during their research process of the case study. Data were collected through the agency of photos, videos, and field notes collected in unstructured observations of 20 children, who are 18-26-month, and their 6 teachers who are teaching in a preschool located in Australia. After the analysis of data via coding in NVivo, the findings demonstrated that redesigned outdoor environments by children afford a sense of social, emotional, and spatial belonging, and also physical affordances of the outdoor environment support risky play experiences. The researcher also emphasized that risky elements like large rocks afforded physical, social, and emotional belonging since children frequently used risky materials in their social play during observations.

In another study, similar results related to the connection between outdoor environment affordances and risky play were reached. In this study, Obee et al. (2021) examined the risky play experiences of children in outdoor environments so as to understand how children benefit from the environment's affordances for experiences of risky play in Norway. The researchers benefited from photos and field notes taken during participant observations and also focused video observations to explore how 36-48-months old children use qualities and materials of environments for risky play experiences. The data collected from 28 children were analyzed via thematic analysis, and it demonstrated that outdoor environments provide good affordances via three categories that are stable, movable, and weather features for risky play experiences. The researchers also illustrated that the usage of loose materials increases affordances for adaptable and different risky play experiences.

This study benefits from the affordance study to explore and understand teachers' and parents' perceptions of the outdoor environment and the relation between behaviors related to outdoor play and learning. In other words, the affordances theory was utilized to understand participants' interpretations of the environment so outdoor practices were effectively explored and adjusted for the benefit of children since these interpretations of the environment affect outdoor practices. Namely, advantages of outdoor environments were considered to make connection with affordances theory. To give an example, mud could be a good affordance for outdoor learning if teachers and adults perceive mud as a facilitator of learning.

On the other hand, mud could be a not good affordance for outdoor learning in terms of teachers and parents who perceive it as a threat to hygiene and health conditions for children. Moreover, rainy weather conditions could be a good affordance for learning seasons and the cycle of water but if the teacher perceives rainy weather as a threat causing children to be ill then the teacher will limit outdoor learning during rainy weather conditions. Furthermore, materials in the outdoor environment could be regarded as dangerous for parents who perceive outdoor materials as a cause for the physical injuries of children. This perception could result in changing the outdoor environment in a way that limits the improvement of risk-taking skills for children in the early years.

2.2.3. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of play has significant effects on constructing the understanding of the developmental significance of play in children. This theory emphasizes that play serves as a crucial medium through which children acquire cognitive, social, and emotional skills within the context of their culture. At the core of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory lies the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which delineates the space between a child's present level of development and their potential level of development with the aid of a more knowledgeable other, typically an adult or a peer. Play is regarded as an ideal milieu for the emergence of the ZPD, as it affords children the opportunity to engage in activities slightly beyond their current abilities, with support from more competent individuals (Vygotsky, 1978; Senemoğlu, 2013; Morrison, 2014).

Vygotsky identified two primary types of play: spontaneous (or free) play and guided (or cooperative) play. Spontaneous play entails activities initiated and directed by the child, fostering creativity, imagination, and exploration. In contrast, guided play involves collaboration with others, often under the guidance of an adult, and serves to promote social interaction, communication, and the internalization of cultural norms and values. Central to Vygotsky's theory is the acknowledgment of the influence of culture on children's development, play is perceived as a cultural activity that reflects the values, beliefs, and practices of a given society. Helanko Researchers have explored how cultural variations impact the types of play children engage in, as well as the roles and expectations associated with play within different communities (Corsaro, 2005). Understanding these cultural nuances is imperative for educators and caregivers in providing meaningful and relevant play experiences for children from diverse backgrounds.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory has profound implications for education, particularly in early childhood settings. Play-based learning approaches, which emphasize hands-on, experiential activities guided by adults, closely align with Vygotsky's emphasis on social interaction and scaffolding in learning (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012). Research has demonstrated the efficacy of play-based interventions in

enhancing language development, problem-solving skills, and social competence in young children (Bodrova & Leong, 2007).

Despite the widespread acclaim for Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of play, it has not been immune to criticism. Some scholars have questioned the universality of Vygotsky's ideas, suggesting that they may not fully capture the diversity of children's experiences across different cultural contexts (Wertsch, 1985). Others have advocated for further empirical research to elucidate the mechanisms through which play influences development and to explore its long-term ramifications into adolescence and adulthood (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978).

2.2.4. The Dual Capacity-Building Framework

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework is a comprehensive approach introduced in 2013 and developed by the U.S. Department of Education that aims to enhance student achievement by strengthening the capacities of both families and teachers in supporting learning and development (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The Dual Capacity-Building Framework underscores the reciprocal relationship between families and schools, acknowledging that both play crucial roles in supporting children's education. By strengthening the capacities of both educators and parents and fostering collaborative partnerships, this model aims to create inclusive and supportive learning environments that positively impact student achievement and well-being (Henderson et al., 2007).

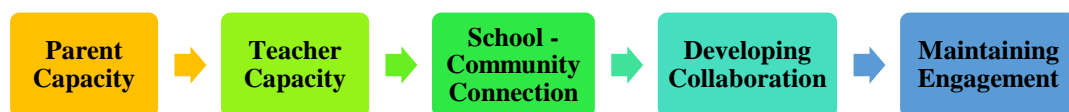


Figure 2.2 *The Dual Capacity-Building Framework*

This framework involves five different components: building parent capacity, building teacher capacity, developing collaboration, connecting the school and community, and maintaining engagement with families and the community. Among these components, the first two components are believed to carry significant potential for the current study. The first component provided two crucial points, which are empowerment and skills development. Empowerment focuses on empowering parents with the necessary

skills, knowledge, and confidence to actively engage in their children's education experiences. This point includes providing resources, workshops, and training sessions that equip parents with strategies to support learning at home, understand educational standards, and communicate effectively with teachers. Furthermore, skill development refers to guidance, which is for parents, on how to navigate the educational system, understand academic expectations, assist with homework, and create conducive learning environments at home. The second component of this model, which is building educator capacity argues that the teachers receive training and professional development to enhance their ability to engage with families effectively. This includes workshops on cultural competence, communication strategies, family outreach techniques, and understanding diverse family backgrounds. Educators learn to build trusting relationships with families and understand the importance of involving parents in their children's education. Additionally, teachers are equipped with skills to collaborate with families, recognize their strengths, and incorporate family perspectives into classroom practices. They learn to communicate effectively, create inclusive environments, and involve families in decision-making processes regarding their children's education (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Henderson et al., 2007; Grant & Ray, 2000)

2.2.5. Parents as Teachers (PAT) Model

This home-visiting program aims to facilitate children's holistic development by increasing their parents' knowledge in early childhood development and supporting their parenting skills through a developed curriculum implemented by trained specialists (Parents as Teachers, 2023). Parents as Teachers (PAT) was structured as a free program implemented via volunteer work for the parents of children from birth to the age of five (OAISD, n.d.). In 1980, this evidence-based parent program was developed firstly by Missouri educators with the lead of Midred Winter they conducted the program as a pilot project for parents who have newborns, and the program was expanded to the U.S. and after diverse countries from 1985 (Parents as Teachers, 2023). The PAT program has four different dynamic aspects: home visits, meetings with other parents in a group, regular developmental screening for children, and a network providing diverse resources to help parents (OAISD, n.d.).

The PAT program was constructed on diverse basic beliefs. The first of these beliefs is that considering a parent as the first and most effective teacher in their children's life. Alongside this significant belief, the PAT program also highlights that the early childhood period is the most crucial one to support holistic development and establish a base for future success in not only school but also life. Another belief supporting the program framework is that the children and their parents need to reach the same opportunities in order to be healthy and successful without considering their characteristics such as the location that they live in or their income. Besides this, the PAT program focuses on serving parents while celebrating diversity in their cultures and traditions. Lastly, the program pointed out that scientific research needs to be the base of community parent projects while considering services, materials, and so on (Parents as Teachers, n.d.)

Studies conducted regarding the PAT program demonstrated the effects of this program on parental involvement. These studies found that the PAT program facilitates low-income parents to engage with their children more through early literacy activities such as reading aloud and singing songs. Parents who participated in this program demonstrated active involvement in the schooling of their children. To illustrate the program participant parents contact with teachers of their children to conduct teacher and parent meetings and support school learning more at home (as cited in Iowa Department of Education, 2007).

In a study conducted by Ding et al. (2023), 803 PAT program participant parents completed pre and post-surveys to provide data regarding the examination of changes in their parenting skills through project participation. This study revealed that the PAT program supports parenting skills associated with resilience, social-emotional competence, social connection, and concrete support. Relate to the PAT program, Lahti et al. (2019) conducted an experimental study to examine how the program is affecting the behaviors of parents besides their children's math and language skills besides their school participation. These researchers found that parents and children, who are the program participants, demonstrated better preformation in the specified skills, school participation, parenting behaviors, and knowledge related to the development of children.

Established in 1993 with the purpose of supporting disadvantaged children to have healthy development and effective learning experiences, AÇEV has been working in Türkiye for over 30 years (AÇEV, 2023). Bekman and Koçak (2011) demonstrated the effectiveness of one of the AÇEV programs, named AÇEP. The researchers interviewed 100 mothers participating in the AÇEP program, and they found that the AÇEP program supports the mothers' attitudes and behaviors regarding child-rearing. During the implementation of AÇEP, it was also seen that fathers need a program so BADEP (Father Support Program) was designed and implemented by AÇEV to support fathers' attitudes and behaviors regarding child-rearing (Kılıç, 2010).

2.2.6. Place-Based Education (PBE)

“Place-based education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum” (Sobel, 2004, p. 7) Problem- and project-based learning are combined with place-based learning to expand the possibilities for suitable interaction (Huntley & Sobel, 2019).

Place-based education carries the learning outside of the school walls by integrating the experience and meaning of the place (Yemini et al., 2023). Popularized by David Sobel who formed the principles of modern place-based education, place-based education (PBE) provides a basis for the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other topics by introducing pupils to the local heritage, culture, environment, landscapes, possibilities, and experiences (National Park Service, 2010; Hamilton, 2018). PBE first attempts to fortify the connection of the child to the place where she lives by focusing on the commitment to the community (Smith, n.d.).

Because it is based on solving real-world problems, PBE serves as a bridge between students and society. By integrating history, geography, science, the environment, media, and languages, PBE becomes interdisciplinary and enhances the enjoyment of learning across disciplines (Elbaz, 2023). According to Ark (2016), PBE is a teaching method making use of the location's natural features to provide individualized instruction that is significant, genuine, and captivating for students through a real experience immersing them in the neighborhood and serves as a foundation for

studying geography, history, literature, the arts, mathematics, science, and other subjects that can be studied anywhere.

2.3. The Need for Outdoor Experiences in Early Childhood Education

The need for outdoor experiences consists of diverse perspectives related to early childhood education. The first of these perspectives can be explained by the broken connection between children and nature. The broken connection between nature and children is trying to be fixed in diverse ways in today's world. An increase in the popularity of virtual reality products promising to fulfill the need to be outdoors is used as one of the ways to fix this broken connection. Powers and Williams-Ridge (2019) argued that the usage of technological tools like videos, photos, and interactive simulators, which can be described as secondary experiences, cannot be regarded as real-life experiences. Hence, secondary experiences are not equal to primary experiences that are defined as outdoor experiences assisting children to explore their parts in nature and strengthen the connection between nature and children via real-life experiences. The underlying reasons for this argument are presented in the following parts via support of current studies in the area of literature. The broken connection with nature creates negative effects on the learning and development of children since children significantly need outdoor experiences for their whole development and efficient learning processes (Louv, 2017)

The first of the key needs for outdoor experiences could be examined in terms of learning in the early years. When the definition of learning is explained to children in their early years, it can be stated that learning is more special for young children since they need to interact with the world around them through sensing, moving, using their whole bodies, and expressing. Therefore, they need real-life experiences that involve play-based explorations of the materials (White, 2014). At this point, outdoor experiences in school settings can be regarded as a solution for providing real-life experiences since outdoor experiences deliver experiential learning opportunities for children so whole developmental areas of children can be supported via these experiences (Powers and Williams-Ridge, 2019).

Beames et al. (2012) emphasized that school outdoor environments carry highly significant potential in terms of providing diverse educational opportunities for children (as cited in Afshar & Barrie, 2020). White (2014) suggested that an outdoor environment should be regarded as a garden, not a playground or a play space, where a child learns through exploring via senses and playing with natural materials through being active with the whole body.

Outdoor learning facilitates different cognitive skills for children in the process of learning. The benefits for cognitive development were demonstrated by illustrating positive effects on exploration and observation in the process of learning in an outdoor environment in a qualitative study that was conducted by Okur-Berberoglu (2021) in New Zealand. The researcher examined the effects of unstructured play in outdoor environments on children. Within the design of a single-participant case study, the data was collected via field notes and photos that were taken during observation sessions of unstructured play over two years. Besides the development of exploration observation skills, conducted content analysis of collected data also demonstrated the development of the participant in terms of creativity and self-confidence.

The need for outdoor experiences was also proven by different studies conducted in specific areas of learning. Conducted as a project, Citizen Scientist was implemented for a year with kindergarten children so as to provide learning experiences about plants and seasons. The evaluation of the project was conducted through weekly observations, semi-structured interviews, and group discussions. The results of the project illustrated that the learning process was facilitated via hands-on experiences. In the process, children engaged in authentic inquiry so they became more able to understand scientific concepts related to plants and seasons (Hatton et al., 2019). The term citizen scientist was first used by Alan Irwin who is a social scientist, and Rick Bonney who is an ornithologist in 1990 to emphasize the role that citizens play in observational or scientific endeavors (Science Europe, 2018).

Moreover, Aysu and Aral (2024) emphasized that integrating agricultural education into early childhood education will enable children to become producers who knows the process of a food from the field to the table through experiences that will help them to contribute to future agricultural management decision-making processes,

tackle the food and climate crisis. In the systematic review article, Miller et al. (2021) examined outdoor learning outcomes for children who are 4 to 12 years old via reviewing quantitative studies. From 6777 studies, the researchers reached 20 quantitative studies after implementing criteria for study selection. The findings illustrated 30 diverse outcomes in outcome areas of well-being and mental health, education, physical activity, social, and engagement. For these areas, all examined studies highlighted positive outcomes for children. The findings showed that outdoor learning increases achievement in literature and science makes children more involved in the learning process, and supports their communication skills as well as intelligence in emotional areas. Considered a new practice in Australia, bush kindergartens were demonstrated as effective in terms of providing a high level of wellbeing, and not only building confidence but also making involvement in the process of learning in terms of children (Campbell & Speldewinde, 2019). Similar results on positive relations between outdoor learning, well-being, and involvement in the learning process were reached by Storli and Sandseter (2019) through their quantitative study within the participation of 80 children who are 3 to 4 years old, and analysis of observations that were recorded and scales related to well-being and involvements.

Outdoor learning is not about taking indoor learning outdoors as well as taking the role of teachers outdoors since outdoors is the children's domain where children learn about social skills, about being human, and about the world through explorations by themselves (White, 2014). Learning in social and emotional development could be regarded as another need for outdoor experiences in early childhood education. A mixed-method study was conducted to examine the views of preschool teachers and children on the difference between indoor and outdoor learning. The researchers collected data from 2 teachers and 37 children who are 5 to 6 years old through online surveys, observations, and interviews. The study illustrated that teachers and children consider the outdoors as beneficial for increasing interest and enjoyment of the learning and teaching process (Guardino et al., 2019).

In parallel to finding supporting motivation toward learning, Powers and Williams-Ridge (2019) also emphasized that outdoor experiences carry benefits for children who have challenges in the learning and development process through the agency of inspiring them. For instance, a child can be more passionate about conducting learning

activities in an outdoor environment if the child is less interested in traditional indoor learning activities. For these children, outdoor experiences can take their attention while supporting their confidence, assisting the development of necessary learning skills, and having fun while learning.

The second of the key needs for outdoor experiences could be examined in terms of development in the early years. In addition to the physical activities they do in structured environments, children need to play where they can discover their own limits and away from adult leadership. The place where they meet these needs is nature, just like adults so children have a need to play in nature on a daily basis (Değirmenci, 2023). White (2014) argued that spending outdoor time is an indispensable developmental need and a human right for children in the early years since it has the potential to support holistic and healthy development by providing rich experiences, unlike indoor environments. Children benefit from fresh air, interact with natural materials, use their whole bodies, learn about being safe, develop social and emotional wellbeing, express themselves in creative ways, and feel freer to learn through explorations and senses. Children could be regarded as deprived if they are not experiencing the outdoors. At outdoors, children can feel freer since they can feel less adult control during outdoor experiences so they have more permission to be active.

Empirical evidence on the benefits of outdoor experiences for the development process of children in the early years is provided by different intervention studies. In the experimental study that was conducted by Yildırım and Akamca (2017), the researchers implemented a 10-week outdoor education module for disadvantaged children who live in İzmir so as to explore the effects of outdoor education on the development process of children who are 5 and 6 years old. The study was designed as one group pre-test and post-test design. Pre-test and post-test were conducted through observation forms involving scale items for all developmental skills of children. Within Wilcoxon's signed-ranked test analysis, the researchers demonstrated that outdoor activities have significant effects on areas of motor, social-emotional, language, and cognitive development.

The outdoor environment helps children and adults by enhancing and extending the learning and development opportunities that indoor environments could provide so outdoors should be perceived as an indispensable part of working in harmony with indoors to support children in their early years. Due to these reasons, high-quality outdoor experiences need to be carefully planned and prepared as much as indoor experiences (White, 2014). This preparation of high-quality outdoor experiences could be examined in terms of components such as teachers' roles, physical environment, the attitudes of adults, and so on.

In terms of the physical qualities of the outdoor environment, the outdoor environments need to be designed as adaptable, flexible, and sensory-rich areas as much as possible in order to meet the children's developmental needs. The adaptable and sensory-rich areas help the development of children through play since these environments provide flexibility which is significant for keeping not only arousal of interest but also the process of stimulation in experiences of play. Therefore, a designer needs to have an understanding related to the play experiences of children, and their developmental needs for an effective design of an outdoor environment (Walsh, 2016). An ideal outdoor environment needs to carry three characteristics: being versatile, flexible, and dynamic so that the environment will be the child's play environment where the child has opportunities to choose, create, and change. Through this design, the child will participate in decision-making processes related to play and learning experiences (White, 2014).

In the project that was founded by TUBITAK, Aydın-Turk et al. (2019) aimed to redesign elementary schools' outdoor environments as learning environments that support the academic, social, psychological, and physical development of children through the agency of forming a multidisciplinary approach. The researchers conducted the project in Trabzon, within a sample of five elementary schools. As the first step, a need analysis was conducted through observations and focus groups with diverse participants students, teachers, and principals. The data were analyzed within the SWOT approach so as to determine the problem and needs of each school and produce a plan for them. Under the light of analyzed data, the researchers produced designs for each outdoor environment and these designs were discussed with participants to select and implement the most suitable ones. As the project outputs, the

researchers produced a design guide involving information on how schools' outdoor environments could be designed as learning environments, checklists for qualified outdoor learning environments, and master plans that are maps of designed suitable outdoor learning environments for each school in the project. The researchers recommend that collaboration between the community, school, home, and government should be provided so as to redesign school environments that are suitable for physical limitations, the number of students, learning objectives of the curriculum.

For the national context related to the need for high-quality outdoor experiences, Yıldırım (2017) argued that the Ministry of National Education (2013) provided little importance to outdoor activities and outdoor environments in preschool programs because of the statements that little mentioned about outdoor environments and outdoor activities although the program highlighted the significance of the usage of creativity in terms of materials and play environments. Seker (2020) conducted a qualitative study in order to examine the qualities of outdoor environments in terms of safety, materials, and qualities of natural areas. 15 preschools, which are 10 public and 5 private schools, in Uşak were examined through the agency of structured observation. The collected data were analyzed via the approach of descriptive analysis. Findings illustrated that public preschools are more qualified in terms of safety, material, and natural areas in outdoor environments. Similar findings were also reached by Geney et al. (2019) resulting from their qualitative study to compare outdoor environment qualities of 20 public and 15 private schools located in Eskişehir, via structured observations, checklists, and taken photos. After descriptive analysis, the researchers illustrated the adequacy of public schools' outdoor environments in terms of the diversity of materials and size of areas. The findings of these studies demonstrated that private early childhood schools could be inadequate in terms of environmental quality.

Walsh (2016) stated that teachers have significant roles in play experiences since teachers observe, provide support, evaluate, and meet the needs for play experiences. They also help children to not only explore but also discover through the agency of play so the process does not depend on direct teaching and structured environments. Instead of benefiting from direct teaching and a structured environment for outdoor experiences, teachers use observations to provide diverse play opportunities within the

outdoor environment. Therefore, early childhood educators need to understand the potential and results of outdoor experiences for not only the well-being but also the development of children in the early years (White, 2014).

The perspectives and practices of teachers on outdoor experiences were explored by different studies in the area. Ebbeck et al. (2019) examined the views and practices of preschool teachers toward outdoor play through a mixed-method design the data was collected from 432 teachers in Singapore through a questionnaire involving both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Through analyses on SPSS and NVivo, it was reached that teachers experience barriers resulting from safety and health concerns, management of classroom in play, and inadequate physical environment even though teachers enjoy outdoor play and they believe it's beneficial for physical and social-emotional development of children in early years. It was also found that approximately half of the teachers (46%) provide regular play opportunities for children in outdoor environments.

Besides the perspective and practices of teachers, some studies also investigate parental attitudes and practices as associated with outdoor experiences. Mart (2021) examined parents' perceptions related to outdoor experiences in the early years. For this purpose, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 parents who are from Konya and who have children going to kindergarten. The collected data were analyzed within the NVivo program. The findings illustrated that parents prefer indoor activities because of their safety concerns even though they state their view as positively related to providing outdoor experiences for both school and out-of-school contexts. The researcher suggested that the conflict between the perception and preferences of parents in terms of outdoor activities should be explored by further researchers in the literature.

Barriers to play in outdoor environments were also illustrated through the results of the quantitative study that was conducted by Sandseter et al. (2020). How European teachers and parents recognize barriers to the play experiences of children in outdoor environments was investigated in the study of Sandseter et al. (2020). Analysis of questionnaires of 32 teachers and 184 parents illustrated stranger danger, traffic, and inadequate outdoor environments were regarded as barriers by parents. Furthermore,

physical harm and parental concerns were stated related to outdoor play by teachers. It was also found that Norwegian preschool teachers and parents are less concerned about outdoor play experiences compared to Eastern European teachers and parents according to the findings of this study.

Brussoni et al. (2021) conducted a randomized controlled trial research design to explore the effects of intervention programs aimed at developing mothers' tolerance for risky play and promoting opportunities for risky play. The sample of the study consisted of 451 mothers, whose children are 6 to 12 years old, and who also live in Canada. The participants were involved in three stages of a facilitated digital workshop that took 3 months to complete. The tolerance of risk in play scale and questionnaires were used as data collection tools in the study. The collected data was analyzed via correlation and logistic regression analysis on programs of R and Stata. The analysis demonstrated that intervention programs are effective ($p=.007$) for mothers to increase their tolerance toward outdoor play experiences. In parallel to the findings of this study, the researchers emphasized that web-based intervention programs could be effective in changing attitudes. The researchers also recommend that future researchers not only explore parental risk perception but also implement intervention programs for different cultures.

The Nature Playground project, which is conducted by Loftesnes (2021) in Norway, is an educational model aiming for preschool teachers and parents to be collaborative and more capable to design, create and use outdoor play environments for the benefit of children. With the participation of 18 teachers and 12 parents from nine kindergartens, the project was implemented. Participants are involved in courses in diverse areas that are the design of an outdoor play environment, outdoor play practices, and child development. As a result of the project, teachers and parents in nine kindergartens design their outdoor play areas and benefit from this area for a year with the participation of 2-4 days a week. The evaluation of the project was conducted via questionnaires and unstructured interviews. It was reached that participants began to spend more time outdoors with children and their knowledge and confidence related to the preparation and implementation of outdoor play experiences, were increased.

In another study conducted to explore parents' involvement in outdoor play and learning, Bohling and others (2013) demonstrated that implementation of an involvement-based program provides benefits for enhancing involvement in outdoor play and learning. The researchers conducted a case study to examine the involvement of parents in outdoor play and learning. Through the participation of 4 educators and 93 parents in a family center, the researchers implemented a program for two years, supporting parents' understanding related to outdoor learning. The findings demonstrated that parents become more able to understand the significance of outdoor learning and its benefits on health. Parents also gained confidence in guiding their children's outdoor learning experiences occurring outside of the school.

Fruin (2020) focused on three research questions related to exploring the attitude of teachers and parents toward muddy play, the effects of these attitudes on the muddy play experiences of children, and also the effects of muddy play on the learning process of children. The data was collected via observation, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires involving open-ended questions. The researcher demonstrated that the weather concerns of adults formed barriers to muddy play. Furthermore, muddy play is stated as a facilitator for the development of confidence and critical thinking skills for children in their early years. In a review article, Wainwright (2021) explored "The Foundation Phase" program and its relation with development through the agency of studies conducted related to the issue. The researcher described "The Foundation Phase" as a play-based early childhood education curriculum that was prepared for 3 to 7-year-old children, and focused on the usage of the outdoor environment. Moreover, the efficiency of this program was illustrated via the benefits of motor skills and being active during the learning process.

2.4. The Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Learning Experiences

The effects of parents on their child's cognitive, social-emotional and physical development starts before the birth of the child, and it continues to have an impact throughout life (Şahin-Karapınar, 2015). Family is the first environment where a child learns about life, herself and other individuals from the moment she is born so family

could be described as first institution where education is given, has the greatest effect on the child's development (Işık & Demircioğlu, 2023).

From infancy, the child's development and learning occur within three contexts that are home, school, and community, and also interconnections among these contexts. Parents are the first context of the child since the child first interacts with the immediate environment. After the child enters the school, the school becomes another significant context in the process of development and learning. Parental involvement reflects a multidimensional characteristic between the home and school interactions. This involvement also demonstrates a shared responsibility that not only the school but also the home has in the process of children's development and learning in the early years (Patrikakou et al., 2005). The positive parent-child relationship is tremendously significant for early development since this interaction between the child and parent supports social behaviors, a sense of safety, learning by exploration, and effective communication develop when the relationship between the child and parent is positive (Bayoğlu&Elibol, 2020).

When the related literature is examined, it can be seen that diverse terms, like parental involvement and parental engagement, are used to describe the collaboration between teachers and parents. Parental involvement can be described as “the participation of parents and other family members in all areas of their children's education and development, based on the premise that parents are the primary influence in children's lives” (Morrison,2015, p.534). For parental involvement, Epstein (2019) proposed a model including six different involvement types in education. According to this model, the first type of parent involvement is parenting emphasizing the establishment of a positive home environment for supporting the academic skills and abilities of children. The second type, which is communication, describes effective school and parent communication for the development and learning progress of the child. As the third type, volunteering highlights the contribution of the parent to the school activities. Another type of parental involvement was named learning at home highlighting home-based activities like homework to help and monitor the child's progress in school. In the fifth type, which is decision-making, parental involvement in school management is emphasized. Finally, the model proposed collaborating with the community as the

parental involvement type to utilize community sources to fortify school programs and support children to serve the community.

Parental engagement is more than parental involvement since it includes greater commitment and ownership of activities than parental involvement which just provides a simple involvement (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Parental engagement emphasizes the partnership that occurs to make decisions, set goals, and determine outcomes for the learning and development of children. Therefore, parental engagement could be described as a more comprehensive partnership including two-way and consistent communication in that parents and school come together in decisions and work for the benefit of their children (Michigan Department of Education, 2011). Considered as a whole, parental engagement involves diverse components which are parent education, parent involvement, and parent partnership. Within this whole, parental engagement is placed at the outermost level since the parent and school need to build a bond before conducting cooperative activities (Demircan, 2018). For the current study, the terms of parental involvement were preferred since the study aims to focus on the participation of parents in the OPAL experiences through the volunteer type that is proposed by Epstein's parental involvement model (2019) instead of a more comprehensive partnership.

Diverse studies conducted in the area of early childhood education demonstrated the benefits of parental involvement. Tuna et al., (2019) aimed to support the math teaching process of early childhood and elementary school teachers whose students are immigrants and refugees through the agency of developing and implementing a program. Within a quasi-experimental and mixed-method design of research, the researchers benefited from diverse scales, observations, and interviews with both parents and teachers during the data collection process. As one of the significant parts of the study, the researchers conducted workshops supporting parental involvement in math education by helping parents gain math-related experiences and also teaching workshops about efficiently involving parents in the math education process. It was indicated that teachers gained awareness of how they can effectively communicate with parents and involve them in the education process in efficient ways, and also they highlighted that their motivation and confidence to work with parents was increased.

In another study demonstrating the benefits of parental involvement, Ata-Aktürk and Demircan (2024) implemented a case study to explore the involvement of parents in the area of early engineering via a developed program for 60-72-month-old children. The researchers revealed that the involvement of the parents in their children's experiences supports them in developing a positive attitude and interest regarding the topic, and supports their parenting skills to direct children related to the topic.

Yılmaz et al. (2017) explored the effectiveness of pedagogical documentation in terms of learning, teaching, and assessment processes in early childhood education. The data was collected via observations, interviews, document analysis, and surveys from 24 teachers and 231 children and their parents in Ankara, and also the collected data were analyzed within an inductive approach. In the process, the researchers designed and implemented teacher education modules including parental involvement modules. As one of the significant findings of the research, it was reached that pedagogical documentation contributed to teachers-parents collaboration to be more qualified through making learning activities more visible.

Through the agency of conducting a meta-analysis study, Ma et al. (2016) explored the relationship between parental involvement and the learning outcomes of children in the early childhood and elementary education period. The researchers screened 3407 studies and reached 46 after the final procedure. These 46 studies were reached since they involved adequate statistical information to estimate the effect size between the involvement of parents and children's learning outcomes. The coding procedure was conducted based on three aspects that are publication, design, and parental involvement. In the framework of the findings, this meta-analysis concluded that a strong relationship between the involvement of parents and learning outcomes is possible with three components that are the connection of school and home, involvement in behavioral level, and supervision of home. These three components also provide active parental involvement. Therefore, the researchers suggested that parental involvement and the development of teachers-parents collaboration need to be key components in education programs to motivate teachers and parents to support children's learning outcomes in their early years.

In action research conducted by Yanık-Ozger et al. (2020), the researchers investigated the school transition process with the cooperation of teachers, parents, and children in Kahramanmaraş. The sample consisted of 3 teachers, 25 children, their parents, and a school principal. The data was collected via observation, interviews, and document analysis, and the collected data were analyzed within a content analysis approach. The findings of the project demonstrated that children become ready and motivated in the transition to the preschool process if active cooperation is provided among the school, parents, and community. Teacher-child meetings before starting school and teacher-made home visits strengthen the connection between home and teachers. Furthermore, it was emphasized that communication with parents before the transition process decreases their concerns. Another research was conducted by Gessiou (2022) to enhance OPAL in a preschool. The researcher conducted a participatory action research with 5 teachers and 40 parents. The study showed that cooperation between parents and teachers was supported by involving parents in the process of redesigning the schoolyard environment. In this participatory action research, had a chance to internalize how the outdoor environment supports their children's learning and development process so the need for informing parents on outdoor benefits was met as far as the researcher discussed.

When it comes to outdoor learning, it was emphasized that supporting parents to make a connection with nature is one of the best ways to help their children with outdoor learning (Powers & Williams-Ridge, 2019). White (2014) stated that “young children need all the adults around them to understand why outdoor play provision is essential for them, adults who are committed and able to make its potential available to them.” Therefore, the role of adults is significant in terms of organizing the outdoor environment so as to facilitate children to follow their interests and needs via play experiences.

Powers and Williams-Ridge (2019) provided different ways to help parents connect with nature for the benefit of their children. Firstly, teachers can support parents in understanding how spending time in nature is beneficial for them and their children. This could be done through newsletters involving information on nature's benefits and also by inviting parents to be a part of outdoor experiences. Secondly, teachers can help parents to cope with concerns related to outdoor experiences. Outdoor concerns

could result from fears. Therefore, teachers can provide realistic information related to safety in outdoor experiences since being honest about dangers and sharing them could make parents trust more for the experiences more and create an environment where ideas could be shared to find alternatives to dangerous activities. For instance, hiking in the mountains could be replaced with hiking on flatter surfaces. Another way is helping parents to make nature a part of daily life. In other words, teachers can guide parents to make outdoor experiences a routine in their lives. For this purpose, planned outdoor events could be shared with the parents, and also outdoor events like walking in nature could be planned with parents. Furthermore, a family garden could be designed at school as well as sharing nature-themed storybooks with parents for their libraries.

2.6. Summary of the Literature Review

This study was conducted to enrich parent involvement regarding outdoor play and learning (OPAL) through action-based practices. This study was conducted based on ideas of diverse significant figures who are Rousseau (1712-1778), Pestalozzi (1746-1827), and Frobel (1782-1852) in the history of child education. The literature review illustrated Rousseau (1712-1778) is regarded as a pioneer of the idea of education in nature through his ideological effects on Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Frobel (1782-1852) and their educational practices related to outdoor education. These historical figures reached a common ground that outdoor experiences are a need for healthy development and efficient learning experiences for children in the early years.

Diverse theories and frameworks like the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the affordances theory (Gibson, 1977), were utilized to guide the whole research process. The ecological systems theory is believed to be efficient for exploring and understanding the different systems that interaction to affect play and learning experiences in the outdoor environment by providing a perspective for these systems' effects on the learning and development processes of young children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Furthermore, the affordances theory carries the potential to enable the researcher to understand how affordances in the school's outdoor environment are understood by participants, and how these understandings shape

practices in this outdoor environment (Gibson, 1977). Additionally, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), parents as teachers (PAT) model (Parents as Teachers, 2023), and the dual capacity building framework (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.) supports this participatory action research study through shedding light on the role of teachers and participant to enrich perspectives and experiences related to OPAL. In addition to this, place-based education (PBE) (Sobel, 2004) assists the study by directing participants to learn by exploration and connect with the schoolyard which can be considered as a local nature environment.

The existing literature on children's outdoor experiences demonstrated diverse benefits not only for the learning process (e.g. Campbell & Speldewinde, 2019; Hatton et al., 2019; Okur-Berberoglu, 2021; Miller et al., 2021; Storli & Sandseter, 2019) but also for the development process (e.g. Brussoni et al., 2021; Loftesnes 2021; Yildirim & Akamca, 2017). Through the agency of summarizing related literature, it was seen that parental attitudes can affect the outdoor experiences of children in school and home settings. In the literature review, it was found that parental attitude has a significant effect in shaping both outdoor experiences (Mart, 2021; Kandemir, 2020; Sandseter et al., 2020; White, 2014; Powers & Williams-Ridge, 2019). Therefore, studies related to parental involvement were also examined in the literature review, and it was demonstrated that quality of play and outdoor experiences are supported when the parents are involved in the process (e.g. Ma et al., 2016; Tuna et al., 2019; Yanik-Ozger et al. 2020; White, 2014).

The researcher's master thesis which was conducted to explore outdoor practices of a private school located in Çankaya, Ankara illustrated the need for involving parents in OPAL to make OPAL as more transparent for them so they can understand the significance of OPAL (Kandemir, 2020; Kandemir & Sevimli-Çelik, 2021). Based on the findings and recommendations of this study, the current participatory action research was planned and conducted to meet the needs regarding parental involvement in OPAL. Apart from this study, diverse studies which above emphasized results pointed out a need for strengthening parental involvement in OPAL. Therefore, the current study was constructed to enrich perspectives and experiences of parents and teachers regarding parental involvement in OPAL. Furthermore, the academic and teaching experience of the researcher, which was explained in the methodology

section, believed to be efficient for the research process via the role of the researcher as an insider, who was a part of the research setting as a teacher, and an outsider who is a grad student conducting this participatory action research study.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This chapter provides information regarding the method employed in the current study by giving a detailed explanation of the design of the study, study participants, data collection tools, the process followed to collect data and analyze the collected data, ethical considerations, and ensuring the trustworthiness of the collected data. The first section of the chapter addresses the research design followed through the process, as well as provides the research aim and questions. In the second section, volunteer participants of the study are described by providing descriptive information about the participants. Furthermore, the school setting where the research was conducted is explained through detailed explanations related to the schoolyard, daily schedule, school system, and so on. The diverse data collection tools are described in the fourth section, and how these tools are used to collect data in the process is explained in the fifth section. The sixth section addresses how the collected data is analyzed. The role of the researcher and motivation to conduct this study is explained in the seventh section. The eighth section focuses on the necessary ethical principles which were followed throughout the study. The ninth section demonstrates how the reliability and validity of the collected data were provided for the study. The last section summarizes the method chapter of the current study.

3.1. Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to enrich the involvement of parents in outdoor learning and play (OPAL) experiences in the schoolyard. To reach this purpose, different action-based practices were implemented to enrich experiences and perspectives regarding OPAL. In parallel to this aim and described statement of the problem, participatory action research was conducted with a focus on the following questions;

1. How do teachers and parents perceive and interpret parental involvement in OPAL?
2. What are the experiences of teachers and parents with parental involvement in OPAL?
3. What are the characteristics of action-based practices enriching the involvement of parents more in OPAL?
4. How has parental involvement changed through action-based practices regarding OPAL?
 - How do teachers perceive and interpret changes regarding parental involvement in OPAL?
 - How do parents perceive and interpret changes regarding parental involvement in OPAL?

The qualitative research design was considered suitable to conduct the current study. Reality is constructed as individuals, who can have different perspectives on the same aspect and live their own daily life so individuals have the potential to shape and change the real world and become the agents of this change (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Therefore, the main research questions led the researcher to have deeper and more detailed knowledge about perspectives and experiences on parental involvement regarding OPAL. The meaning attributed to the experience is considered to be established with social interactions in the environment so the reality does not have a single definition since it changes from person to person through diverse experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). How this reality is understood and experienced by persons with diverse contexts is subject to study by qualitative researchers who collect research data through tools like interviews and observations (Creswell, 2014).

Within the framework of qualitative research methodology, the current study was conducted via action research since the study mainly focused on enriching parental involvement for OPAL. Action research can be defined as the process of studying a real classroom or school situation to understand and improve the quality of education (Johnson, 2015). There are many ways to ensure change and development. As one of these ways, the action research can be used to achieve development or quality of education can be increased in this direction (Gürgür, 2017). Action research is carried

out by one or more people or groups with the intention of resolving an issue or gaining knowledge to guide local practice (Fraenkel et al., 2016). Action research argued that individuals outside of the academy also have potential to conduct a research process in parallel to their practices or interests to create a social change (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). With the help of action research, individuals become more able to understand themselves in an efficient way since this design supports their not only commitment but also their awareness to solve a problem or contribute to an issue through being active in the process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

As one of the action research types, participatory action research (PAR) is one of the qualitative research designs focusing on both empowering groups of people and bringing change at some level through implemented actions (Frankel et al., 2016). The participatory action research was built on a qualitative approach since it depends on the individuals' words to understand the social problem and convince them to solve the problem (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). For understanding and solving a problem belonging to an organization or community, mutual collaboration is constructed in an inquiry structure through PAR. Hence, the participants become co-researchers working collaboratively with the researcher. With the help of this inquiry structure, the nature of practice is supported and improved in some areas (Patton, 2015). Similarly, Gordon (2008) highlighted that PAR has benefits like assisting the learning process, transforming the culture of the school, and supporting teacher qualifications.

Altrichter and others (2005) listed six characteristics of the action research design. The first characteristic is that the action research needs to be conducted by individuals who are concerned with the social problem that is being searched. The current research is parallel to this characteristic since the problem belongs to the school where the volunteer teacher is currently working. Secondly, action research focuses on the development of practice and the perspectives of the individuals who are involved in the process. This characteristic is suitable to the current research since the study aimed to enrich parental involvement in OPAL. Thirdly, action research needs to be in line with the school's educational values and the teachers' working conditions in order to examine this subject in greater detail. The current study applies this characteristic by obtaining permission from the school principal to follow steps

and arrange volunteer activities that are suitable for the volunteer teacher's daily schedule.

The fourth characteristic was emphasized as that the action research provides a set of straightforward and achievable research techniques, not disrupting practice, for practice development and that are distinguished by a reasonable cost-to-result ratio. The current study is parallel to this characteristic since it applied data collection tools like observation, semi-structured interview, and document analysis. Furthermore, the fifth characteristic was described as that the action researcher follows the steps of acting and reflecting to produce knowledge. This characteristic was applied in the research through action cycles constructed with the implementation of planning, implementing, observing, and evaluating steps. Lastly, each action research carries unique characteristics even though they follow similar steps. The current study is suitable for this characteristic since it is specific to the research setting (Altrichter et al., 2005)

In the current study, the action research cycle that was proposed by McNiff and Whitehead (2006) was followed throughout the study. The researchers stated that this research cycle involves five steps which are observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating, and modifying. The cycle starts with something that is identified as a concern. This concern tried to be minimized or eliminated through revising practices. After this step, reflection on this revised practice is done to understand whether the practice is efficient to eliminate the concern or not. If the revised practice is not efficient in eliminating the concern, then the practice is revised again. This action research cycle is repeated until reaching a satisfactory conclusion regarding the elimination of the concern. Through implementing the final step, an action cycle is completed but if the (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). The figure demonstrates the steps were followed for an action cycle.

In the framework of the action research cycle that was proposed by McNiff and Whitehead (2006), the following steps were taken for the current research. First, the researcher identified the need and context regarding parental involvement in OPAL. Following this step, the researcher worked with one of the volunteer teachers to enrich parental involvement in OPAL for her classroom. For this purpose, a parent-

involved activity was planned and implemented with the teacher. The developed activity was implemented with a volunteer parent in the class. After the action step, the researcher and the teacher evaluated and reflected on the action step to understand the efficiency of the activity. If the activity was decided as needing to be modified to support parental involvement more, the researcher and the teacher repeated the action cycle. This action cycle was repeated until the need related to strengthening parental involvement in OPAL was met.

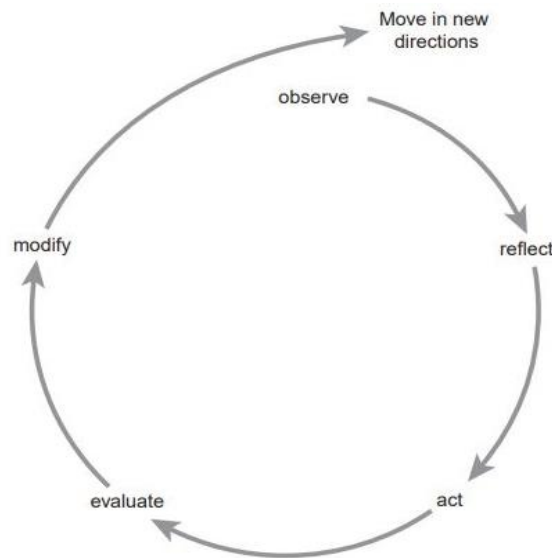


Figure 3.1. Action Cycle Steps

Note. From “All You Need to Know About Action Research” by J.McNiff & J.Whitehead, 2006, p.9.

3.2. Participants

Participatory action research describes participants as co-investigators instead of subjects. Therefore, the research process is also controlled by the participants who develop themselves through the reflective process (Patton, 2015). Two groups, preschool teachers and parents were the participants in this study. The participants were selected through the agency of convenience sampling method. The convenience sampling method can be defined as a sampling methodology in which the researcher easily accesses available participants (Frankel et al., 2016).

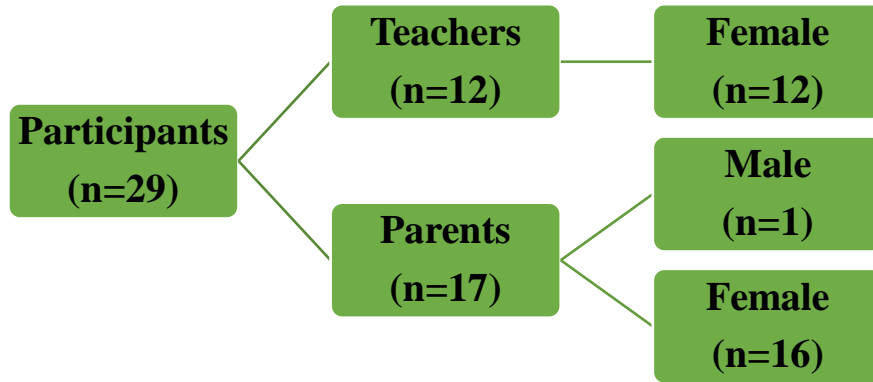


Figure 3.2. *Participants of the Study*

The convenience sampling method was used since the researcher can easily reach participants and the research setting which is the school where the researcher was working as a preschool teacher. In other words, the researcher is still in communication with the school that she worked in and has current knowledge about the research setting. Furthermore, the researcher also conducted her master's thesis in this school. Due to these reasons, the current study was planned to be conducted in a private kindergarten that is located in Çankaya, Ankara.

Table 3.1. *Demographic Information about Teacher Participants*

Pseudonyms	Age Grp.	#Child	Edu.Backgr.	Age	Exp. Years	OPAL Edu.
						P. Inv. Edu.
Ms. Güneş	60-72 months	12	B.A (ECE)	23	1	No
						Yes (Course)
Ms. Çiçek	60-72 months	12	H.S. (C.D.)	19	2	No
Ms. Lale	48-60 months	9	B.A (ECE)	23	1	No
						Yes (Course)
Ms. Toprak	48-60 months	9	H.S. (C.D.)	22	5	No
Ms. Nergis	48-60 months	13	B.A (ECE)	28	4	No
						Yes (Course)
Ms. Yeliz	48-60 months	13	H.S. (C.D.)	23	2	Yes (Seminar)
						Yes (Course)
Ms. Manolya	36-48 months	15	B.A (ECE)	22	1	Yes (Course)
Ms. Kardelen	36-48 months	15	H.S. (C.D.)	29	3	No
Ms. Ayşe	36-48 months	15	A.A (C.D.)	38	6	No
Ms. Rana	36-48 months	15	H.S. (C.D.)	19	1	No
						Yes (Course)
Ms. Papatya	24-36 months	10	B.A. (S. W.)	28	9	Yes (Seminar)
						No
Ms. Orkide	24-36 months	10	H.S. (C.D.)	20	3	No

As stated earlier, the participants of the current study were preschool teachers and parents whose children registered with the same school. There were no criteria to select participants due to the convenience sampling method, so volunteer teachers and parents formed the current study sample. For the step of need and context analysis, all of the teachers participated in the study so 12 preschool teachers participated in the study, voluntarily.

Apart from preschool teachers, 17 parents volunteered to participate in the study. After that, one of the volunteer teachers and five parents in this teacher's classroom were participants in the other steps in this study. The ages of teacher participants ranged from 19 to 38 years old (mean age = 24, 5). Furthermore, some of the teachers mentioned that they have an outdoor education background through courses and seminars (n=3). On the other hand, half of the teachers (n=6) stated that they have an education background related to parental involvement through courses and seminars. In addition to this, the ages of parent participants ranged from 30 to 41 years old (mean age = 34, 82). Just two of the parents emphasized that they took seminar related to outdoor education. Moreover, most of the parents (n=14) have a bachelor's degree.

Table 3.2. *Demographic Information about Parent Participants*

	Pseudonyms	Age	Educational Background	Age of the Child	Training on OPAL or Parent Inv.
1	Ms. Tansu	31	Undergrad.	36-months-old	No
2	Ms. Sakine	32	Undergrad.	30-months-old	No
3	Ms. Parla	38	Undergrad.	48-months-old	Yes (Seminar)-OPAL
4	Ms. Gizem	37	Undergrad.	30-month-old	No
5	Mr. Metin	31	Undergrad.	42-months-old	No
6	Ms. Oya	35	Grad	60-months-old	No
7	Ms. Gaye	33	Undergrad.	42-months-old	No
8	Ms. Nalan	36	Undergrad.	36-months-old	Yes(Seminar)-OPAL
9	Ms. Dilek	30	Undergrad.	30-months-old	No
10	Ms. Eda	41	Undergrad.	72-months-old	No
11	Ms. Eylül	35	Undergrad.	60-months-old	No
12	Ms. Zeliha	36	Grad	42-months-old	No
13	Ms. Melda	35	Grad	62-months-old	No
14	Ms. Feriha	40	Undergrad	60-months-old	No
15	Ms. Perihan	38	Undergrad	66-months-old	No
16	Ms. Dilşah	32	Undergrad	48-months-old	No
17	Ms. Betül	32	Undergrad	66-months-old	No

3.3. The School Setting

The research was conducted in a private school located in Çankaya, Ankara. The school was where the researcher worked as a preschool teacher and conducted her master thesis so the same school chosed as the research setting to meet the needs determined at the end of the master thesis. Therefore, the study was conducted in Çankaya where the school lacated in. Located in Ankara City, Çankaya district has a population of 973.54 inhabitants, 48% of whom are university graduates or above, and 49% of the population has a high socio-economic level (Endeksa, 2024). The research setting was the schoolyard of a private preschool. The schoolyard has a total of 550 m2 including the front yard area, side area, and backyard area. The front yard area consists of a playground, a flower garden, and sitting areas. The side area involves a gravel area within a bench. The backyard area consists of a sand pool, a wooden playhouse, and a small area where desks are placed to conduct learning activities.



Figure 3.3. *The Front Schoolyard*



Figure 3.4. *The Side Schoolyard*



Figure 3.5. *The Back Schoolyard*

In the school, there are six age groups: one classroom for 24-36 months old, two classrooms for 36-48 months old, two classrooms for 48-60 months, and a classroom for 60-72 months old children. Each of the age groups involves children whose numbers differ from 5 to 15, and also two teachers are responsible for each of the age groups. Two teachers in a classroom are considered as partners so there are equally responsible for learning and development processes, including tasks like preparing the environment, preparing the learning activity, and conducting the activity, of children in their group as well as communicating with parents of the children in their groups. Apart from the teachers, there are 5 more school employees and one of them is the school principal. The school's daily schedule starts at 8:30 a.m. and finishes at 5:00 p.m.

Table 3.3. Daily Schedule

08.00-09.00	Arrival to the school
09.00-09.45	Breakfast
09.45-10.30	1 st Workshop
10.30-11.15	2 nd Workshop
11.15-12.00	3 rd Workshop / Schoolyard
12.00-12.45	Lunch and Self Care
13.00-15.00	Sleep Time
15.00-15.30	Snack Time
15.30-17.00	4 th Workshop / Schoolyard
17.00-...	Getting ready for home

Furthermore, the school follows a workshop system in that teaching and learning are conducted at diverse workshops like math, science and kitchen. A rotation program is prepared to indicate which age group uses which workshop on that day and in that period. The schoolyard is accepted as one of the workshops and it is placed in the rotation program as two or three sessions in a week, and a session is approximately 45 minutes, a week for each age group. Despite the rotation program, the teacher can benefit from the schoolyard if the area is not used by another group. However, the rotation program is not changing according to weather conditions and seasons but the teachers have the flexibility to not use the schoolyard according to weather conditions or other reasons like conducting another indoor activity, field trip, guest speakers, and so on. Furthermore, the school does not have a policy related to outdoor experiences. In other words, there is no written document on the philosophical perspective about outdoor experiences in the school.

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

To understand the lived experiences in depth, it was recommended that action researchers need to benefit from a variety of data collection instruments such as e-mail correspondence, journals, and records of observations (Mac Naughton & Hughes, 2008). In-depth interviews and descriptive observations are other examples of the variety of data collection instruments in action research since these instruments are considered effective tools to support collaborative inquiry through being not only understandable but also accessible for people with not too much expertise as the researcher (Patton, 2015). Due to these reasons, the researcher benefited from diverse instruments ranging from focus-group discussions to teacher journals. Each instrument was developed based on the related literature and expert opinions. Table 3. demonstrates the data collection instruments used regarding the research questions of this study.

Table 3.4. *The Exemplary Interview Questions for Teachers and Parents*

Main Topic	Exemplary Interview Question
Perspective	- What do you think about outdoor play and learning in preschool education? (Need and Context Analysis & Overall Evaluation-Parent &Teacher Interview)
	- How do you think parent involvement can be strengthened in the context of play and learning experiences in the schoolyard? (Need and Context Analysis-Teacher Interview)
Experience	- About the parent-involved activity that you implemented; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think it affects your perspective related to OPAL? • How do you think it affects your motivation/interest toward OPAL? (Overall Evaluation-Parent Interview)
	- What do you think about the cooperation you established with the parent during the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the involvement activity? (Overall Evaluation-Teacher Interview)

To answer the first research question, which is related to examining the perspectives of participants regarding involvement in OPAL, semi-structured interviews, and observation sessions were used as data collection tools. The second research question on exploring participants' experiences regarding involvement, was answered through the data which were collected within semi-structured interviews, observation sessions, and document analysis.

Furthermore, characteristics of action based practices were reached via semi-structured interviews and observation sessions, as related to third research question. Semi-structured interview was used to collect data to answer the last research question which is related to exploring the changes in participants' perspectives and experiences regarding involvement in OPAL. In addition to these data collection tools, teacher journal and the researcher journal were used to as support the collected data for each research questions.

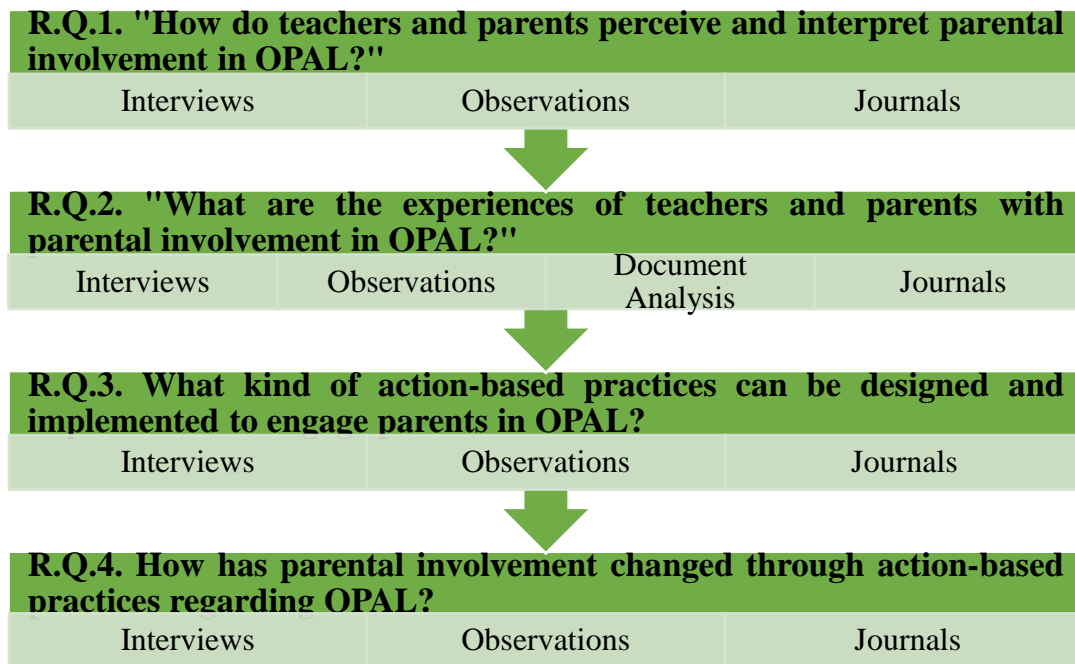


Figure 3.6 *Data Sources Regarding Main Research Questions*

3.4.1. Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

The qualitative interview can be described as an interview approach involving a small number of open-ended questions for eliciting participants' perspectives about the studied topic (Creswell, 2014). Similarly, Given (2008) defined a semi-structured interview as a qualitative data collection instrument in that the researcher directs pre-determined but open-ended questions to participants through the agency of a developed guide for the interview process.

The researcher highlighted that this guide can involve open-ended questions, which are based on the research questions. The current study benefitted from different semi-

structured interview protocols to elicit perspectives and understand the experiences of diverse participants in depth. For this purpose, four different interview protocols were prepared to guide to interview process that was conducted with teachers, and parents.

In the first data collection step, the researcher benefitted from a semi-structured interview protocol for teachers (See Appendix B) and a semi-structured interview protocol for parents (See Appendix C) to conduct need and context analysis. The aim of this was to learn about what participants think about the involvement of parents in OPAL and what are the current experiences regarding this topic. Therefore, the protocol includes open-ended questions related to participants' perspectives and practices on parental involvement in OPAL besides questions on demographic information. In the second data collection step, the researcher benefitted from a semi-structured interview protocol for participants (See Appendix D) during planning for action cycles. Hamamcı (2007) highlighted that the learning needs and expectations of participants are helping to plan more effective implementations. Therefore, this interview protocol includes open-ended questions about the needs and expectations of not only teachers but also parents from the action cycles so the collected data assisted the planning process.

Following the planning process, another interview protocol (See Appendix E) was used to reflect on and gain an understanding related to the experiences and perspectives of participants during the implementation of action cycles. In the last data collection step, which is the overall reflection regarding the action research, the researcher benefitted from an interview protocol (See Appendix F) that includes open-ended questions to learn about what participants experience during action cycles to strengthen parent involvement in OPAL.

3.4.2. Non-Participant Observation Protocol

Robinson and Lai (2006) argued that observation enables the researcher what is really happening in the research setting. Hence the researcher needs to design an observation tool based on the observation purpose and research questions. In the current study, different observation forms were used to collect data in the steps of determining the

problem and conducting action cycles. In parallel with the research questions of the study, two different observation protocols were used. Creswell (2012) describes an observational protocol as a form of providing an organized data collection tool for recording events in chronological order, portraits of participants, a map of the research setting, participants' verbatim quotes, and field notes.

The first observation protocol was used in the data collection process' first step which is determining the problem. This observation aims to collect data to explore needs and context so the researcher benefitted from a non-participant observation protocol to understand the context of the research setting and what participants need. Liu and Maitlis (2010) describe nonparticipant observation as used for observing not only events but also interactions to gain a direct understanding of the context of the research. Hence, the observation form includes 5 different parts to elicit information regarding outdoor practices in the schoolyard. The first part focuses on observation data about general information such as the date, observed teacher, weather, and materials. The following four parts focus on the steps of outdoor activity in order so these parts are related to activity preparation, implementation, and assessment.

The second observation form was used in the framework of participant observation in the step of conducting action cycles. Participant observation was preferred for this step since the design of the action research requires the participation and collaboration of the researcher in the action process instead of being uninvolved (Sigurdardottir & Puroila, 2020). Participatory observation supports the researcher to be both insider and outsider at the same time, and it enables the researcher to be involved in activities while conducting observation of the activities, participants, or physical qualities of the context (Spradley, 1980). The form of participant observation includes parts regarding how parental involvement for OPAL is constructed beside the parts of general information and steps of parental involvement activity, which are preparation, implementation, and assessment.

3.4.3. Document Analysis Protocol

Merriam (2009) described documents as “a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study at hand” (p.139). Documents can be beneficial

to learn about practices in a school and checking the not observable data gathered from other data sources like interviews (Patton, 2015; Robinson & Lai, 2006). Due to these reasons, a document analysis form was used to examine the outdoor activity plans of the school.

Creswell (2012) highlighted that document analysis requires a systematic procedure involving diverse criteria. The researcher analyzed with some predetermined categories which are included in the document analysis form. After the lesson plans involving the schoolyard as the learning environment were chosen, the plans for the process under observation were analyzed in the data analysis procedure according to categories. For this purpose, the current study benefitted from a document analysis form involving four predetermined categories that are monthly distribution, activity types, materials, and focused subjects.

3.4.4. Unstructured Researcher and Teacher Journal

Journals could be described as notebooks in that individuals take notes research-related notes regarding observations, analysis, feelings, and comments during the research process (Johnson, 2015). Journals can be utilized as data sources since they provide vivid portrayals and thick descriptions of research experiences including aspects like social interactions (Given, 2008).

In the current study, the journals of the researcher and teachers are used to elicit thoughts and feelings about the research process so the researcher kept an unstructured journal while motivating participants to keep unstructured journals during the research process. For this purpose, the volunteer teacher wrote her experiences in the process, without any limitation. Unstructured journals were preferred for the study since unstructured journals are advantageous to understanding how individuals experience specific events in their lives by giving unlimited space to the expression of thoughts (Robinson & Lai, 2006). Therefore, the journals are expected to demonstrate what the researcher and teachers experience during the process of strengthening parental involvement in OPAL.

3.5. Data Collection Process

The data collection process was started after obtaining the necessary ethical approval from the Human Subject Ethics Committee (HSEC) of Middle East Technical University (METU) and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). McNiff (2014) emphasized that knowing the backstory of the school leads the researcher to conduct successful action research. Hence, need and context analysis needs to be done as the first step of the data collection process. For this purpose, the researcher first and most importantly benefitted from her master's thesis providing a general perspective on OPAL perspectives and practice. The researcher's thesis was conducted in the same research setting to examine teachers' and parents' perspectives and practices on OPAL. Thus, this research provided a perspective regarding what the school needs to improve outdoor time practices in the schoolyard. Since the researchers' master's study was conducted three years ago, the researcher nevertheless conducted the need and context analysis, which is similar to the master's study, to be certain of the school's current practices and needs regarding OPAL still exist. As the first step of the data collection process, the need and context analysis was completed within three months. To determine the needs, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers in the school. Furthermore, teachers' outdoor practices in the schoolyard were observed in the process. Besides interviews with teachers and observations of outdoor practices, semi-structured interviews with parents were conducted.

Documents of monthly plans were also be analyzed for the need and context analysis. For this purpose, the researcher analyzed the monthly plans that followed so the plans from September to June were analyzed through predetermined categories which are montly distribution, activity types, materials, and focused subjects. The data collection and analysis were carried out simultaneously and the problem identified through findings of the need and context analysis step. After the problem was identified in the framework of the need and context analysis, the data collection process continued with the second step: planning the action cycles. This step included informative meetings with the teacher, as well as organizing the action process.

For this step, the researcher conducted two informative meetings with the volunteer teacher before starting the action research cycle. The first meeting was about the

conducted research in detail. Within this meeting, participants also learned about action research and its benefits for improving educational practices for the benefit of children. In this meeting, the volunteer teacher also organized a draft schedule for volunteer parent-involved activities. Furthermore, the researcher provided information about outdoor play, outdoor learning, and child development in the second meeting which was held with the volunteer teacher. Through discussing these meeting topics, the researcher tried to establish a basis for why OPAL is necessary for early childhood education. In this meeting, the volunteer teacher was also informed about how parental involvement could be strengthened through diverse ways.

These meetings include topics related to the preparation, implementation, and assessment of parental involvement activities on OPAL. The meetings were conducted with clear and understandable language, and in interactive ways like motivating the participant to give and discuss daily life examples since concrete experiences supported the meeting topic to be more enriched. Furthermore, each session was assessed through verbal and written tools which used by the participant so the participants were motivated to express what she has learned, how she feels, and how to use the knowledge she has learned in different life experiences (Hamamcı, 2007).

Moreover, the researcher paid attention to following steps given by Powers and Williams-Ridge (2019) for teachers to motivate parental involvement in OPAL. The researchers focused on these three steps that were being proactive, using respectful language, and avoiding being indoctrinated. The first step, which is being proactive, requires learning about parental concerns, beliefs, and values. Secondly, the usage of respectful language creates a sense of feeling for families that the teacher supports their values. The last one is related to benefiting from scientific knowledge instead of arguing to change the perspectives of parents. Providing science-based reasons for outdoor practices could make parents less defensive. The third step of the data collection process was the implementation of the action cycles. The action cycles were conducted by the teacher with the collaboration of the researcher. For each cycle, a parental involvement activity regarding parents' concerns on safety, hygiene, and weather besides supporting their knowledge of the OPAL benefits was focused on. The cycles were completed within three months. Planning, acting, observing, and reflecting stages were followed for each action cycle, and the researcher and the

teacher worked closely throughout the whole process. To illustrate, meetings were conducted for the planning stage with the teacher. For these meetings, prepared semi-structured interview forms were used to collect data. However, each cycle started with the planning stage of the activity. In this stage, involvement activity was developed in collaboration so both the teacher and the researcher was active during the process. Parents were just invited to the activity based on being volunteer. In other words, one volunteer parent led one activity. The researcher and the volunteer teacher took the decision that one parent leads the one activity to encourage more parents in the process.

The acting of each planned activity last 45-60 minutes based on the needs and interests of the children in the classroom. While the planned activity was conducted, the researcher collected data through non-participant observations. Each activity implementation was recorded by the camera. After the acting and observation stages, the reflection stage meetings were conducted. At these meetings, the teacher and the researcher discussed the preparation stage, acting stage, what kind of problems occurred in the whole process, and what can be done to minimize these problems to strengthen parental involvement in the OPAL.

Table 3.5. *Parent-Involved Volunteer Activities*

Activities	Name	Date
Activity 1	“Hexagon Worm Hotel”	April
Activity 2	“Flower Life Cycle”	April
Activity 3	“Animals Goes Wild”	May
Activity 4	“Hexie’s Mud Story”	May
Activity 5	“Water Drops”	June

The final step of the data collection process was the overall reflection process. In this step, the researcher conducted individual with the teacher and parents who led parental involvement activities. In these semi-structured interviews, participants reflected on the whole action research process. For this purpose, the researcher directed open-ended questions so that participants could reflect on the action cycles besides expressing their perspectives regarding parental involvement in OPAL.

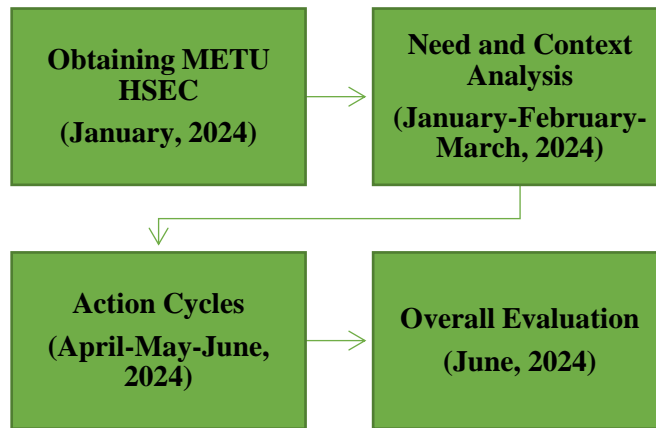


Figure 3.7 *Timeline for Data Collection Procedures*

3.6. Data Analysis Process

Robinson and Lain (2006) suggested that data analysis needs to be done while the data is still being collected because adequate time is necessary to provide valid answers to research questions. To illustrate, information gathered from a teacher interview needs to be cross-checked via other data sources like document analysis if the researcher suspects that the information is sketchy or suspicious. Due to this reason, the data analysis process was conducted within the data collection procedure simultaneously. This participatory action study benefitted from content and thematic analysis for the whole process.

The collected data was analyzed through the agency of following these steps which are preparation of the data, construction of meanings, giving codes, demonstration, and interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2007). The first step of the data analysis procedure was the organization and transcription of the collected data. For this reason, audio records of interviews were transcribed by the researcher. The collected data from observations, journals, and document analysis was also organized according to the given codes.

The data was organized according to data sources which are interviews, observations, document analysis, and journals, and the associations between data sources were discussed in the discussion part of the study. To illustrate, “INT” was given for interview data, “OBS” was given for observation data, “JOUR” was given for the data of journals, and “DOC” was given for document analysis data. Furthermore, teacher

and parent participants were demonstrated with pseudonyms that each participant chose as they wished. These pseudonyms were chosen to be not related to the names of the participants.

After transcribing and organizing the collected data, the second step of the data analysis procedure was conducted to make sense of the collected data. For this purpose, the prepared data was read several times so the researcher was capable of becoming familiar with the data and producing early insights into categories. For the next steps, the researcher identified codes by rereading the collected data to find differences and similarities among the data. The associated codes were grouped so as to name categories by comparing and contrasting the derived categories and after similar categories were sorted together to produce themes of the current study. The last step was conducted by controlling all themes in terms of not only coherency but also clarity. These controlled themes were presented via the construction of tables as well as interpretations of the theme tables (Creswell, 2007).



Figure 3.8 *Document Analysis Categories*

3.7. Researcher Role and Motivation for the Study

McNiff (2014) emphasized that researcher positionality is one of the important aspects which is needed to be considered while conducting action research. The current study was conducted through the agency of the researcher's two roles which are an insider and an outsider. The insider role was constructed via teaching experience in the setting. As a preschool teacher, the researcher worked for two years that one year with 36-48-month-old children and 60-72-month-old children children in a private school where is located in Çankaya, Ankara.

The researcher worked in this school while studying for the master degree. As the research setting, the kindergarten's outdoor environment consisted of three different areas: the front area involving the playground, the side area involving the vegetable-

growing area, and the back area involving a sandbox and a bench. These areas were mostly used by the researcher to prepare and direct outdoor experiences so as to support the healthy development and efficient learning process of the children who are the students of the researcher conducting the current research.

As a parallel to the research aim and research questions, the researcher gained experience in teaching in the research setting and forming a collaboration with the parents so as to increase the quality of children's outdoor experiences in the schools. Furthermore, the researcher conducted her study for her master's thesis in the same research setting with her colleagues and parents of the age groups in the school. The researcher examined the outdoor time practices and views of teachers and parents related to outdoor time (Kandemir, 2020). Due to these experiences, the school climate, practices, and views related to outdoor experiences were investigated in detail. Therefore, it is believed that the researcher carries an insider role in the current study.

Two years of experience in outdoor learning and outdoor play benefited the researcher to develop her practical knowledge. The researcher observed that outdoor experiences are beneficial for children who have behavior challenges in terms of cognitive and social-emotional developmental areas. For instance, it was observed that children become more motivated to learn in an outdoor environment or after spending free time in an outdoor environment. Discharging energy in the outdoor environment was also observed to help minimize behavioral problems like biting and hitting among children.

The experiences in the outdoor environment motivated the researcher to conduct her master's thesis on topics of outdoor play and outdoor learning. In this way, the researchers' knowledge of these areas was supported, and also findings of the master study facilitate the researcher to construct this research. In other words, the current study is mainly constructed within the guide of the researcher's master study's recommendation part. To illustrate, the conducted study demonstrated that collaboration between teachers and parents is needed to minimize concerns and direct the quality of play experiences in the school's outdoor environment (Kandemir & Sevimli-Çelik, 2021). All in all, it is believed that the experience and knowledge of the researcher are valuable as a source of information to establish and direct the research due to explained reasons in this chapter.

The outsider role was provided through being a Ph.D. student in the early childhood education field and being a researcher who is motivated to examine and strengthen the outdoor experiences in the study. The researcher also conducts independent studies with more experienced researchers in areas of outdoor learning and outdoor play in early childhood education. To illustrate, the researcher is currently conducting a qualitative study in order to examine and understand early childhood teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in outdoor learning and outdoor play experiences. For this research aim, the researcher benefits from phenomenological design which is one of the qualitative research designs (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, the researcher also examines the play experiences of children, who are in the 36-72-month-old age group, during the pandemic process. Besides these studies, the researcher conducts reviews of the literature to understand the gaps in the area of outdoor play and outdoor learning as well as following the current studies in these areas.

3.8. Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration is one of the highly significant parts of social science studies, especially in the process of data collection, due to relationships between the participants and the researcher (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the current study followed diverse steps in order to provide and enhance ethical consideration of the whole research process. The first step for providing and enhancing ethical consideration was applied to the Human Subject Ethics Committee (HSEC) of Middle East Technical University (METU) and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). This application was done so as to take the approval of HSEC so the necessary research documents such as data collection tools, consent forms for participants, details of the research process, and so on were given to the HSEC and MoNE for examination that whether the study is ethically appropriate or not. The taken approval of HSEC and MoNE were added in the appendix of the study.

The second step was obtaining approval from the school that was considered as the research setting for the current study. Therefore, the researcher held a meeting with the school principal to give detailed information about the research aim and the research process. Alongside the ethical approval form that is taken from HSEC and

MoNE, other research documents like data collection tools were shared with the school principal to build a good rapport. The next step was holding a meeting with teachers who are working as full-time teachers in the school. This meeting was arranged at a suitable time for all teachers. The same procedure that was conducted with the school principal was also conducted with the teachers to inform them about the research and get their consent for participation in the research. Hence, the research process was explained in detail. For the last step, the researcher communicated with parent participants through the assistance of the school principal when parents came to school to pick up their children. The same procedure of explaining the research process in detail and demonstrating the HSEC and MoNE approval was also conducted with the parents. For each of the volunteer participants, the signed consent forms were taken to demonstrate their voluntariness in the study. Furthermore, the withdrawal option at any time was explained to all participants. Participants were also informed that their identities will be kept confidential through the usage of pseudonyms and all research documents will be kept on the researcher's password-ensured computer which is located at home.

3.9. Trustworthiness of the Study

The trustworthiness of the current study was constructed and enhanced in terms of validity and reliability through diverse strategies. The strategies of validation firstly are explained in this part. The first strategy was triangulation so as to construct and enhance the validity of the current study. Miles and Huberman (1994) described the four triangulation approaches which are utilizing diverse methods, benefiting from different sources of data, usage of multiple theories, and also conducting the study with more than one researcher. The triangulation of the current study was constructed through the usage of different sources that are methods, as well as multiple theories. Using diverse qualitative methods like semi-structured interviews, journals, observations, and document analysis supported the study in terms of multiple methods.

Patton (2015) emphasized that a combination of different data sources like interviews, observation, and document analysis supports validation through the agency of findings' cross-checking since the strength of one data source could compensate for

another data source's weaknesses. Furthermore, involving more than one participant group, which are teachers and parents, were helpful to provide different sources of data in the framework of different data sources. Benefiting from multiple theories, like the Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and the Affordance Theory by Gibson (1977), was another way to strengthen the triangulation strategy for the study.

The second strategy for constructing and enhancing the validation was prolonged engagement. Creswell (2007) emphasized that prolonged engagement could be delivered via spending adequate research time in the research setting so as to construct rapport and gain information related to the culture and climate of the research setting. The data collection process was planned to last six months which is considered approximately half of the education year of the school that is the research setting. Besides prolonged engagement, providing a rich-thick description of the study is planned in terms of validity.

The rich-thick description could be described as adequately detailed information related to observations of the research setting in a way that a portrait is painted by the researcher for the readers of the study (Frankel et al., 2016). In parallel with this description, it is aimed to provide detailed information for the transferability of the research findings to the other research contexts carrying similar characteristics to the research setting. Moreover, member checking was used as another method. Therefore, the researcher communicated with participants to share the analysis of collected data and verify not only the completeness but also the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2007).

For the construction and strengthening of the reliability part of the current study, inter-rater reliability was utilized. The inter-rater reliability was conducted during the data analysis procedure by calculating the inter-rater formula (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher was the first coder and the second coder was chosen as an expert in the area of early childhood education. Independently, the second coder read and coded the collected data that the researcher randomly chose. The codes of the two researchers were discussed to agree or disagree on the code. The rate for the agreement was calculated through the formula. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated the lower boundary

as 80% for the conducted studies. The rate was found to be as 85,5% so the rate was demonstrated in the analysis as consisting between these two coders.

3.10. Limitations of the Study

This research aimed to enhance the involvement of parents in OPAL conducted in the schoolyard. This section focuses on recommendations based on some limitations that the current study carries. Further studies could be conducted while also involving the school principal as a participant since it was reached that school principle has an important role as the decision maker for not just OPAL and involvement policy but also approving the steps of this study. Secondly, this participatory action study conducted with a qualitative research design so it does not carry the purpose of generalizing the findings but future studies could be conducted with larger sample size and with a more homogeneous group in terms of gender. Thirdly, conducting the study in a public school or a school located in a different location or a school that language of instruction is Turkish could provide different perspectives regarding the effects of diverse socioeconomic status or socio-cultural background. Moreover, it was hard to do observation for the researcher since the teachers were not motivated to provide OPAL time in poor weather conditions so this lack of motivation could be regarded as another limitation. Lastly, the limited time because of the intensity of the education program could be considered another limitation. Hence, further studies could be executed over a longer period

3.11. Summary of the Methodology

Aiming to enrich parental involvement in OPAL, this qualitative study was conducted with the participatory action research. Participatory action research could be described as empowering individuals while bringing change at some level through implemented actions (Frankel et al., 2016). The action cycle steps of McNiff and Whitehead (2006) guided the researcher throughout the study so the steps of observing, reflecting, acting, evaluating, and modifying were followed to conduct this participatory action research.

Selected through the agency of convenience sampling method, the participants of this study were 12 volunteer preschool teachers 17 volunteer parents whose children were registered as students in the school. The research setting was a schoolyard of a private school located in Çankaya, Ankara. The schoolyard includes four areas which are front yard, side yard and two different backyards. After taking necessary ethical and formal permissions, the researcher collected data for the needs and context analysis with the participation of 12 teachers and 17 parents. For the following steps which are the implementation of action cycles and overall evaluation, one teacher and five parents became volunteers.

For the need and context analysis, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, observing OPAL practices of teachers for three months and analysing six months of OPAL based plans in monthly plans. Based on the findings of need and context analysis, five different action cycles were implemented for three months. In this process, the researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents and observing volunteer parent involved OPAL activities. For the next step, which is overall evaluation, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews. In addition to these data collection tools, the researcher and the volunteer teacher journals support the process as supplementary data.

For the need and context analysis, the collected data was analyzed through content and thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was also used for the steps of action cycle implementation and overall evaluation of the whole action process. The trustworthiness of the study was supported by triangulation, prolonged engagement, providing a rich-thick description, member checking, and inter-rater reliability (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Frankel et al., 2016). The existing limitations of the study were explained in the discussion chapter in detail.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This study aims to enhance the involvement of parents in outdoor play and learning (OPAL) experiences taking place in the schoolyard. In this regard, first exploring the need and context regarding the OPAL experiences was conducted to understand the OPAL experiences of teachers. Second, different action cycles were planned, implemented, and evaluated based on the identified needs related to parental involvement in OPAL. Lastly, overall reflection was conducted with the participants to understand how involvement has changed through the action cycles.

Following these aims, this chapter presents the current study's findings resulting from the thematic analysis process. The findings related to the need and context analysis are presented in the first section. This section demonstrates the perspectives and experiences of teachers and parents regarding OPAL. The OPAL activities conducted in the schoolyard are also shown in this section through a document analysis of the monthly plans and observations. Through the first section, the first and second research questions about exploring perspectives and experiences of parental involvement in OPAL were addressed.

The findings related to the five action cycles are presented in the second section. This section demonstrates the five different action plans' implication, observation, evaluation, and reflection steps. The second section focuses on the research question about planning and implementing action-based practices to engage parents more in OPAL. The third section of the findings chapter demonstrates the participants' overall evaluations regarding the whole action process. In this chapter, the perspectives and experiences of teachers and parents were presented. In the third section, the last research question regarding the exploration of how the involvement of parents has been changed through OPAL action-based practices is addressed. The final section provides a summary of the findings chapter of the current study.

4.1. The Need and Context Analysis

The data for the need and context analysis was collected through semi-structured interviews, observation of OPAL activities conducted in the schoolyard, and document analysis of monthly plans implemented in the school. To identify needs and also understand the context in the research setting, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 early childhood education teachers, who are currently working in the school, and 17 parents whose children are students of the school. Furthermore, 15 observation sessions were conducted in the schoolyard. Besides observations, activity plans covering six months were examined through document analysis.

4.1.1. Perspectives and Experiences of Parents Regarding OPAL

To explore 17 parents' perspectives and experiences, semi-structured questions were asked about what they think related to topics of OPAL and parental involvement, and also how they experience OPAL and parental involvement in the school setting. The thematic analysis of the collected data led the researcher to reach six themes: descriptions, practices, OPAL benefits, OPAL barriers, parental involvement benefits, and enhancing practices.

4.1.1.1. Descriptions

Parents were asked to describe what comes to their mind when they hear OPAL and parental involvement. Based on the responses, the researcher constructed two categories which are outdoor-related descriptions and involvement-related descriptions. The category of outdoor-related descriptions was constructed through the codes of schoolyard description, risk description, and poor weather description. In terms of schoolyard descriptions (n=8), parents provided two points that consider the schoolyard as a productive area but also an uncontrolled area.

According to parents, the schoolyard is an effective area that can be used to support the developmental skills and learning experiences of children due to involving

different surfaces, different materials, and being larger than the indoor environment. For instance, the schoolyard becomes a living space for children who are trapped indoors according to Ms. Perihan. Just like Ms. Perihan, Ms. Nalan reflected on how the schoolyard could be used to teach about hygiene through mud play with this exemplary quote;

...there's also a good learning point there. Like, your hands are dirty, we need to go wash our hands. It's also a type of routine. You go outside, you get dirty, you wash your hands after. So, for me, mud is wonderful. I mean, I think in terms of immunity and learning hygiene habits, it's fantastic...

Although these parents described the schoolyard as a productive area, some parents described the schoolyard as uncontrolled because of its being large. These parents emphasized that the larger the area gets the more it becomes hard for the teacher to control because of risks like being unable to see children. Mr. Metin is one of the parents who emphasized the struggle with controlling children outdoors with this exemplary quote;

...I think it's hard out there. The teacher is with that many children and the space is very wide. There is a door, the child can even run out...the teacher needs to see all the children...

The second code was given for the parent quotes emphasizing risk descriptions (n=5) in the schoolyard. These parents exemplified outdoor risks such as slip-fall cases, throwing natural materials at each other, eating foreign plants, getting pricked by plant thorns, and collisions while running. Lastly, some parents shared their perspectives on what they mean by poor weather conditions (n=3).

These parents defined the poor weather with explanations like very extreme frost, weather like right before the snow, and weather making the child not enjoy or experience physical discomfort. Parent involvement-related description was formed as the second category of the theme. This category involves two codes; involvement as volunteering (n=14) and significance of involvement (n=4). Almost all of the parents (n=15) who participated in this study provided explanations about coming to school and doing some activities with children when they wanted to describe involvement. To give an example, Ms. Eda stated what comes to her mind when she hears parental involvement with this exemplary quote;

...Possibly one of the children's parents coming and playing with the children ...meeting classmates, communicating with the children... I haven't done any activities like this yet...

While describing parental involvement, some of the parents (n=4) also emphasized that parental involvement needs to have some limits. To illustrate, Ms.Nalan highlighted her trust in the teachers' practices regarding parental involvement with this exemplary quote;

...I feel like involvement should also have a limit...At the end of the day, they're the professionals. So, I think it's important that when your opinion is asked or advice is asked to give it and if they say, can you come in and help....there's also a limit to how much parents should be involved with the teachers...

Some of the parents (n=6) also stated the importance of parental involvement in supporting the development and learning processes of their children. Mr. Metin emphasized the significance of parental involvement in communication with this exemplary quote;

...My child is a child who avoids talking when he is overwhelmed...if there is something that upsets him or puts him in trouble, he does not easily tell. Therefore, at this point, the daycare center must include you, guide you, and inform you. That is why I attach great importance to it...

4.1.1.2. Practices

Parents were asked to describe what they knew about the OPAL practices held in the schoolyard as well as what kind of parental involvement activities they participated in. Based on the given responses, three categories were reached; OPAL practices (n=15), involvement practices (n=8), and out-of-school practices (n=4). In the first category, which is OPAL practices (n=15), the responses were coded within the codes of activity types, activity duration, and communication on activity. In terms of the type of OPAL activities, parents specified that children are mostly doing activities such as playing structured games, examining nature in the yard, doing botanic activities, and engaging in free play. Ms. Oya stated her knowledge of the OPAL activities with this exemplary quota;

...they usually plant some things in crates when spring comes...at the end of spring, sometimes they observe the flowers and fruits if they bear them. Once they marked insects or things, they saw around them. Their teacher gave them a checklist...questions such as Did you see a tree...

Furthermore, parents stated that teachers change the environment's duration, frequency, and usage based on weather conditions regarding OPAL. To illustrate Ms. Betül stated "...Because it was very cold, I didn't see them outside (schoolyard)...you know, when one child gets sick, they all get sick, so they don't prefer it much..." Ms. Gizem reflected on how teachers change learning areas and frequency to avoid the risk of children getting sick within this exemplary quote;

...They have different areas, one in the front and one in the back. They take photos there. There is also a sand area back but I understand that they rarely use there. I guess it's cooler and more shady there. Teachers don't want to take children too much there...

The duration allocated for the OPAL time was another question asked to parents to learn about what they know regarding the allocated time. For this question, parents focused on two points which are OPAL in good weather and OPAL in poor weather. For the OPAL time in good weather, parents indicated that children have OPAL time for almost one workshop time, which is around 45-50 minutes. On the other hand, OPAL in poor weather is stated to be less which is around a maximum of 15 or 20 minutes.

Furthermore, it was asked how parents get information about OPAL practices. The answers of parents lead to codes of OPAL communication on activity. Most of the parents stated that they get information about OPAL time through the school's web application which teachers send photographs and write daily routines to be sent to parents. Besides this web application, teachers utilize WhatsApp groups to send videos on each Friday, that they took during OPAL time.

It was also stated that parents learn about OPAL practices through talking with teachers and their children. In terms of the communication tool, parents stated they generally get information about what kind of activities they are doing in the schoolyard, and some specific information about the child if there is an observation that the teacher wants to share. Ms. Tansu explained her experience with the OPAL communication content with this exemplary quote;

...since they already tell what they do daily, they always tell step by step. When they first come to school, in the workshop, or when they go to the garden...we did this activity, they learned that...sometimes they give information about my child...like your child was interested...I do activities on the weekends related to the things she liked in school...

The second category, which is involvement practices (n=8), demonstrates how parents experience involvement through formed codes that are involvement through communication, involvement through volunteering, involvement through parenting, and involvement through decision-making. In terms of involvement practices, the parents mostly highlighted that they are taking assistance with parenting when they encounter difficulty with their children. For that purpose, parents provided different examples of what kind of issues they took help to provide support for their children's development through one-to-one meetings with the teacher and the school principal who is also a psychologist. For instance, as the mother of a 60-months-old child, Ms.Feriha shared how the school helped her within this exemplary quote;

...I am frankly very happy because they convey all kinds of information. Even when we have problems at home that I cannot solve myself, I share them and they help me. For example, we had a toilet problem for a while...We learned why with the teacher...first we talked to the principal and the teacher...When we have a problem at home, I share it with them. We try to find a common solution together...

Alongside the code of parenting, parents also emphasized how the school pays attention to communicating with parents in diverse ways. As a parent who uses the school's web application frequently, Ms.Dilek reflected on communication with the school with this exemplary quote;

...when we first started, during the orientation process, she informed us about the process, and about what we might experience in the meeting...it was good to talk to her. ...we have an application...at the end of the day, we receive something about what they did today...whenever there is something we want to ask, there is a separate phone number here. Likewise, we can send a message through the application and get feedback from there...Sometimes we get anxious, about what our child did today, and they return immediately...they do not leave us uninformed in that regard...

In terms of the decision-making, parents specified that the school send mini surveys from time to time to involve them in the decision-making process such as organizing birthday parties in the school.

After communicating, parenting, and decision-making; volunteering was highlighted as another involvement practice by the parents. Even though some parents shared their experiences of doing volunteer activities, most of the parents specified that they do not come to school to conduct volunteer activities with children. The parents came for the volunteer activities and emphasized that they do some activities like book reading and art activities. Moreover, most of the parents gave the example of the orientation program for parental involvement activity. By emphasizing Ms. Tansu, who is the mother of a 36-month-old child, reflected on their orientation process with this exemplary quote;

...It was very nice of them to include us in the orientation...On the first day, we were there together for about an hour and a half, parents of all the groups...refreshments, and areas for the children to play...On the fourth day...we picked them up after lunch. During that time, the parents already met, the teachers met the parents and introduced themselves. I think this could be the best example of parental involvement...

In the last category of this theme, parents (n=4) shared how they spend time with their children out of school. The answers of parents were coded within the codes of lack of play experience at home, doing daily household chores, and OPAL habits outside of school. Some of the parents stated that they do not have enough time to spend quality time with their children because of reasons such as the busy load of their work or being not interested in playing games.

Even so, these parents try to have some common experience with their children by doing activities together like doing household chores or going to the market. Furthermore, most of the parents also described how they spend time outdoors with their children by doing activities like going to parks, walking to the market, examining the letters that they see in the street, asking questions about what they see outdoors, examining nature, and so on. As the mother of a 30 months-old child, Ms. Gizem shared her experience with this exemplary quote;

...Because I can come up with new ideas too. Our conversation increases when we are outdoors. I am talking about the street. Sometimes I go to the grocery store just to do something with him. Even on the way, he asks many things. He asks about...He looks at the mud puddles. He wants to play and so on...

4.1.1.3. OPAL Benefits

Parents were asked to explain what they think about outdoor activities in early childhood education. The given responses were categorized as supports cognitive development (n=12), supports social-emotional development (n=14), and supports physical development (n=16).

Table 4.1. *OPAL Benefits According to Parents*

Theme	Categories	Codes
OPAL Benefits	Supports Cognitive Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports learning by doing • supports observational learning • supports sensory learning • supports memorable learning • attracts interest • supports creativity • encourages to ask more questions • learns about problem-solving
	Supports Social-Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports group interaction • motivates more for learning • learns responsibility-taking • learns to wait in line • express themselves more • having more fun • feels freer • feels more relaxed • feels more energetic • feels happier • becomes more resilient • reinforces the love of nature
	Supports Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports self-care skills • strengthens muscles • moves more • discharges energy • benefiting from fresh air • utilizing sunlight • improves sleep quality • increases appetite • strengthens immunity • decreases sensory sensitivity

In the category related to cognitive development, diverse codes were created based on parent’s responses. These codes are related to learning types and how OPAL supports cognitive skills like problem-solving and asking questions. Most of the parents expressed that OPAL activities support learning by doing, observational learning, and sensory learning. When the child learns in diverse ways, the learning becomes more memorable according to parents. In addition, the child’s creativity is supported, and also the child gets more motivated to ask questions and learn about problem-solving through OPAL activities as far as parents stated. In their perspective, OPAL activities attract the child’s interest more. As the mother of 41 months-old children, Ms. Zeliha reflects on how a child learns from real-life experiences by saying “...I mean like, in the outdoors by imitating...You cannot explain skiing to children, but when they ski in the park, they understand what it is. That's why it is much more logical for them to experience and see for themselves...”

As related to observational learning and usage of senses, Ms. Betül shared the OPAL experience of her son who is 60 months old with this exemplary quote;

...his observation skills are developing a lot, without realizing it. His awareness increases because he observes his surroundings. He can discover other living things. It can be a plant, an animal, an object. He is more likely to discover something ... because the outside is very diverse in terms of texture. There is grass, there is a stone...

With another exemplary quote, Ms. Gizem shared her observation regarding how OPAL activities affect her child's imagination and creativity;

...he becomes very creative in play. While playing with mud, he is cooking and making other creative things. It develops his imagination...at home you make him do the same things every day...but outside he can use his imagination more...

In the second category of OPAL benefits, parents' responses were categorized as supporting social-emotional development. In this category, parents mostly focused on how OPAL activities promote positive emotions and feelings such as feeling freer, relaxed, happier, more motivated, and energetic for children while enabling them to have fun in the outdoors. Besides these benefits, parents stated that OPAL activities facilitate children to socialize more, learn about social skills like responsibility taking and waiting in a line, and express themselves more. Furthermore, a child becomes more resilient according to the perspective of parents. Lastly, the parents exemplified how the child's love of nature was promoted as she gained experiences in the outdoors. Related to social and emotional development, Ms. Eda shares her observation on how children feel free on the outside with this exemplary quote;

...I think it's a freer space. Even when you pick the child up from school, usually boys come out doing somersaults and stuff like that. I mean, they throw themselves out as if they have found freedom as if they live in a black room...

Ms. Sakine shared her perspective and observation related to how children enjoy the outdoors and how the outdoors helps children to express themselves and socialize with others within this exemplary quote;

...natural environment can be a tool for play and learning for them...Even the stones in the park. It is material for him and sometimes a means of communication. I mean, I know that he takes stones to people he does not

know, to children to meet them, and he gives them stones. Therefore, he learns to use everything around him...

The last category of the OPAL benefits theme is supporting physical development. In this category, the responses of parents were coded with diverse codes, which are mostly focused on promoting a healthy lifestyle and physical well-being. In terms of parents' point of view, OPAL practices support children to reach a healthy body by benefiting from fresh air, utilizing sunlight, improving sleep, increasing appetite, and strengthening immunity.

While the child is becoming healthier, OPAL promotes her muscles according to parents. Parents exemplified that the child is able to move more so discharge energy more outdoors. As the child gains these experiences outdoors, her self-care skills are supported more, and also her sensory sensitivity decreases while she experiments with natural materials like water and soil. Regarding to theme, Ms. Gizem shares her observation about her child's OPAL experience within this exemplary quote;

...he learned how to hold a scoop to play with sand. He was very small, he couldn't hold anything yet. He was so eager to play with sand that he learned that there (at the beach) When we came back from vacation, he was more able to grasp and hold many things...

Similar to Ms. Gizem, Ms. Dilek also shared her observation regarding how outdoors support her child to develop physically this exemplary quote;

...he has more mobility in the open space. You know, they have the opportunity to do many things they cannot do at home. And at home, there are restrictions such as that fell, that broke. He can act more freely in the open space...

As another parent expressed his perspective and observation related to how the outdoors affect his son's sleep, Mr. Metin stated that;

...It makes a big difference... If you take T... out, he spends much calmer time when he comes home. He's in a much better mood. For example, he sleeps much more comfortably at bedtime...And when he stays at home, he can't get rid of that energy... He is constantly stomping, jumping, hopping, but nothing happens...that energy doesn't go away. And he doesn't sleep. I mean, he has a very difficult time sleeping...

4.1.1.4. OPAL Barriers

Parents were asked to explain what kind of difficulties can be encountered in OPAL. The responses of participants were analyzed, and four different categories were created based on the analysis. These categories were listed as teaching struggles (n=10), lack of OPAL policy (n=8), adult concern (n=15), and social-cultural changes (n=5).

Table 4.2. *OPAL Barriers According to Parents*

Theme	Categories	Codes
OPAL Barriers	Teaching Struggles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • struggling to ensure safety • struggling to control the group • struggling to support self-care • being a newly graduated teacher • lack of OPAL plans
	Lack of Opal Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of information on weather conditions • lack of information on clothing • lack of information on duration and frequency
	Adult Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safety concern • illness concern • hygiene concern
	Sociocultural Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing urbanization • increasing work hours • advancement of technology • spending more time indoors

The first category of the OPAL barriers theme, teaching struggles was the focus of parents. In this category, parents mostly discussed how OPAL could be challenging in terms of ensuring safety, controlling the group, and supporting the self-care skills of children. Parents also emphasized that having less experience in teaching is another reason for encountering difficulties in OPAL so this focus was coded as being newly graduated. Furthermore, the lack of OPAL activities in the curriculum is another issue discussed by parents with teachers regarding OPAL practices in the school. Mr.Metin is one of the parents thinking that the outdoors is a more dangerous area to ensure the safety of children, and he reflects on that idea within this exemplary quote;

... so the children don't stop, and the outside is a more dangerous place ... for example, they may fall down the stairs of the slide, one might get hit by a swing...I think it is difficult to control the outside. Because I have a hard time controlling T... (his son) alone, I am one person and he is one person. But it is even more difficult for a teacher to control 10 or 15 children...

As the mother of a 60-month-old child attending the school for two years, Ms. Eylül shared her concern about the lack of OPAL experience in the education program and how she discussed this concern with the teacher within this exemplary quote;

...it's my wound...there is nothing with outdoors in the program...They did not go outside for a long time. If they did, it was very rare...When I talked to her teacher, she said that if I can make it through the program, I'll take the children out. So I understood that there is no outdoor activity in the program.....but I would very much like this to happen. Instead of worrying about taking the children out, I think there should be at least one hour outside per week within the program, and I think even one hour is insufficient. I talked to the teacher about that, but I didn't pressure the teacher either, because she also needed to finish the activities in the program...

The second category related to OPAL barriers was named as lack of OPAL policy. In this category, diverse codes were created to explain the lack of information on weather conditions, clothing, duration, and frequency regarding the implementation of OPAL time. During interviews, most of the parents mentioned that the school lacks a clear outdoor policy regarding the temperature limits for OPAL activities, appropriate clothing for children, as well as the duration and frequency of the outdoor time. The third category of this theme illustrates how concerns of parents and teachers vary with different focuses like hygiene, safety, and getting ill. It was highlighted that these concerns differ based on the ages of children so younger groups were depicted as more vulnerable to danger, getting sick and dirty. For instance, as a mother of two children, one of them is a toddler and the other is a kindergartener, Ms. Tansu expressed her safety and getting sick concern about her children's ability to understand body temperature and protect themselves from dangers outdoors within this exemplary quote;

...a six-year-old child already knows about cause and effect; he knows that if he pricks his hand on a thorn in the yard, it will hurt...a younger child is not able to realize this. He sees it by doing it...my older child says he is cold but if you ask the little one (toddler) if he is swinging, he can swing for 2 hours. His hands will freeze but he does not say that. He enjoys it...but his brother clearly says, "I'm cold" After the age of four, they say it a little more when they are cold or hot...

Ms. Feriha is another parent who expressed her concern regarding doing OPAL activities in poor weather within this exemplary quote;

...no matter how much you protect and clothe them, they run and breathe the cold air. After that, maybe he gets cold, maybe he sweats...teachers take out many children...teachers do not know if they are sweating or cold...it is very difficult to follow up...

The last category of OPAL barriers theme was formed as sociocultural changes. In this category, the parents' responses were generally discussed on their childhood OPAL experiences so the childhood in the past and now was mostly the focus of the parents. In this context, the codes were constructed as increasing urbanization, increasing work hours, advancing technology, and spending more time indoors. As a family living in an apartment, Ms. Melda described how her OPAL childhood experiences are different from his son's within this exemplary quote;

...we live in an apartment and our yard is very limited so we would love to have classes in the schoolyard if the weather conditions are suitable...we grew up in the village when we were young, I know from myself. We learned a lot by experience...the soil, the grass, everything, holding it in our hands, barefoot but he does not live it... (her son) He has never been a child who has walked barefoot on the soil...

Besides discussing their own OPAL childhood experiences, parents also highlighted that today's children have limited opportunities to play outdoors because of reasons like fewer outdoor play areas and increasing focus on spending indoor time with technological devices like tablets and televisions. For instance, Ms. Sakine compares her childhood with her child's experiences while highlighting barriers of OPAL within this exemplary quote;

... when I was a child, I was always playing outside...In our neighborhood, there were houses with big gardens...I remember spending the summer months, and the winter months in the gardens...we were rarely in the house ...this was also the case when I think about my older generations...I honestly don't think that it was so normal for children to be at home so much but with urbanization, work time, technology, and modernization. In our generation, we are now at home, in offices. Children are with us. Either in homes or in kindergartens, again indoors...

4.1.1.5. Enhancing OPAL

Based on the analysis of parent responses, a theme about how to improve OPAL practices in the schoolyard was constructed through categories that are strengthening involvement (n=13), re-arranging time (n=9), and setting a policy (n=5).

Table 4.3. Enhancing OPAL According to Parents

Theme	Categories	Codes
Enhancing Opal	Strengthening Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthening communication • explaining policy • organizing volunteer activities • organizing parent seminars • balancing demands • giving child-specific feedback
	Re-Arranging Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being careful about clothing • re-organizing the environment • providing more time
	Setting a Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear policy • consistent policy

In the category of strengthening involvement, the responses illustrated involvement of parents in the process could minimize OPAL concerns. To illustrate, organizing volunteer OPAL activities and parent seminars on OPAL are proposed as effective practices that have the potential to minimize concerns regarding OPAL. Ms. Sakine is one of the parents expressing that these practices could be beneficial to make parents understand the benefits and necessity of OPAL in early childhood within this exemplary quote;

...maybe it's good for them to observe there...Studies on this can be shared with those families... this will bring such and such a return to your child. I mean, all of the families are conscious, they have a high level of understanding, a high level of education. What will be good? So, I think if their concerns are addressed and this is supported by scientific studies, I think a good decision will be made for the children...

As well as organizing volunteer activities and parent seminars, parents highlighted the necessity of strong communication with parents to learn about their expectations and perspectives on OPAL besides balancing OPAL over expectations like not having OPAL time in winter. Within this exemplary quote, Ms. Tansu explained that sharing information on planned OPAL activities needs to be a routine of the school so that parents can provide the necessary clothing for the activity;

...If the children go out in the winter and they have muddy areas, teachers could say “This Monday when you bring the children, if you put a pair of boots and overalls with them, we will be able to go out in the garden” In this way, parents’ concern will go away and the children will be comfortable...

Moreover, parents indicated that providing information regarding their children's OPAL experiences holds a crucial place since parents wonder not only how their child learns in outdoor time but also how she experienced outdoor time. To illustrate Ms. Parla expressed her need to take more feedback regarding her child's OPAL experience instead of taking general feedback just focusing on what kind of activities are done in the schoolyard;

... The teacher writes down a very long daily routine...For example, my teacher wrote that we picked parsley in the garden today, but it is more important for me that she (her child) can taste and eat parsley. Why? Because she doesn't eat the leaves of parsley, but she eats the stalk...It is important that she goes and picks it from the garden and eats it...

The second category of enhancing OPAL time is re-arranging OPAL time. In this category, these codes were constructed; being careful about clothing, reorganizing the environment, and providing more time. In this category, parents generally focused on increasing the frequency and duration of outdoor time, especially in the winter season as long as being careful about clothing.

Additionally, parents mentioned that more structured materials helping to reach gains and indicators of the learning activities need to be added to the schoolyard. Ms. Eylül discussed her idea of ideal outdoor time and frequency within this exemplary quote; "...I mean, I would be very happy if it was every day. You know, but I need to keep an eye on the weather... since I see the difference in B...(her daughter), I would like it every day... It can be 45-50 minutes a day..."

Setting an OPAL policy was constructed as the last category of enhancing the OPAL theme. In this category, codes of clear policy and consistent policy were derived based on the analysis of parents' responses. This category illustrated that the school needs a consistent outdoor time policy that is not changing by diverse perspectives or weather conditions. To give an example, Mr. Oya emphasized the necessity of having a certain education perspective for a school within this exemplary quote;

...It shouldn't, it's actually about the school's understanding of education and we should respect it...There should be an attitude. I think it is also very wrong to put children inside because a few parents say they don't want them to go out in the cold in winter. The cold doesn't make them sick. The germ makes them sicker...It is more problematic to keep them inside...

4.1.1.6. Parental Involvement Benefits

Parents were asked to describe their thoughts about parental involvement in early childhood education. Based on parents' responses, two categories were constructed: benefits for parents (n=14) and benefits for children (n=16).

Table 4.4. *Parental Involvement Benefits According to Parents*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Parental Involvement Benefits	Benefits for Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observing child development • supporting parenting skills • empathizing with the teacher • strengthening communication • strengthening trust
	Benefits for Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting school adaptation • supporting quality time • strengthening trust • attracting attention • being motivated • being happy • being proud

In terms of benefits for parents, these codes were created based on responses; empathizing with teachers, strengthening trust, strengthening communication, supporting parenting skills, and observing child development. To illustrate, parents emphasized that their parenting skills like communicating with the child and doing developmentally appropriate activities are supported through parental involvement practices.

As a parent who experienced volunteer parental involvement activity for the first time, Ms. Eylül expressed how she understood her child's development and how she emphasized with the teacher through encountering teaching struggles during the activity;

...I observed the class for the first time...I didn't know it was so difficult to explain something, to show something because I always deal with one child...There were fifteen kids in the class. It was very difficult to make them listen and gather them in one place in concentration...Now I understand how my child cannot focus....it is very normal. ...with that concentration period, it took three months to learn number three...

The second category for the benefits of parental involvement was formed as benefits for children. In this category, parents discussed that involvement has diverse opportunities to support the learning and development processes of children. The analysis of parents' responses resulted in these codes; supporting school adaptation,

supporting quality time, strengthening trust, attracting attention, being motivated, being happy, and being proud. Ms. Gaye shared her volunteer activity experience as well as her observations on the activity's effects, like being happy, on her child within this exemplary quote;

...he was incredibly happy. He immediately wanted to be the assistant teacher...He was cool with his friends and he was so helpful for the activity...the activity we did was something he enjoyed a lot...we have been doing this activity at home for a month...

Parents also pointed out that parental involvement activities can help attract the attention of children to the learning topic addressed in the activity. As one of the few parents experiencing volunteer parental involvement activity in the school, Ms. Eylül expressed how children gave their attention to the activity within this exemplary quote;

...in terms of children, maybe they were a bit more careful when they saw us than their teachers. Because we are strangers. They may be more careful, and more concentrated. For example, they saw something different outside the program. Maybe we made such a contribution to other children...

In terms of school adaptation, Ms. Dilşah underlined that the transition process becomes easier through the agency of volunteer parental involvement activities besides seeing the child's social environment in the school within this exemplary quote;

...it is necessary both for the family and for the child... she will say that look, my parents can also come here. This is a normal place... Yes; we know the daycare center but for example, seeing the group. What kind of people are her friends like? How is her relationship with her friends? I mean, here we try to get information from the teacher as much as possible. But after all, it's a different thing to see it with your eye...

4.1.1.7. Enhancing Parental Involvement

Based on the analysis of parents' responses, a theme about how to improve parental involvement was constructed through categories that meet the needs (n=12), desire to participate (n=8), and involvement barriers (n=5).

Table 4.5. *Enhancing Involvement According to Parents*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Enhancing Involvement	Meeting The Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organizing more volunteer activities • supporting collaboration
	Desire to Participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desire to be involved • desire to contribute • desire to learn
	Involvement Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uncertainty in teaching role • work intensity • being a single parent

Regarding the first category of the theme, some needs emerged result of conducted interviews with parents. These needs were coded as organizing more volunteer activities to involve parents and collaborating more in volunteer parental involvement activities. During the interviews, parents mentioned that the school started to implement volunteer parental involvement activities for the first time in 3-4 years so just a few of the parent participants were able to experience volunteer activities in the school. Ms. Parla expresses her desire and suggestion to involve more volunteer activities within this exemplary quote;

...But for example, this year for the first time my husband and I came and did something in the classroom, I liked it...It was a good step...It was the first time in the third year...this is a very nice thing for the children, self-confidence, introducing their parents, spending time. It's an experience for us too...the applications of this activity can be increased...

Besides the lack of volunteer parental involvement activities, parents also highlighted that collaboration between them and the teacher to plan the activity is quite short. As a parent who was not guided in the planning of the volunteer parental involvement activity, Ms. Eylül shared her experience with this exemplary quote;

...so there is no restriction there as I understand it...there are limitations in some schools...For example, they want the child to make a product...We did not have such a restriction...I can say that we made a few wrong choices. We tried to do more experimental things...the concentration was scattered because we did them one after the other...we do not need to do that much. We would be more comfortable if we did something that they could relate to...we communicated with the teacher while planning the activity but she did not do much because I think, it was her first experience. We said we were going to do this, that, and that, and she just said okay...

The second category of enhancing parental involvement is the desire to actively participate in the education process. This category is constructed through the agency of parents' focus on diverse desires regarding improving their involvement in children's education and development process. Based on the responses of parents, these codes were created; desire to be involved, desire to contribute, and desire to learn. Ms. Oya expresses her desire toward involved in her child's school experiences with this exemplary quote;

...it is very good to know his experience. It would also be good for me to know if I can contribute there. And I would like to contribute, frankly...I especially want to say this, when I pick him up from school, he says to me "Come on Mom, let's play a little bit in the yard"...Probably all children think and feel the same thing in the school area. They want to share the space with their families at school, the free space...

Additionally, parents stated that they are not very much involved in the decision-making process except for answering a few questionnaires like celebrating birthdays in the school. From the parents' perspective, the school needs to organize more whole-class parental involvement activities like this orientation program. Ms. Tansu reflects on doing whole-group parental involvement activities within this exemplary quote;

...parents don't know each other. Because everyone takes their kids in different periods. If something is to be done outdoors, it may be more respectful to do it with a few parents or if there is an area where all parents can fit in...These activities also strengthen the communication and bond between parents...it can be good for parents to come together and exchange ideas...

The last category of the enhancing parental involvement theme was constructed as barriers to parental involvement. This category involves codes of being unsure about the teaching role, work intensity, and being a single parent. As one of the few parents experiencing volunteer parental involvement activity, Ms. Betül reflects on her book reading experience regarding to difficulties of attracting attention within this exemplary quote;

...they can barely pay attention to the story. They want to look at the book. My son goes off on his own to something else...Concentrations are immediately dispersed and groupings happen instantly. 3 kids there, 3 kids there. They gang up. One of them immediately throws someone... It was hard to manage all of them at the same time...So it wasn't very easy...

Unlike Ms. Betül, Ms. Perihan is one of the parents who consider parental involvement activities as useful to attract the attention of children but she is not sure about whether parents are capable of teaching or not. Ms.Perihan stated her focus within this exemplary quote;

...for children, yes, it can be impressive because a different person comes. Just like we change our tone of voice when we speak, here we change the teacher for a short time... but the only problem is whether the parent there will be able to teach it or not. There may be a snag there...how will the parents teach it to the children...

Moreover, some of the parents emphasized that too much involvement of parents could be a burden for parents. In other words, coming to school frequently can tire parents, and taking time off from work can be hard if the parent is working according to the parent's point of view. Besides this perspective, parents also highlighted that parental involvement activities could be a difficult experience for kids who lost one of their parents. Ms. Esra expressed her idea on this issue within this exemplary quote;

...we lost our father in 2019. It can also be a disadvantage for children without a mother or father. Because if the father comes and plays in the class with his child and other children, maybe the child may feel sad that I do not have a father. Or the mother in the same way...

4.1.2. Perspectives and Experiences of Teachers Regarding OPAL

12 early childhood education teachers participated in the study to examine their perspectives and experiences on outdoor time and parental involvement. The responses taken during semi-structured interviews were analyzed through the agency of content analysis. Based on the data analysis, seven themes were constructed as descriptions, practices, benefits of OPAL, barriers of OPAL, enhancing OPAL, benefits of parental involvement, and barriers of parental involvement.

4.1.2.1. Descriptions

Teachers were asked to describe what comes to their mind when they hear OPAL and parental involvement. The responses of teachers resulted in the construction of two

categories which are outdoor-related descriptions (n=12) and involvement-related descriptions (n=8).

Table 4.6. *Descriptions according to Teachers*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Descriptions	Outdoor Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describing OPAL • describing schoolyard
	Involvement Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describing poor weather • describing risk
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describing parental involvement • describing the role of the parents

In outdoor-related descriptions, teachers provided diverse descriptions regarding OPAL conducted in the schoolyard. For instance, some of the teachers described OPAL as less but more valuable in terms of children since children have less opportunity to play in the schoolyard so it makes OPAL more valuable for children. Furthermore, OPAL was described as troublesome because of a lack of staff. Besides describing OPAL as troublesome and valuable, OPAL is also described as a learning experience involving structured gains and indicators. On the other hand, some of the teachers also indicated that OPAL involves just free play because it is hard to organize a planned activity because of material and area shortages. Ms.Lale shared her experience related to considering OPAL as more valuable within this exemplary quote;

...there is so much to interest them in the yard...sometimes I want to do an activity but immediately run, so it is impossible to do an activity...the schoolyard is more valuable because they go less and dive straight into the play. If I say we need to do an activity there, they are like, oh, they don't want to do it...

Teachers also provided descriptions of risk in the schoolyard and poor weather related to OPAL. According to teachers' perspective, there are diverse risks in the schoolyard. Teachers list these risks such as putting foreign objects in the mouth and choking, falling from a high place, tripping over wires, falling on the door, getting fingers and hands caught in the door, hitting by play equipment like swings, throwing stones or soil at each other, sharp corners on play equipment stinging, and child running away from school. Furthermore, teachers also explained what they meant by saying poor weather. According to teachers, poor weather means cold, windy, under -5 degree weather, and rainy weather with thunderstorms.

Describing the schoolyard was another code constructed in analysis based on the teachers' responses. Teachers reflect on the schoolyard within purposes and size. According to the teachers, a schoolyard is a productive area offering many opportunities to do learning activities, enrich play, and support the developmental skills of children. Teachers exemplified these codes by emphasizing that nature can be observable diverse learning activities can be done, and natural materials can be the subjects of play. As the teacher of the 24-36-months age group, Ms. Daisy explained how the schoolyard supports observation skills within this exemplary quote;

...it's about hygiene and meticulousness. We like to observe the spider but in the garden. No one wants to watch a spider entering and leaving the nest indoors, but when you see a spider in the garden, you stop and watch it, or when you see a snail walking in the garden, you like it, but not in the house...I mean, I think real living spaces are more interesting and trigger learning more...

Additionally, teachers reflect on how they perceive the size of the schoolyard. The same school size was described as sometimes large and sometimes small. To illustrate, the schoolyard is large enough for children to enable them to express themselves and play but it is too small to conduct structured activities and observe children one to one according to some teachers. Moreover, while some of the teachers consider schoolyard size as adequate for parental involvement activities some of them stated that it is inadequate for parental involvement activities. In addition, some of the teachers perceive large schoolyard size as a risk for being sure about the safety of children. As the teacher of the 48-60-month age group, Ms. Yeliz reflects on her perception of schoolyard size regarding safety within this exemplary quote;

... and there can be a little bit unpredictable things in the schoolyard, it's a little bit beyond my control...There is a stony area, there is a wooden house, and there is a grassy area. Now two or three of the kids can go inside the house, but it can be difficult to observe the inside of the house from the outside...when there is no assistant teacher, I hesitate to go out in the schoolyard...

The second category of the descriptions theme is involvement-related descriptions. In this category, the data analysis led to the construction of these codes which describe parent involvement as volunteering, describe the limits of parental involvement, and describe the role of the parents. Most of the teachers described parental involvement as parents coming to school and doing some volunteer activities with children. From

the teachers' point of view, parents mostly need to be involved in the process by providing information about their child and collaboration. While explaining what comes to their mind when they hear parental involvement, some of the teachers also highlighted that parental involvement needs to have some limitations. Some teachers also said that involving parents in the decision-making process could create problems. Ms. Güneş reflects on this topic within this exemplary quote;

...so of course there should be parental involvement. The parents are a bridge, they know the child best and can give me the best information. For this reason, I think there should be involvement as much as possible, but where necessary. For example, not in all areas such as “decision-making”. Then it seems to me that the family has the right to question too much. It's not like that, but I think they should be integrated where necessary...

Secondly, teachers discussed the roles of parents regarding parental involvement. Some of the teachers emphasized parents as learning leaders focusing on the idea that parents are valuable to support the learning experiences of children. In teachers' opinion, parents can take the role of experience transmitters so that they can share their experiences and facilitate children to learn from these experiences. Parents also could be field experts teaching about a specific field like the ones related to their occupation to children according to teachers.

Furthermore, teachers stated that parents could be material providers bringing rare and unavailable materials to the classroom to examine and talk about. The role of information providers was also highlighted by teachers who referred to parents as the most accurate source of information regarding the development of their child. Additionally, teachers mentioned that parent also takes the role of being just implementers who act with the guidance of teachers without involving planning or decision-making processes. As the teacher of the 36-48-month age group, Ms. Manolya emphasized how taking different roles attracts attention from children in a volunteer parental involvement activity within this exemplary quote;

...it depends on the nature of the activity and what we are going to do. Let's say we are going to prepare a very comprehensive activity on any subject...for example, let's say I am planning an activity on food, for example, a mother or a father who is in the kitchen will be different in the eyes of the child. I mean, the teacher always plays the role of a teacher, but the parents play the role of a teacher but also a cook. I think this can be very enjoyable and remarkable for the child...

4.1.2.2. Practices

The second theme was constructed as practices while analyzing the teachers' experiences and perspectives on OPAL and parental involvement. In this theme, four different categories were formed planning OPAL (n=10), implementing OPAL (n=12), assessing OPAL (n=5), and involvement practices (n=8).

Table 4.7. Practices according to Teachers

Theme	Categories	Codes
Practices	Planning OPAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considering weather • considering time • preparing the materials • suitability of the environment • considering differences
	Implementing OPAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considering outcomes • planning to attract attention • getting children's opinions • strengthening content knowledge • ensuring safety • directing behaviors • quality of teaching • using area effectively • managing time effectively • being careful about clothing • OPAL in poor weather • OPAL in good weather • types of practices • purpose of practices
	Assessing OPAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using open-ended questions • taking short notes • doing assessment • communication tool • communicating with parents
	Parental Involvement Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning at home example • Parenting example • Communicating example

In planning the OPAL category, teachers focused on what they pay attention to when preparing an OPAL activity for their age group. In the category of planning OPAL, teachers emphasized that they pay attention to weather conditions, time of the day, materials, and environment. To illustrate, teachers gave the example of examining nature in spring and summer which have good weather conditions. As one of these teachers, Ms. Nergis reflects on what she considers while planning an OPAL activity within this exemplary quote;

...if I plan it for every morning, I design a dynamic activity because they come to school like a bomb...Safety is also crucial to me...if there is something like a swing around and I plan an activity with running, I try to revise it. I try to

plan an activity with materials that are easy to apply because they can be easily dispersed. I make sure that there are few materials and few products...

Besides weather, time, materials, and environment; teachers focused on the differences among children while explaining how they plan an OPAL activity. In this context, teachers highlighted that the developmental skills, readiness, and interests of children are important while planning the activity so teachers emphasized that they differentiate activities based on what children can do and what they need to do. In parallel to these aspects, the teachers also pointed out attracting the attention of children and getting their ideas in the process. Ms. Daisy explained what she meant by considering individual differences within this exemplary quote;

...if there is a child in the group who cannot do it, I plan the activity at a level where that child can also be involved. While planning this, I do not want children who can do it to lose interest, so I increase the process gradually, step by step. I make it progress from easy to difficult so that the child who cannot do it easily can also do it...so he can feel a sense of accomplishment...I want to give every child, at every level, the opportunity to experience that moment...

Moreover, teachers indicated that an OPAL activity also needs to have gains for children. For this reason, teachers also pay attention to the learning outcomes of the activity as far as they state. To give an example, integrated activities were emphasized as effective OPAL activities due to being focused on more than one learning topic and developmental areas. Additionally, some of the teachers highlighted the necessity of having adequate content knowledge about what they are planning to teach. Teachers gave examples of knowing the names of plants in the schoolyard if they were planning to teach about nature. The second category of the practices theme was formed as implementing OPAL. In this category, teachers listed the aspects that they pay attention to during the implementation of an OPAL activity with their age group. Most of the teachers focused on ensuring the safety of children while implementing the activity. Besides safety, teachers regarding the implementation of OPAL activity emphasized intervening the behavioral problems like pushing. As one of the teachers of the 36-48-months-old age group, Ms. Kardelen reflects on what she pays attention to during OPAL implementation in the schoolyard within this exemplary quote;

...some of our children have behavior problems. We try to manage the classroom as much as possible, but the children are a bit troubled, and we

cannot get them to listen... For example, we have children who hurt each other... We have experienced hitting during OPAL... or the child walks away or tries to take the place of another friend...

In addition to safety and dealing with behavioral problems, teachers stated that they also try to attract children's attention and keep attention on the activity while implementing the OPAL activity. Teachers explained that they benefit from games like chasing games, doing short-term exercise movements, contacting individually through calling by name, and so on when they observe that children begin to lose their attention during the OPAL activity. Furthermore, teachers indicated that they strive to improve the quality of teaching through the agency of benefiting from diverse practices such as observational learning, sensory learning, taking children's ideas to direct the activity, interacting with nature, teaching from simple to difficult, demonstration, teaching in English and so on.

Most of the teachers pointed out the importance of managing time effectively during the implementation of OPAL activity. Due to considering outdoor time as another workshop that has time of up to 45 minutes, teachers expressed that they try to manage this specific time as much as possible since they need to go to another workshop when they run out of time in the schoolyard. Moreover, a few of the teachers highlighted that discharging energy is crucial for them so they pay attention to using whole the area of the schoolyard while doing an OPAL activity. Another important practice that teachers follow for OPAL activities is discharging energy. Teachers mentioned that they are very cautious with the weather conditions when they conduct an OPAL activity. For that reason, they prepare children's clothing before going to the schoolyard, control clothing during the activity, and change clothing at the end of the activity whether children are sweaty or not. As a teacher giving importance to having OPAL time even for a short period in winter, Ms. Manolya reflected on her OPAL experience regarding clothing within this exemplary quote;

...I have families who are hypochondriacs or who are very cautious. I also have a concern that we went out to the schoolyard and the child got sick the next day, but I usually ignore the concerns of parents since I dress children in layers and take them out even if in winter...

In the category of implementing OPAL, teachers also shared how much time they spend on OPAL and what activities they are doing during OPAL time. In terms of

time, teachers provided information regarding the duration and frequency of OPAL not only in good weather but also in poor weather. Most of the teachers highlighted that the time allocated to OPAL is less in seasons like winter and fall compared to summer and spring. In other words, teachers highlighted that children have less OPAL time if there are poor weather conditions. Teachers also stated that they have OPAL time in poor weather approximately in 15-20 min while having OPAL time in good weather approximately in 45-50 min. Ms. Yeliz shares her experience regarding OPAL frequency and duration within this exemplary quote;

...because it's cold and some of the children are very sick, and parents say that could you not go out today...I want to go out all together so there are times when we don't go out because of sick children for a week in cold weather. But when we go out, we generally stay for 10 or 15 minutes to take a breath...

In terms of activities, teachers stated what kind of activities they are doing and for what purposes they do these activities. Teachers generally emphasized that they are doing science and nature activities like examining leaves and flowers in the schoolyard.

Besides science and nature activities, children engaged in free play, movement, math, games, art, and early literacy activities as examples of OPAL activities. Teachers also pointed out that they conducted OPAL activities to support children in discharging energy, benefiting from fresh air, improving developmental skills, teaching concepts, interacting with nature, teaching about nature, and teaching respect for nature. As a teacher of the 36-48-months-old age group, Ms. Ayşe shares with her what kind of OPAL activities they are conducting in the schoolyard and the purposes of these OPAL activities within this exemplary quote;

...we examine the leaves that fall in nature, snails that wander, and spider webs. We sang songs and played with dried leaves. We examined the vegetables and fruits in the garden and watered them while autumn was not yet here. We harvested and collected. We tried to support gross motor skills such as throwing and catching balls by taking out materials such as balls and Frisbees, and we made movements that would be healthy for their bodies... We play catch, we play high off the ground, we play games like this...

The third category of the practices theme is assessing OPAL. In this category, diverse codes were constructed based on teachers' responses regarding what they are doing

to assess and evaluate learning and development occurring in the schoolyard. A few of the teachers indicated that they assess and evaluate children's learning and development in the schoolyard. These teachers stated that they are using open-ended questions to understand whether children learn the focused topic or not. While most of the teachers emphasized that they are also benefiting from observation during OPAL, just one of them stated that taking short notes to record her observations. Similarly, just a few of the teachers highlighted that they are doing self-assessments after the activity through questioning their teaching practices. Besides self-assessment, these teachers also stated that they are assessing the activity to revise the activity to support the OPAL experience efficiently. As the only teacher who emphasized doing assessment and evaluation with three dimensions, Ms. Nergis shared her experience with this exemplary quote;

...self-assessment is very valuable for me and I think it should be unchanging for a teacher because the child is constantly changing. Was I appropriate for the child, did I attract the child's attention, did I arouse curiosity in the child? Did the child enjoy participating in the activity or did they do it dutifully? ...but evaluation for the child is also valuable for me...So from the child's point of view, was it suitable for the dynamics of the children, to the group? ...We should also always criticize the program. I feel like the activities we write are never good enough, but it's not because I think badly, it's because I try to improve them...

The teachers' focus on communicating with parents to provide information on OPAL experience was also involved in the category of OPAL assessment. In this category, teachers focused on what kind of subjects they were focused on while communicating about OPAL in the schoolyard. Communicating related to self-care skills is one of the subjects for teachers and parents. Some of the teachers expressed that they generally give feedback regarding the child's care and the development of self-care skills to parents.

Furthermore, some of the teachers highlighted that they sometimes communicate with parents, who demand more OPAL time, to explain why they change the duration and frequency in the winter season. Additionally, teachers shared which tools they are using to communicate with parents on OPAL time. Teachers mostly communicate with parents through the agency of the school's web application which teachers send photographs and write daily routines to be sent to parents. Besides this application,

talking face to face and sending OPAL activity videos from WhatsApp parent groups were given as examples of OPAL communication tools. During their face-to-face communication, Ms. Daisy expressed how she communicates with parents on weather conditions related to OPAL within this exemplary quote;

...parent said that their child ran in the schoolyard and sweated in the cold weather. That might be why he got sick...I told her that we don't stay in the schoolyard for very long periods and that only a 10-15 minute period would be enough as long as no frost and cold would make children sick, and that children could not get sick in such a short period...

The last category of practices was constructed as parental involvement practices. This category describes the focus of teachers regarding how they enable parents to be involved in their children's development and learning experiences. In this category, the codes of learning at home example, parenting example, and communicating example were constructed to portray the involvement experiences of teachers. In terms of the point of learning at home, teachers mentioned that they are giving some homework like completing worksheets or an art project together.

Apart from learning at home, some of the teachers also pointed out that they try to facilitate parental involvement through supporting parenting skills. In this context, they organize one-to-one parent meetings to guide them on how to approach the child in a developmentally appropriate way as far as they stated it. Teachers also emphasized how they communicate with parents to provide information about their children's development, learning progress, and the activities that they are doing in the school via usage of the school's web application and parent WhatsApp groups. Ms. Toprak shared this example of her practices related to parental involvement within this exemplary quote;

... I think an activity that the child does with her family can be more productive for the child... The child is more willing anyway...she will be happier when she shares something with her parents. Let me give an example from an activity I did last week, about body parts. I asked the children to draw their own feet. I said, "I want you to draw the size of your parents' feet as a home activity." We were learning the concepts of big and small at this time. I said, "Is your mother's foot bigger or your father's foot bigger?" ...I liked the children's feedback and their sharing...

4.1.2.3. Benefits of OPAL

Teachers were asked to describe what comes to their mind when they hear OPAL and what they think about the usage of schoolyard in early childhood education. The analysis of teacher responses led to the formation of three categories, which are supporting cognitive development (n=11), supporting physical development (n=9), and supporting social-emotional development (n=8).

Table 4.8. *Benefits of OPAL according to Teachers*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Benefits of OPAL	Supports Cognitive Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports learning by doing • supports sensory learning • supports play-based learning • provides memorable learning • attracts curiosity • learns about nature • learns about comparison • learns about risk management • supports longer attention span • supports creativity
	Supports Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discharges energy • benefits from fresh air • promotes better health • supports gross motor skills • supports fine motor skills
	Supports Social-Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feels more relaxed • feels happier • feels freer • learns about being patient • motivates more for learning • gets socialized

The first category of OPAL benefits describes teachers' perspectives and experiences of benefits in cognitive development. In terms of supporting cognitive development, most of the teachers underlined the significance of supporting diverse learning types which are sensory learning, play-based learning, and learning by doing. Children also have opportunities to develop an awareness related to understanding that learning happens everywhere including outdoor environments such as forests and the schoolyard as far as teachers indicated. Ms. Nergis explained how OPAL supports learning by doing within this exemplary quote;

...what we call cognitive development is the process of discovering and learning about the world we live in. Now, when the child experiences this only at home, it is incomplete because there is nature outside, there is soil, there is air, there is everything...the child falls, his leg bleeds, he can't get up, he fights with his friend, he waits in line, there are so many developmental opportunities in outdoor games...we can't do this in kindergartens; we can't do it at home so we need outdoor...

Teachers also stated that OPAL attracts more curiosity and gives a longer attention span to focused learning topics. Additionally, teachers pointed out that learning becomes more memorable through the agency of OPAL. Ms. Lale, who is the teacher of the 48-60-month age group explained how she observed the effects of conducted OPAL activity focusing on worms in the schoolyard, on the learning process of children within this exemplary quote;

...it stays in their memory better...when I asked do they remembered the worm in the yard, they said yes and how much time has passed since then. Especially things that interest them a lot, like animals or leaves or plants, they remember them and they can use them in this way. When I show them something about a worm, they can say we saw this in the schoolyard...

While children engage in OPAL, they also learn about nature besides understanding comparison and how to manage risks outdoors according to teachers' point of view. To illustrate, examining leaves in the schoolyard also assists children in understanding differences among leaves through comparison. Moreover, the child becomes able to learn about how to manage diverse risks as they gain experience in the schoolyard as far as teachers believe. For instance, a child learns not to push her friend when she experiences a risk of falling when a friend pushes her according to the example given by Ms. Rana who is one of the 36-48-month age group teachers. Supporting creativity is another benefit affecting cognitive development in their early years in terms of teachers' points of view. Some of the teachers highlighted that open-ended materials like mud and stones help children build and sustain dramatic play. Ms. Nergis shares her observations and experiences related to OPAL benefits on cognitive development within this exemplary quote;

...you know, the game played outdoors has no limits because there are few materials. I think the material redundancy limits the child. Every toy has a schematic in the child's mind, they act according to that schematic, but a stone on the outdoor is a toy for the child. That stone can be a pot or a cloud. It can be anything...

The second category of the OPAL benefits theme was constructed as supporting physical development. This category was formed based on the teachers' responses related to the development of motor skills and promoting physical well-being. Most of the teachers highlighted that OPAL enables children to discharge their energy effectively since they can move more. In teachers' opinion, children can breathe more

in the schoolyard. Moreover, teachers emphasized that children's fine and gross motor skills are supported through the agency of OPAL experiences that they gained in the schoolyard. Ms. Ayşe stated that "...since we do activities with the children in the workshop (inside of the school), they like to play freely in the schoolyard more because they need discharge and relaxation..." and Ms.Lale are some of the teachers who shared their experiences and perspectives regarding physical development in OPAL through these exemplary quotes;

...I think it also supports it in terms of physical development. There are big tires in the backyard. Children try to lift these tires, they go inside the tires, for example, they fill the inside of that tire with stones and then they cannot lift it...At that moment, that's not their aim, but it turns out to be a game...

The last category of the OPAL benefits theme was constructed as supporting social and emotional development. This category illustrates what teachers think and what they observe about the effects of OPAL on social and emotional development. Teachers generally indicated that they observed children happier when they were in the schoolyard. Besides being happier, children feel more relaxed and freer as far as teachers think. Moreover, teachers highlighted that children are more socialized in the schoolyard. Teachers also pointed out that OPAL facilitates children to learn about being patient since children wait in line and share outdoor material in play. Furthermore, teachers emphasized that children get more motivated to learn in the schoolyard since they love being in outdoors. Ms. Rana shared her experience that she observed the development of social-emotional skills during OPAL within this exemplary quote; "...for example, children want to go on the swing, but they are impatient, one comes first and the other one comes later. One of them says I want to, he cries there, but he has to wait there and be patient. They learn this..."

4.1.2.4. Barriers to OPAL

Teachers were asked to describe what kind of difficulties they encountered during the process of planning, implementing, and assessing steps of an OPAL activity. Based on data analysis of teachers' responses, these four different categories were created;

adult-related (n=10), child-related (n=5), school-related (n=8), and social-cultural changing-related (n=4).

Table 4.9. *Barriers of OPAL according to Teachers*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Barriers of OPAL	Adult Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safety concern • illness concern • hygiene concern • academic concern • concern about having problems
	Child Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing illness • inability to concentrate • lack of experience • not enough clothing • slip and fall cases
	School Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • too much workload • lack of staff • overcrowded class • lack of assessment • lack of materials • inadequate space • school system • difficulty in managing class
	Sociocultural Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effects of Covid-19 • negative media reports • disappearance of neighborhood • changing in parenting style

In the adult-related category, which is the first one, teachers generally reflected on how difficulties from parents and teachers affect the OPAL experience of children. Most of the teachers shared their perspectives related to concerns. To illustrate, teachers generally highlighted that parents demand them to conduct less OPAL activity in the winter season, which is considered to have poor weather conditions. In addition to this, teachers stated that parents blame OPAL time for children getting sick.

As one of the teachers of the youngest age group in the school, Ms. Daisy shared how parents’ concern about getting ill affects her OPAL practices within this exemplary quote;

...For the last two months, because the children have been sick and because of the parent's reactions, I have been reducing OPAL time in cold weather. For example, today we went out for just 5-10 minutes. When we go out, we wonder if the parents would say something because children get sick more in the winter months. Some children were sick...it is not possible to take them out because the parents say that the child was already sick and got sicker because of you. To avoid these reactions and to protect my health, I take them out less in winter. But before the weather got colder, we used to go out more...The same thing happened also in previous years...

Furthermore, some of the teachers also indicated that they do not want to go out in wintertime because they are afraid of children getting sick. Not only younger group teachers but also older age group teachers stated that they do not prefer to go to the schoolyard too much because of the risk that children can get ill. As one of the teachers of the 24-36-month-old age group, Ms. Orkide reflects on her concern about children getting ill within this exemplary quote;

...in the summer, children can sit on the ground and roll around, they don't get cold but in winter they can't sit. When we went out in the schoolyard today, they wanted to play with pebbles, and I did not want to let them play because they did not have gloves and the stones were very cold. They wanted to sit but I told them that the stones are wet, you can get wet and get sick. So because of that, I think the time would have been less...

Apart from getting ill, teachers emphasized that some of the parents can experience being uncomfortable with the child getting dirty during OPAL time but these teachers also highlighted that they are paying attention to changing clothes when they get dirty to minimize hygiene concerns. Moreover, teachers also reflect on their OPAL experiences in terms of safety. Regarding safety, Ms. Güneş stated that there needs to be more than one teacher supervising the OPAL time within this exemplary quote;

...I have only done one learning activity in four months so far...I do not want to be alone with the children. My partner teacher is also supporting other age groups, and I do not find it safe enough to go outside by myself with children around because I think that there could be something bad when I am paying attention to another child... I find it more attractive to stay inside...

Besides getting ill and safety, a few of the teachers also indicated that focusing on academic development of children and hygiene sometimes could be barriers for OPAL. In terms of hygiene, some of the teachers shared that they wipe the surfaces of playground equipment like swings and slide if they are muddy to prevent children's clothes get dirty and ensure that there will be no accidents like slipping and falling because of mud. Some of the teachers also expressed that they feel like to trying to complete the academic program even though the school administration or parents do not show no pressure to do so. In other words, these teachers stated that they prefer to conduct planned activity to do at the classroom instead of OPAL time in the schoolyard. Moreover, teachers indicated that they do not want to experience any problems with parents and school administration regarding OPAL time so they tend

to do or change their OPAL practices even though they do not believe it is not right. Ms. Manolya reflects on how she experiences this challenge within this exemplary quote;

...if the parent tells us that the child is getting sick, please don't take him out, we do it that way...there is no persuading the family, unfortunately. As I said, I don't like the fact that they get so involved in the first place...I'm worried about having problems with the parents and the administration because I think the school's policy is at this point, like this...I don't think about these things much anymore. These are not issues that can be fought in a private institution; I'm trying to go a little bit more into the water...

The name of child-related barriers was given to the second category of the OPAL barriers theme. In this category, teachers generally reflected on getting ill, safety, and distraction of attention topics while sharing their experiences and perspectives. Teachers gave the reason those children getting sick more in winter as a barrier. This barrier led teachers to decrease the frequency and duration of OPAL since children are not coming to school so their school adaptation process gets harder as far as teachers stated. Furthermore, teachers emphasized that children have no ability to control their body temperature. To illustrate, children are not aware that they are cold so they are not able to say they get cold and help assistance from the teacher because they are too hyper-focused and immersed in the play according to teachers. Similar to checking body temperature, children also struggle to focus their attention during OPAL time from the point of teachers' view. Ms. Nergis shared her observations regarding children's struggle with concentration in OPAL within this exemplary quote;

..children's self-control, executive skills, attention skills...they start to misfire a little bit more. When the child is sitting in the activity and sees the slide, he needs to say, "I'm in the activity now, my teacher will give me permission after the activity is over". I don't believe that they can establish this mental schema and participate in the activity. They immediately wants to play. Within years, I see that children have really changed...now they are too much pleasure-oriented. I mean, when it comes to executive functions, they seem to have regressed a little bit with the pandemic...

Furthermore, teachers emphasized that children's slip and fall cases can disrupt the effectiveness of the OPAL activity. Another barrier related to children is not enough clothing according to teachers.

In other words, teachers highlighted that if the child has no suitable clothes for the day's weather conditions, they are not able to go to schoolyard for OPAL time as a class. Teachers emphasized suitable clothes such as rain boots, mittens, and weather-appropriate thickness of clothing. Additionally, teachers proposed children's lack of OPAL experience as another OPAL barrier. Teachers emphasized that doing an OPAL activity is sometimes challenging for them because children do not have the habit of doing a structured OPAL activity in the schoolyard. As one of these teachers, Ms.Güneş reflects of this barrier within this exemplary quote;

...children think that being outside means just free play...because they are not used to learning outside...when I want to do an activity outside, children are very easily distracted, and their attention span is less, but if we had integrated every activity I did in the classroom outside, until now.. maybe if they were used to it, I think this would not have happened...

The third category of the OPAL barriers theme was named school-related barriers. This category illustrated what kind of difficulties teachers experience related to OPAL time resulting from the school. Teachers emphasized that they are living a very busy work life in the school. According to teachers, the intense workload consisted mostly of completing planned activities in the program but some of them also pointed out providing care for the children.

In addition to completing activities and providing care, some of the teachers also mentioned that they are providing cleanliness of the learning area like cleaning the mud on slides and swings. Teachers generally highlighted that they are facing the busy work-life barrier mostly when they want to assess the OPAL activity that they conducted. Moreover, a few of the teachers also stated that they cannot find time to go to the schoolyard because of not only numerous activities but also branch lessons like robotic coding, Orff, and gymnastics. Ms.Orkide shared why she struggles to do assessments for an OPAL activity within this exemplary quote;

...we have classes like robotic coding. When we drop those classes, we have very limited time to implement the activities. The program also has many activities, such as mathematics and literacy. When we complete all, we have about 2 days left...When we have free time, we make an evaluation at the end of the day. We cannot always do assessments specific to OPAL. It does not always happen...

The teachers also regarded the school's workshop system as another OPAL barrier. In this system, teachers highlighted that they have 45-50 minutes to enter the workshop, do activities, restore the workshop with clean up, and leave the workshop. Because of considering the schoolyard as another workshop, teachers indicated that the time allocated for the workshop is not enough for them because of also providing care before and after OPAL, and also trying to not miss the time span of the next workshop is significant. Within this exemplary quote, Ms. Daisy reflected on how this workshop system has caused them to hurry without implementing assessment and evaluation for the conducted OPAL activity;

...I mean, I can say that we can't get into the assessment part because the process of going to the schoolyard and transitioning to a different workshop again can force us so we are doing usually not a very in-depth assessment. Sometimes I can ask questions like did you like our games in the schoolyard, did you enjoy them, should we play this game when we go out in the schoolyard again, so I don't think this is exactly an evaluation, I don't know...

Teachers indicated a lack of staff as another barrier related to the school. Some of the teachers shared that they do not prefer the schoolyard when their partner teachers are not with them for reasons such as ensuring the safety of children, doing all the planned activities, supervising children, providing care for children, and so on. Few of these teacher also emphasized that their age groups are so crowded so it is become harder to conduct an effective OPAL activity with a large group of children. To illustrate, a group involving 15 children was regarded as crowded for just one teacher to conduct OPAL time in the schoolyard. Ms.Manolya shared her OPAL experience regarding the barriers of staff lack and overcrowded classrooms within this exemplary quote;

...having a partner teacher would definitely change...when I was going out today, I took the children out alone because my partner teacher was helping another class. I took the children out alone, like what is in one hand is in two hands. I dressed the children in 10 minutes...when I have the partner, it goes down to 5 minutes very comfortably...it takes a moment outside for children to do something...for example, a child falls and while I am taking care of that child, other children can fight with each other or they can fall...very difficult to manage at the same time, but when you have a partner, while one is dealing with one, the other goes to the other...

Furthermore, teachers while reflecting on the OPAL barriers also highlighted physical qualities of the schoolyard. In this regard, few of the teachers emphasized that the size of the schoolyard is not enough to conduct OPAL activities effectively. Especially

conducting OPAL time becomes very difficult in the front schoolyard because parents come to take their children and wait in front of the inner door of the school these teachers do not prefer OPAL activities afternoon close to the school exit since there is not enough area involving also waiting for parents for their children.

Few teachers pointed out another barrier related to physical quality as lack of materials. Teachers described the inadequacy of the materials as a barrier that they encountered during planning an OPAL activity. Moreover, an area like a gazebo, involving a table, was highlighted as a need for poor weather conditions with a focus on doing desk-based activities in the schoolyard. Ms. Güneş shared her experience and perspective on early departure from the school within this exemplary quote;

...Just after noon, the children start to be picked up slowly. After half past three, it starts to fill up in front of the door... When can we go out to the schoolyard? The children are being given, and if we change our clothes there, it's unbelievable chaos... I mean, parents sometimes come to inside the schoolyard too much... it's also a bit different for the children too as they start to be in front of the door at 3.00, they say, "My mom is here, my dad is here," because there may be children who go early. Then I don't want their play to be interrupted...

In terms of classroom management, teachers generally highlighted that it is hard to maintain the attention of children effectively in outdoor time. This barrier was highlighted as a barrier that teachers encountered during the implementation and assessment of the OPAL activity. To illustrate, children tend to play freely so they are going to swings and slides instead of doing structured OPAL activities as far as teachers shared. Similar to the difficulty of attracting attention, some teachers pointed out that they struggle to provide control during an OPAL activity. Regarding control, teachers shared examples of intervening in problematic behaviors, making children do another activity or inside the workshop, making them speak in turn, and so on. Related to providing control and attracting children's attention, Ms. Lale shared her experience with this exemplary quote;

...This happened on the treasure hunt. I say that we'll go there but the schoolyard attracts them so much that there's a swing, a slide. I say we'll start there, we'll look over there. I look and one of them comes from a very far point, the other one is at the slide, and the other one is at the swing. It can be difficult to collect them. When I go out in the schoolyard, they usually scatter a lot...: Children scatter at the end of the activity too, for example. They realize that the

activity is over and suddenly try to look left and right. Some of them start running before doing a proper assessment...

Moreover, most of the teachers stated that they are not able to conduct systematic assessments and evaluations for OPAL in the schoolyard for diverse reasons like the workshop system, not having enough time, going out to the schoolyard less often, forgetting to conduct assessments, struggling to attract the attention of children and so on.

Except few of the teachers taking notes about their observations from time to time, teachers generally pointed out that they are not recording assessments of the conducted OPAL activity, through the usage of assessment tools like checklists, observation forms, and so on. As one of the teachers doing observation for assessment but not using a recording tool, Ms. Ayşe shared her perspective within this exemplary quote;

...I mean, we work with a workshop system...We did the activity and then we realize that it's time for a change. When we move on to the next workshop in a hurry, a different activity is planned for that workshop, so we move on to that activity...I think I have a good memory. When I close my eyes and think about the children, I make evaluations by imagining and remembering what they say and do...but I haven't used it so far, maybe I think it would benefit me to use it from now on...

The last category of the OPAL barriers theme was constructed as social and cultural changing related barriers. This category illustrates what teachers think and experience related to changes occurring in society in terms of OPAL. Teachers highlighted that the neighborhood culture and relations have been disappearing over the years from past to present. In addition to the lack of neighborhood culture, families start to live their lives inside of the houses too much as far as they state.

Furthermore, today's parents are more concerned with safety, which is also a result of negative media reports, and they tend to focus on more small family life so all of these barriers led children to play less in the outdoors from the teachers' point of view. The effects of the pandemic are also another barrier for OPAL according to teachers' perspective. To illustrate, teachers pointed out that children started to change with the excessive usage of technology and too much home-oriented life during the pandemic.

Ms. Nergis discussed these social and cultural changes in terms of OPAL barriers within this exemplary quote;

...after the pandemic, social interactions that we experienced in childhood have weakened a lot...children don't go down to the apartment and play anymore...I think the concept of neighborhood is very much diminished now so I think children cannot interact with neighbor children because there is not as much neighborhood as before...

4.1.2.5. Enhancing OPAL

Based on the analysis of teachers' responses, a theme about how to improve OPAL in the schoolyard was constructed through categories which are strengthening parental involvement (n=10) and improving classroom management (n=7).

Table 4.10. *Enhancing OPAL according to Teachers*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Enhancing Opal	Strengthening Parental Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organizing volunteer activities • strengthening communication • balancing demands • need for involvement policy
	Improving Classroom Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being flexible • knowing children • directing attention • managing time effectively

Teachers proposed diverse educational practices that could be implemented to involve parents in the OPAL process more. In the category of strengthening parental involvement, teachers generally highlighted that parents need to be more involved in learning experiences occurring both inside the school and schoolyard in different ways. To illustrate, most of the teachers stated that volunteer parental involvement activities have been not implemented since the pandemic, which is almost 6 years between 2019 and 2024 because of protecting children from the risk of COVID-19. Teachers also stated that the school administration decided to organize volunteer parental involvement activities with the implementation of this thesis work. Furthermore, just a few of the teachers implemented volunteer parental involvement activities during the implementation of semi-structured interviews. Still, as far as teachers stated, these activities were also not in the schoolyard. Ms. Ayşe shared her

experience with implementing volunteer parental involvement activities in the school through this exemplary quote; "... We have not practiced it (means volunteer parental involvement activity) since the pandemic, but we will start now... We sent a message to all parents..." Through the agency of this exemplary quote, Ms. Kardelen emphasizes that parents need to experience OPAL with their children to understand how learning occurs in the schoolyard;

... parental involvement activities could be a solution. For example, we have a parent like this. The child gets dirty while playing and we must change her. In the evening, she immediately asks us. Why did she change? We get such feedback, but when we go out in the schoolyard together, this parent will also fall, bend, get up, and get muddy with the child. In this way, maybe the parents can be a little more comfortable. About clothes and getting dirty...

Some of the teachers also add that volunteer parental involvement activities need to be differentiated according to age. To give an example, these teachers stated that inviting all parents to organize a whole class parental involvement activity would be more beneficial for toddler groups since inviting just one parent can lead children to miss their own parents and go home. In addition to this, teachers shared that more basic activities like book reading or storytelling activities need to be done with younger age groups compared to the implementation of more complex activities with older age groups.

Moreover, inviting parents to be partners in the process is important according to teachers' opinion. For this purpose, teachers gave the example of sharing a text to be shared via WhatsApp, and this text can include explaining the purpose of parental involvement in the schoolyard. After that, teachers highlighted these practices to have and organize an efficient volunteer involvement process; creating suitable time, providing a structured process of involvement, and getting the opinions of parents for involvement. As one of the teachers who think that the parents need to be involved implementation of the activity compared to the planning process, Ms. Lale shared her perspective within this exemplary quote;

...I would put each family in order and I would communicate with them. I would say that we are thinking of doing an activity outside, I ask them if they have any ideas, if there is anything you can help us with, but I think asking this is too broad for the parents....Maybe giving more concrete instructions could be important...I would say that we want to plan a game, how can you contribute to

this game? How can you support it, how do you see yourself suitable for the play...

Even though most of the teachers emphasized that parents mostly can be involved in the implementation of the activity, some of them also pointed out that parents can also contribute to the assessment and evaluation of the volunteer OPAL activity to summarize the activity and understand the contribution to development and learning. Teachers also stated that the introduction of an occupation, art-craft, movement, science-nature, kitchen, music, and play-based activities could be implemented with volunteer parents to facilitate their involvement. Some of the teachers also pointed out that there is no certain parental involvement policy guiding teachers' practices regarding to involvement of parents in their children's learning and development processes. Apart from this, balancing parental demand in OPAL was highlighted as another practice to enhance OPAL in the schoolyard as far as teachers stated. Regarding balancing parental demands, teachers stated that they try to consider best benefit of children even though these benefits are contracting with the demands of parents. To illustrate Ms. Manolya reflected on balancing parental demands within this exemplary quote;

...there are also parents who want us to go out more often...there are also parents who are who are very nervous about the outdoors. But I sometimes ignore them when they say not to go out and I dress the children in layers and take them out... I look at how much they can affect me, how much they can interfere, how much they have a say, and if it's not much, I don't let those two or three parents get involved with the others...

The second category of enhancing OPAL was named improving classroom management. This category illustrates what kind of classroom management practices support teachers to conduct OPAL time effectively for the benefit of children in their age groups. Teachers highlighted one of these practices as knowing children's interests and needs. Teachers stated that they observe children's moods and direct their OPAL activity based on this. To illustrate, they prefer to play an active game if children are energetic that day. Moreover, teachers exemplified diverse practices like playing a finger game or singing a song that they are using to attract the attention of children during an OPAL activity. Apart from trying to attract the attention of children, teachers state that sometimes they change places where children sit to

minimize children’s interaction if this interaction is disturbing the flow of the OPAL activity.

In addition to these practices, some of the teachers also emphasized that OPAL time needs to be directed effectively since the allocated time is so limited because of following the workshop system in the school. In other words, the OPAL time could be interrupted since the group has to go to another workshop in the school, and another age group comes to the schoolyard as stated in the rotation program. Lastly, the teacher needs to be flexible if she wants to conduct an effective OPAL time according to the perspectives of some teachers. These teachers emphasized that a teacher needs to have another plan in mind if the teacher encounters any barrier while implementing the planned OPAL activity in the schoolyard. Focusing on managing class during OPAL time, Ms. Güneş shared her experience with this exemplary quote;

...I'll talk in general. I take the child who may be distracted right next to me, I take him/her by the hand and guide him/her. I do a sorting like that. I mean, I take the children who need more support close to me, but I take the children who do not need more support in the middle of the line or towards the end...

4.1.2.6. Benefits of Parental Involvement

The responses of teachers regarding the question of what are they thinking and experiencing about parental involvement in early childhood education resulted in the construction of another theme which name is the benefits of parental involvement. The categories of benefits of parental involvement for parents (n=7) and benefits of parental involvement for children (n=10) led to the formation of this theme.

Table 4.11. *Benefits of Parental Involvement according to Teachers*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Benefits of Involvement	For Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empathizing with the teacher • feeling as a learning partner • supports communication • observing the development
	For Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports school adaptation • makes happier • makes proud • supports self-confidence • increases motivation • provides memorable learning • spending quality time • attracts attention

In terms of benefits for parents, teachers stated empathizing with others as one of the benefits. In teachers' opinion, parents have the opportunity to understand what teachers experience and feel through the agency of parental involvement activities. Ms. Orkide reflects on how parental involvement assists parents in empathizing with teachers through the agency of this exemplary quote;

...I would like to conduct involvement activities because I would like parents to see how much we have contributed to the children. I would like them to understand how hard we try to teach children and how much the children progress in return...

Besides empathizing with the teacher, the parents' communication with the teacher becomes stronger through involvement practices according to teachers' perspectives. While parents empathize and communicate better with teachers, the parent also feels like a learning partner as far as teachers indicated. In other words, parents feel like they are also in the process of supporting their child's learning with the guidance of the teacher. Similarly, another benefit for parents was emphasized as related to the understanding of how a school operates. In this context, some of the teachers highlighted that parents can observe daily school practices about how the school operates, what teachers are doing in the school, and how communication exists between the school principal and teachers.

Apart from this benefit, teachers pointed out that parental involvement activities could support the easing of concerns regarding the child's learning and development processes when parents gain real experiences inside of the school. Within this exemplary quote, Ms. Lale reflected on how parents feel like partners through parental involvement activities;

...I think the family gets more information. I mean, they feel more involved in the process... You know, like, what is being done at school. We are already writing down what is being done, they know the routine, but for example, they wonder what or how they focused on in this activity...

Furthermore, teachers highlighted that parents have opportunities to spend quality time with their children within the guidance of teachers so these experiences support the bond between the parents and their children. In addition to this, teachers highlighted that parental involvement can support parents to feel better since they will realize that they are doing something for the benefits of their children, and also

spending time with their children can make them feel better in terms of psychological well-being according to perspectives of teachers. Regarding the benefits of parental involvement, most of the teachers focused on how involving parents in the process enables them to observe and understand the development of their children in the school context. Ms. Daisy shared her perspective on how parents are able to see the developmental level of their children if even they are suspicious about a developmental delay through the agency of this exemplary quote;

...this is an opportunity. Families like the fact that they have the opportunity to observe their child, compares their child with others in the group. This satisfies the parent on behalf of the school, on behalf of the child, and the fact that a child with some developmental delays does not communicate with her friends brings the family a little more to their senses...they may say, why is my child behaving this way when everyone else is behaving this way...the family can see the child with their own eyes, without any influence...

The second category of parental involvement benefits was formed as benefits for children based on the analysis of teachers' responses. With the facilitation of parental involvement activities, children can feel happier and proud according to teachers' perspective. To give an example, the child would be very proud when she sees her parents come to school to teach about something and interact with her friends as teachers stated. Similarly, the child's self-confidence can be boosted when she leads an activity with her parents or she has a chance to prove that she can while her parents observe her in terms of teachers' opinion. Teachers emphasized that the child is also able to spend quality time with their parents through these involvement activities. Additionally, learning can become more memorable for the child within parental involvement activity since the involvement of her parents in the process can attract her attention more to the topic and increase her motivation to learn. Lastly, some of the teachers pointed out that parental involvement activities such as inviting parents inside the school during orientation week could be beneficial for children who are experiencing struggles with adapting to school. My Ayşe reflects on how a parental involvement activity can attract the child's attention, and Ms. Manolya shared her perspective on parents' role in terms of teaching within these exemplary quotes;

Ms. Ayşe

...it will attract children's attention. I think there are things they can learn from families. I think families can also be useful in terms of teaching children.

I think that parents being together with their children at school will also contribute to their own children. In that way, I think it will be useful for the child to share something with the children...

Ms. Manolya

...Or let's say we are going to cook a meal together, I am planning an activity on food, for example, a mother or a father who is in the kitchen will be different in the eyes of the child. I mean, the teacher always plays the role of a teacher, but the parents play the role of a teacher, but they are also a cook. I think this can be very enjoyable for the child...

4.1.2.7. Barriers to Parental Involvement

The last theme regarding teachers' experiences and perspectives on parental involvement was named barriers to parental involvement based on teachers' responses. This theme describes diverse barriers related to the involvement of parents so these barriers were listed within the categories of adult-related (n=8), school-related (n=5), and child-related (n=4).

Table 4.12. *Barriers to Parental Involvement According to Teachers*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Barriers to Parental Involvement	Adult Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concern about having problems • lack of guidance • over expectations • parental attitude • too much workload
	School-Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being a private school • inadequate schoolyard • inadequate volunteering • lack of involvement in plans
	Child-Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being jealous of other children • parent as home reminder

In the first category, which is adult-related, teachers reflected on why involving parents is difficult for them.

To illustrate, teachers shared that they are concerned about having trouble with parents and the school manager when they try to conduct a parental involvement activity. Regarding these barriers, teachers emphasized that problems can be experienced resulting from diverse aspects such as inadequate communication or not being able to manage the class efficiently. These teachers also emphasized that

implementing what they learned in theory related to parental involvement, becomes harder because of having problems with parents and the school manager's concern.

Similar to these barriers, some of the teachers also mention being concerned about not meeting the expectations of parents in a parental involvement activity. To illustrate, one of these teachers described finding solutions to the social problems of their child according to her parents' demands as hard to do. To give an example of fear of having problems, Ms. Rana reflected on why it is hard to implement a volunteer parental involvement activity in the schoolyard within this exemplary quote;

...let's say the mother came to do something in the schoolyard. At that time, that mother's child did not stop and when I tell the child to stop and the parent sees this, you know, the parent will misunderstand. I do not think children will listen much in the schoolyard...

Furthermore, teachers highlighted the parents' over-expectations from teachers and their children. For example, teachers stated that some of the parents consider their children as perfect without seeing their developmental needs and they always want their children to be happy or gain self-care skills immediately. Similar to over-expectations related to children, teachers also pointed out that parents expected too much from the teachers like following the food list formed by preferences of parents wanting children to not eat specific foods. Ms. Manolya shared her experience related to this barrier with this exemplary quote;

...I have a child who only eats certain things, nothing with sauce. The family gave me a list of what they eat and I separated the food with sauces from the food without sauces...I try to give him different options because somebody has to do it somehow...Do not let him cry; do not let him eat, etc...Life will be very difficult for him. You will not always be there for him. Let the child live, let the child be happy...

Another barrier to parental involvement is that parents want to be too involved in the process from the point of teachers' perspectives. Some of the teachers stated that this too much involvement led teachers to lose their motivation sometimes because they did not feel too powerful to construct boundaries to provide balance in parental involvement. As one of these teachers, Ms. Toprak reflects on this experienced struggle through the agency of this exemplary quote;

...unfortunately, we are not persuading the family so if they tell us to not go out, we do it that way...As I said, I don't like the fact that they get so involved in the first place. I always give the same example, you can't comment on a lawyer's case at some point because it's her job, or you can't go into an operation and say you should have done it like this, you should have done it like that. I don't know why teachers are always interfered with so much, I don't know why this profession is like this and I don't find it right and you know but sometimes you have to do the things very much even though you do not believe because you have no power on it...

Similar to the barrier of involving too much in the process, teachers also explained that they are encountering difficulties if parents have a kind of accusatory attitude like assessing the capabilities of the teacher to find a mistake, during the parental involvement activity. Furthermore, teachers highlighted some of the parents who do not have the understanding that learning could occur everywhere. These teachers described those parents as play-focused parents who are not motivated to do an activity with the age group. Lastly, teachers mentioned the workload of parents as one of the difficulties limiting parents to be involved in the process effectively.

The second category of parental involvement barriers was named school-related barriers. In this category, teachers provided examples of difficulties that they are experiencing because of the school. Most of the teachers mentioned that the school has not allowed to hold volunteer parental involvement activities for a long time since Covid-19 so this practice is given as an example of a parental involvement barrier.

Moreover, teachers stated that activity plans provided by the school, do not include parental involvement parts so this lack leads them to not apply the thing they learned in the theory related to the involvement of parents. Another school-related barrier was explained as not having an adequate learning environment to implement volunteer parental involvement activities.

To illustrate, some of the teachers highlighted that the schoolyard environment is not suitable for conducting parent-involvement activities. As the last school-related barrier, teachers emphasized the school type. In other words, parental involvement changes according to type of the school. Ms. Yeliz reflected on this barrier with this exemplary quote;

...the distinction between public and private schools is very sharp...In a private school, it is the opposite. The parents are very dominant and have a lot of say. I think there should be a balance between the two, that is, the teacher and the parents will of course cooperate but I think the dominance of one side collapses that system because the parents do not know much about pedagogy, not as much as we do...so they make our job difficult by claiming that they know too much...

The last category of the parental involvement barriers theme was constructed with the name of child-related barriers. In this category, most teachers of younger age groups reflect on the barriers. According to some of the teachers, parental involvement is not appropriate for younger age groups like 24-36-months children because of the possibility that children can remember their home and want to go to the home when they see their parents or another child's parents in the group during a volunteer parental involvement activity.

Another child-related barrier to parental involvement was described as not sharing their parents with other children. In other words, a younger child will want to call her parents' attention to her during the volunteer activities as far as these teachers stated. Because of these barriers, teachers pointed out that there needs to be whole class parental involvement activities so that all of the parents will come to the school if a volunteer parental involvement activity needs to be held in the school. One of the teachers of the 24-36-month age group, Ms. Daisy shared her perspective and experience with this exemplary quote;

...a 2-year-old group should not be involved in parent involvement activities because the child already thinks that he will leave when he sees the mother. The presence of the mother in the classroom means that the child will get away from that environment as soon as possible...he will not want his mother to communicate with other children in that environment...So involvement activities need to be organized according to age groups...

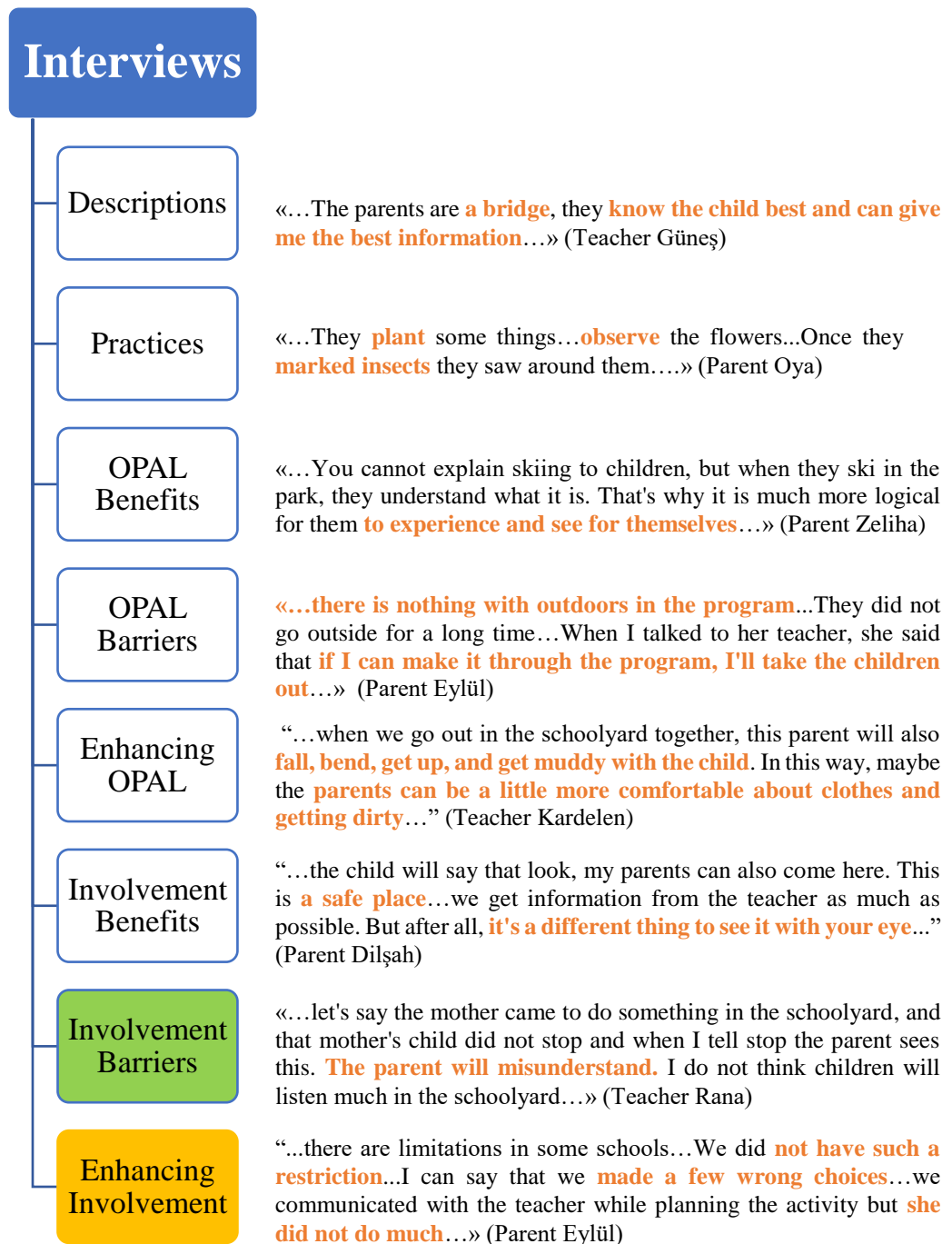


Figure 4.1 *Summary of Interviews*

Note. Involvement barriers (green box) is the seventh theme reached through interviews with teachers. Enhancing involvement (orange box) is the seventh theme reached through interviews with parents.

4.1.3. Observations and Field Notes Regarding OPAL

The teachers' OPAL experiences were observed to understand what kind of practices they are following before, during, and after OPAL time. To reach this aim, diverse outdoor time sessions of six different age groups were observed by the researcher, who is the non-participant observer, starting from January 2024 to March 2024. Within the specified periods, 15 sessions were observed that time differed from 20 minutes to 60 minutes. This section demonstrates observation data in three themes which are OPAL practices, OPAL materials, and OPAL roles.

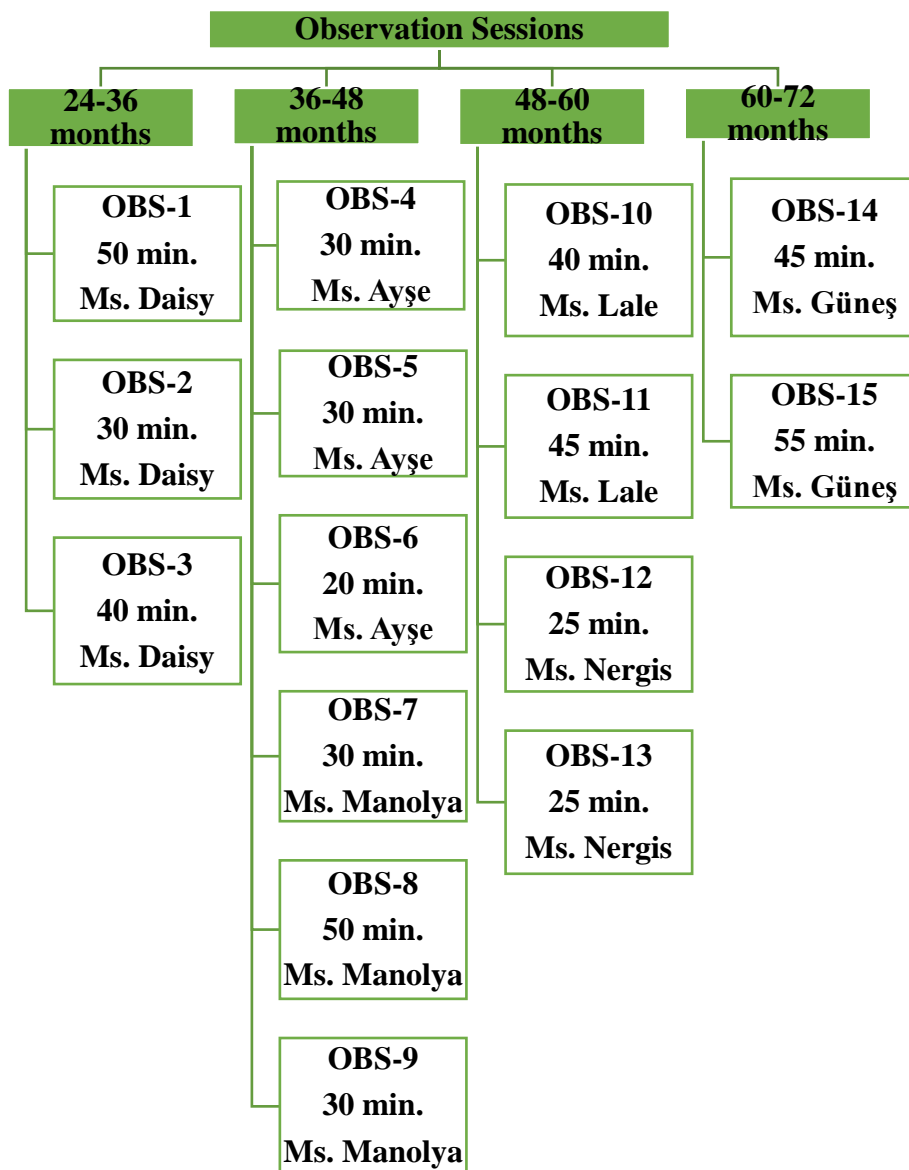


Figure 4.2 Descriptive Information about the Observation Sessions

4.1.3.1. Practices Followed during OPAL Time

Based on the collected observation data, the theme of practices followed during OPAL time was constructed through the formation of three different categories, which are before OPAL time protocols, during OPAL time protocols, and after OPAL time protocols.

Table 4.13. *Observed Practices Followed During OPAL Time*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Practices Followed During OPAL Time	Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing clothes • Reminding the rules
	During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free play • Structured play • Singing songs • Movement activity • Math activity • Drama activity • Nature activity • Circle time • Book reading
	After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting OPAL assessment • OPAL ending practice • Lack of OPAL assessment

The category of before OPAL time protocol illustrates what kind of practices teachers implement right before going to the schoolyard with their age groups. It was observed that teachers guide children to put on their outside shoes and according to the weather, the teacher asks them to put on their coats and also their hats. The degree of supporting children to put on their shoes and coats is changing according to age groups and teachers' attitudes as far as observed. To illustrate, younger age groups require more assistance compared to 60-72-month-old children in the school. On the other hand, some teachers follow diverse practices to motivate children in this process. The following anecdote was recorded while Ms. Daisy was getting prepared for OPAL time with her classroom; "...you know that I will not dress you...Those who change their shoes immediately will receive a star (to draw the star, she shows a marker pen in her hand)..."

Apart from changing shoes and coats, it was also observed that some of the teachers reminding the rules before going to schoolyard. These rules were noted as being in a single row on the inside of the door so that it does not come out, sitting down to wait for others if the child put on her shoes and coat, and not going to schoolyard without the teacher.

The practices followed by teachers during OPAL time were coded regarding the types of learning activities. During OPAL time, it was observed that children generally engage in free play activities. To illustrate, children were observed to play with natural materials like small pebbles, flowers, grass, and so on.

In addition to this, some observed animals like worms and ants assisted children in forming the play. Besides benefiting natural materials in their play, it was also observed that children use materials and areas like tires, playhouses, and botanic garden to construct their play and enhance it. To illustrate, a free play activity occurred among some of the children in the 48-60-months age group of Ms.Lale recorded within this field note;

...after about 15 minutes, the group moves to the backyard. In the backyard, the wolf father game is continued. The children playing the game in the play house, try not to let the wolf father into the house. One of the children says, “The wolf father cannot enter the house, there is a door protector (points to the child standing in front of the door) He protects the house from the wolf father”...A group of children carry the worms from the side yard to the botanic area. Then they decide to carry the worms inside the play house. “Let's take the worms into the house and close the door so they can't get out. They take the worms into the play house...

Furthermore, the sideyard was observed as an area where children engage in free play activities mostly focusing on their senses. In the photographs given below, the children play with colorful tires placed in the side area. In the first photo, a girl from the 36-48-month age group, whose teacher is Ms.Ayşe, acts like a drum player who uses the tire as the drum. With the help of Ms.Ayşe, she started creating a rhyme by hitting the tires.

In the second photo, three children from the 48-60-month age group, whose teacher is Ms. Lale, build a house by putting three tires on top of each other. After one of these children tried to get inside the wheels, the other two of the children also tried to get inside the wheels by sitting on the sides. In the third photo, two children from the 36-48-month age group, whose teacher is Ms. Manolya, play with rainwater accumulated in a wheel. In the last photo, the child from the 24-36-month age group, whose teacher is Ms. Manolya tries to transfer the pebbles from one container to another container. The related photos can be seen in this figure;



Figure 4.3 *Free Play Examples in the Side Schoolyard*

After free play activities, it was observed that teachers mostly conducted science and nature activities such as examining flowers and worms, searching for colors in nature, smelling the flowers, doing botanic activities, and so on. Besides these activities, teachers were also observed to conduct structured play activities like hide-seek, and hot and cold.

Furthermore, it was learned that the school follows a practice that the school organizes sharing days. On these days, each child brings the designated material from home on the designated sharing day and shares it at sharing time. In this regard, it was observed that some teachers implement these sharing periods, which are mostly book sharing and toy sharing, at the schoolyard. Moreover, it was observed that some of the teachers implemented circle time, movement, math, and science activities in the schoolyard. The following field note record is from the OPAL practice of Ms. Daisy who is one of the teachers in the 24-36-month age group;

...Ms. Daisy called the children to the circle saying “Let's make a circle”. Ms. Daisy asked the children to hold hands and make a big balloon. The children worked together with Ms. Daisy to make the big balloon. Daisy and the children

enlarged the circle to make a big balloon. Ms. When Ms. Daisy gave the instruction to make a small balloon, they made the circle normal. In the circle, Ms. Daisy said, “Let's touch our cheeks. Shall we count our cheeks, 1 and 2?” and asked the children to touch their cheeks. Then they touched the head, eyes, hair, arms and feet. Ms. Daisy said “Look, I am a monkey” and started to walk like a monkey. Then she became a duck. Some of the children in the circle got distracted and left the circle and started playing in different places. Ms. Diasy continued to do the duck walk with the children following her...

The other examples of conducted OPAL activities can be seen in the Figure given below. In the first photo, it can be seen that Ms. Orkide who is one of the 24-36-month age group’s teachers, implementing the book-sharing period that each child examines the books that they bring from their homes. The second photo was taken during the OPAL activity implemented by Ms.Manolya who is one of the 36-48-month age group’s teachers. In this activity, children are completing the outdoor parkour created by Ms.Manolya through her supervision. The third photo is from an OPAL activity related to a color hunt. Conducted by Ms.Güneş, children tried to find the colors in the worksheets in nature while comparing the colors of natural materials like flowers and human-made materials like swings. The fourth photo was taken from the OPAL activity conducted by Ms...In this photo, it can be seen that the teacher examines nature in the schoolyard by examining fallen leaves’ textures and colors. The figure demonstrates different OPAL activities;



Figure 4.4 *Examples of OPAL Activities*

The last category in the theme of practices followed during OPAL time was constructed as after-OPAL time practices. This category describes the researcher's observation on what kind of practices were implemented when and right after teachers ended OPAL time. In most of the observed OPAL activities, it was recorded that teachers do not implement assessment at the end of activities. During these observations, just one OPAL assessment was conducted at the end of the activity implemented by Ms. Güneş who directed open-ended questions to summarize the activity and encourage children to reflect on what they learned.

Besides OPAL assessment, some of the teachers were observed to implement rituals when they finished the OPAL time. To illustrate Ms. Ayşe encouraged children to say goodbye to the materials in the schoolyard to make children realize that OPAL time is over through this exemplary quota recorded during observation; "...goodbye tree, goodbye play house. We will come again to schoolyard..." Similar to this practice, Ms.Orkide was also observed letting each child slide down for one last time before going inside so as to help the ones who had a difficult time finishing OPAL.

However, the researcher observed that the age groups followed the routine of changing shoes, taking off their coats, going to the toilet, and washing their hands. After completing these routine activities, the teachers generally observed to provide free time for a short period those children generally dance or play freely before transitioning to a new activity.

4.1.3.2. Areas and Materials Used during OPAL Time

According to the analysis of collected data during OPAL observations of different age groups, the second theme was constructed as areas and materials used during OPAL time. This theme illustrates what kind of materials teachers and children are using to maintain OPAL activities and which areas are most used during these OPAL activities.

In terms of the first category of this theme, the materials used in the OPAL time were listed as open-ended materials which are rainbow parachutes, balls, shovels-buckets, and natural materials. Besides these open-ended materials, it was also observed that

storybooks and structured toys are also included in OPAL time. Among all these materials, it was observed that mostly natural materials such as leaves, thin sticks, flowers, and pebbles were included in OPAL experiences. Regarding the usage of material, the following field notes were recorded during OPAL observations;

Table 4.14. *The Used Areas and Materials during OPAL Time*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Areas and Materials	Used Schoolyard Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back yard • Front yard • Side yard
	Used Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rainbow parachute • Ball • Shovel and bucket • Nature • Story Book • Structured toys

From Ms. Daisy’s OPAL Time

...Ms. Daisy brought the rainbow parachute and attracted the attention of the children in the class. They opened the parachute together. Ms. Daisy gave the instructions “faster, slower, milling” and animated the parachute they opened with the children...

From Ms. Manolya’s OPAL Time

...at the side area, some children are playing... “Let's use the closing dust (pebbles) on the ground to close the gap (the space between the wheels). 3 girls fill a bucket with pebbles using a shovel. “We are cooking. This is enough for the soup. Let's pour the soup into the bowls.... “the soup is ready, I made soup.” One boy asks another boy, “Can you give me your shovel?” He says, “OK, but you have to give it back to me later.” After 2 minutes he goes to the boy to get his shovel back and says “Come on, give it to me now”...

The second category of this theme was formed as used areas during OPAL time. This category was constructed based on the data that each time an observation was made, the area where the OPAL practice was located was noted. Among the school's three areas which are the front yard, the side yard, and the back yard, it was observed that OPAL time is mostly conducted in the front yard involving play pieces of equipment like slide and swing, and also a small free space. After the front yard, teachers prefer to conduct their OPAL time in the side yard and then the back yard. During observations, it was also seen that a part of the backyard, involving the sand pool and tables, has never been used. When the reason of area preference asked to teachers, it was highlighted that the front yard is the most the most sunlit area of the schoolyard

compared to the back area that never gets any sun so teachers prefer this area to keep children warm during OPAL time.

4.1.3.3. Teacher Roles during OPAL Time

Based on the collected observation data, the last theme was named as roles of teachers during OPAL time. This theme was constructed through the codes that are teachers as directors/redirectors, teachers as play-leaders, teachers as photographers, and teachers as co-players.

Table 4.15. *The Observed Teacher Roles during OPAL Time*

Theme	Codes	
Teacher Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers as directors/redirectors • Teacher as play-leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers as photographers • Teachers as co-players

It was observed that most of the teachers were observed to take the role of directors/redirectors during OPAL time practices. To illustrate, these teachers were observed to give directions about how the game needs to be played or warn children to provide safety during play experiences. Related to the director/redirector role of teachers, the following field notes were recorded during OPAL observations;

Ms. Güneş

...for those going down the slide, the teacher says, “When going down the slide, let's take turns, not one on top of the other.”...all the children are waiting on the slide, the teacher says, “This is a small area and there are a lot of children. Take a look around and see what else is in the schoolyard...”

Ms. Lale

...children are playing catch around the slide. They call the midwife in their game a ghost, and the ghost tries to catch the others...The teacher warns the children to play the role of a ghost by saying “I did not like this game”...After this warning, one of the children says to the others, “Friends, let's not be ghosts, let's be wolf fathers...”

After the role of directors/redirectors, teachers were observed as play-leaders, and field notes of observations were recorded as teachers guiding and leading children to maintain rich OPAL experiences. To give an example, Ms.Orkide was observed to

lead the ball and chasing game that she maintained in the OPAL time of the 24-36-month age group. Related to this observation, the field note is given below;

...the teacher throws a ball “I throw a ball, catch it” to one of the boys. Then the children throw it...one of the children cannot throw the ball. The teacher showed him how to throw the ball again and continued to play with the children...Children play chasing games with the teacher around the slide. Sometimes children chase the teacher to catch her, sometimes teacher chases the children...

Furthermore, some of the teachers were also observed to take the role of co-players by just being a part of the children’s outdoor play without directing the process. For instance, teachers were observed to push the swings and sing with children or eat in the game of playing house with children. Moreover, some of the teachers were observed to be just photo takers. In other words, these teachers were observed they just take photos of children without involving their play to send parents while children are playing.

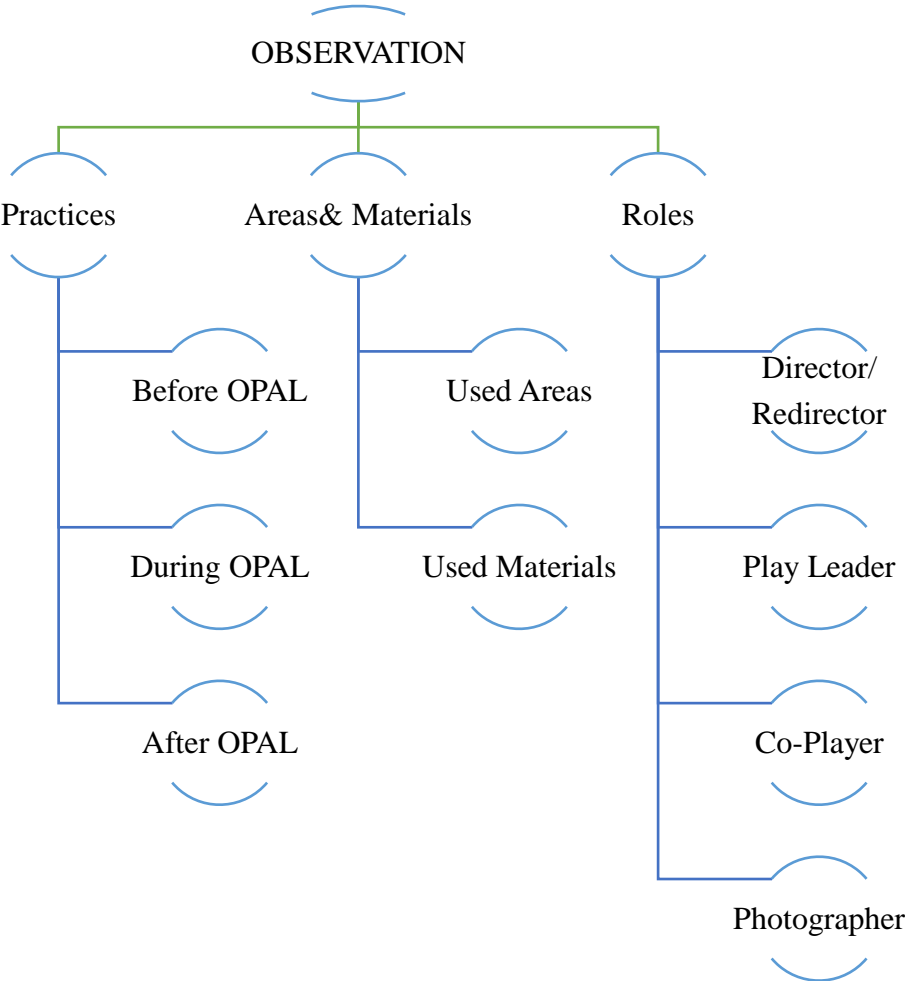


Figure 4.4 Summary of Observations

4.1.4. Document Analysis of Monthly Plans Regarding OPAL

To answer the research question regarding what kind of OPAL activities are conducted in the schoolyard, the school's monthly education programs were examined to explore the OPAL experiences in the education program context. For this purpose, the researcher analyzed the monthly plans starting from September to March so six six-month periods were analyzed in terms of OPAL activity plans.

The analysis process was conducted through written plans including the schoolyard as the learning environment. In other words, the learning activity plan was analyzed if this activity is conducted at the schoolyard. Therefore, the plans involving "schoolyard" word were taken into consideration to analyze as parallel to the related research question of this participatory action research. Furthermore, the selected plans were analyzed according to predetermined categories which are the number of activities written in a month, distribution of plans according to their activity types, distribution of plans based on used materials, and distribution of plans according to their subjects which are focused in the activity process.

4.1.4.1. Monthly Distribution of OPAL Plans

The first category was constructed as the number of OPAL activities according to months. For this purpose, the researcher examined how many OPAL activities have been conducted during six months according to prepared OPAL plans. It was reached that the age group of 24-36-month-old children has the highest number of OPAL activities (n=27) during six months. Compared to this age group and 60-72-months children (n=24), the 36-48-month-old and 48-60-month-old age groups have the least OPAL activity plans (n=22).

When it comes to months, it was found that most of the OPAL activities were written to be conducted in September (n=26) and October (n=22) compared to other months, which are December (n=9), January (n=12), February (n=11), and March (n=12). November was found to be at least OPAL activities (n=3) were conducted with age

groups in the schoolyard. Details about the distribution of OPAL activities based on months and numbers can be seen in this figure;

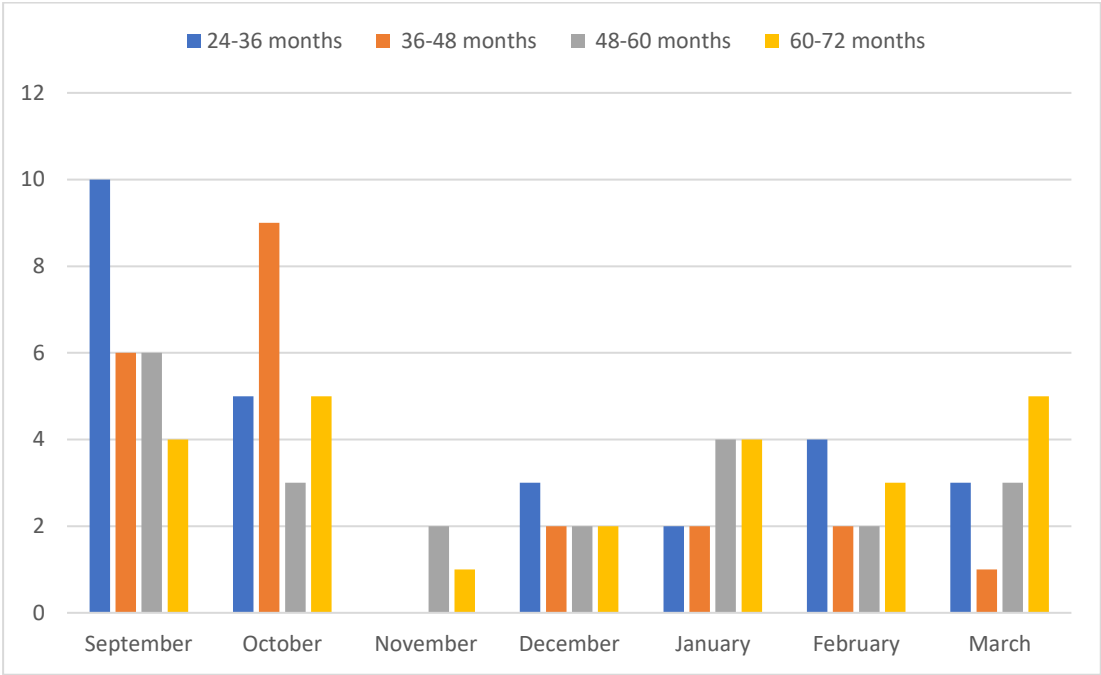


Figure 4.5 *OPAL Activity Plans by Months*

4.1.4.2. OPAL Plans Based on Activity Types

The OPAL activities in the monthly education programs were also analyzed regarding activity types. It was found that teachers mostly implement science activities (n=46) in the schoolyard for six months according to analyzed monthly education programs. Following science activities, these activity types were found to be implemented in the schoolyard; movement/play (n=35), early literacy (n=9), drama/music (n=5), and math (n=1).

In terms of ages, it was found that the 24-36-age and 36-48-month age groups mostly implement science activities while implementing math activities at least. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated that the 48-60-month age group and 60-72-month age group mostly implement movement/play activities while implementing math activities in the schoolyard. In the movement/play activity written for the 36-48-months-old age group, the focus on vegetation through leaves can be seen in the following example taken from the October monthly program document;

...The teacher goes out into the garden with the children and explains the game called The Wolf and the Lambs. A midwife is chosen in the game. That midwife becomes a wolf and the other players are divided into two groups as lambs. The lambs line up opposite each other. The wolf stands in the middle. While the lambs change places, the wolf tries to catch a lamb. The caught lamb becomes the midwife...

Details about the distribution of OPAL activities based on activity types can be seen in this figure;

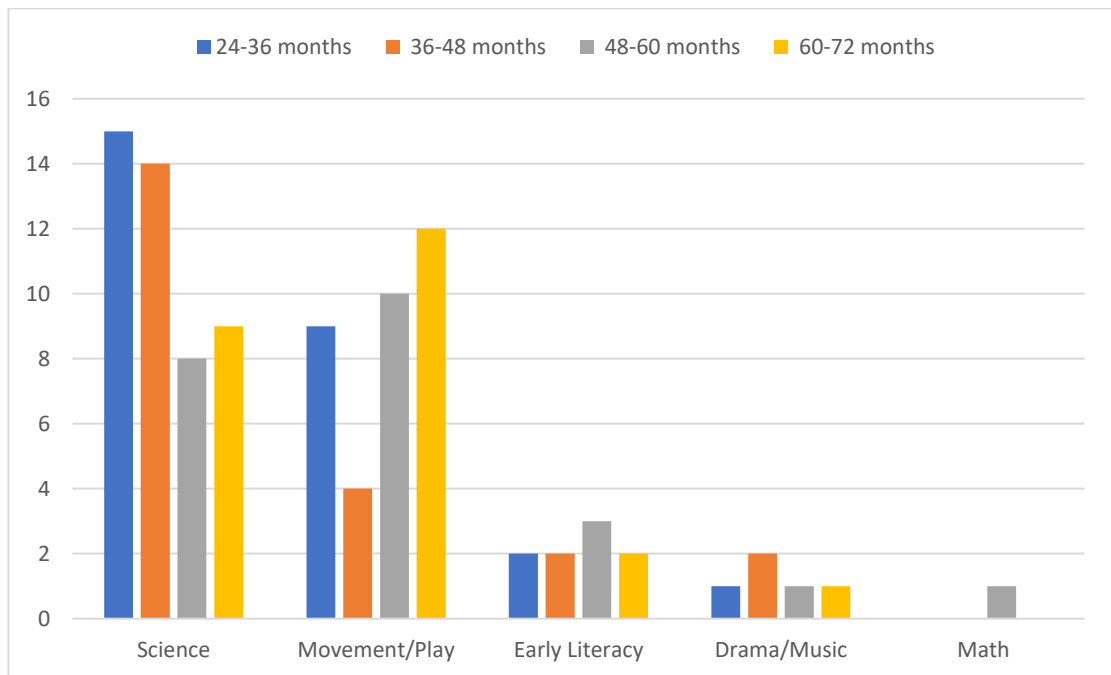


Figure 4.6 *OPAL Activity Plans by Activity Types*

4.1.4.3. OPAL Plans Based on Materials

The category of OPAL materials was another one to guide the analysis process during the document analysis of OPAL activity plans in the monthly education programs. If the OPAL plan required to examination of natural components that are trees, plants, flowers, leaves, and grass, the material was coded as vegetation. Apart from the material of vegetation, animals, soil, water, and stone, it was found that other materials were required to be used in these OPAL plans so the other codes were given for the materials of ribbons, papers, pencils, baskets, balls, plates, glasses, magnifiers, flashcards, and ropes. During six months, it was found that most other materials (n=33)

are required to be used in the OPAL activity plans. After this, vegetation (n=24) mostly was found to be used in the examined plans. Following other materials and vegetation, animals (n=8), soil (n=4), stone (n=4) and water (n=3). Details about the distribution of OPAL activities based on required learning materials can be seen in this figure;

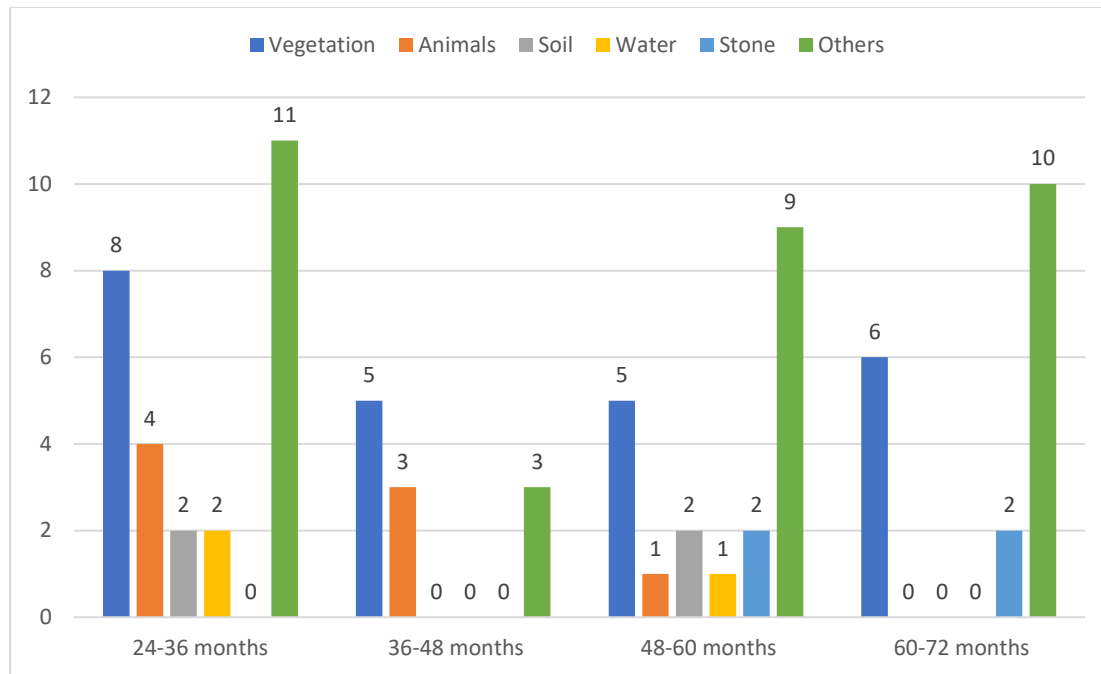


Figure 4.7 *OPAL Activity Plans by Materials*

In the movement/play activity written for the 60-72-months-old age group, the required materials, which are pinecones and baskets, can be seen in following example taken from the October monthly program document;

...Cones are distributed all over the schoolyard. Children are divided into three groups and given yellow-red-blue baskets. Each group is named with the color of their basket. At the teacher's command, the game starts and the children scatter and collect the pinecones in the schoolyard. When all the pinecones are collected, they are rhythmically counted and analyzed according to the relationship between scarcity and abundance. All groups are applauded and the activity ends...

4.1.4.4. OPAL Plans Based on Focused Subjects

The last category for analyzing OPAL plans in the monthly education programs was formed as focused subjects in the plans. In other words, the OPAL plans were

examined to decide which topic they were focusing on throughout the plan. The analysis process demonstrated that teachers mostly focused on the subject of vegetation (n=25), which is related to examining and learning about the natural components like trees, flowers, and leaves in the schoolyard for six months. After this subject, it was found that play (n=21) mostly consisted of the subject of OPAL plans in the examined period. Play subject involves both free play experiences and structured games like playing with balls. Besides these covered subjects, the plans also found to be focused on diverse subjects which are animals (n=9), mud (n=1), circle time (n=6), weather (n=8), pollution (n=5), seasons (n=1), color (n=4), sustainability (n=1), size (n=1), shape (n=3), numbers (n=1), and graph (n=1). Details about the distribution of OPAL activities based on focused subjects can be seen in this figure;

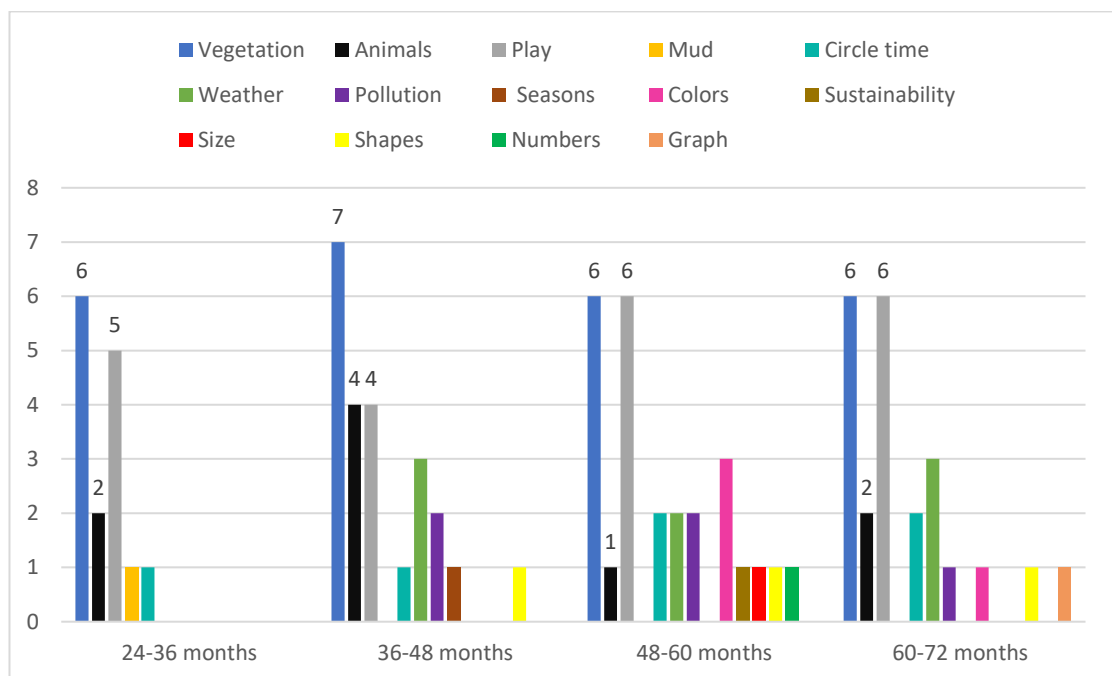


Figure 4.8 *OPAL Activity Plans by Focused Subjects*

In the science activity written for the 24-36-months-old age group, the focus on vegetation through leaves can be seen in the following example taken from the October monthly program document;

...Go out to the yard of the school to collect dried leaves. Each child collects the leaves in a big bag given to them. The collected leaves will be examined according to their colors, shapes, sizes, etc., and discuss differences and similarities with children...

In the activity written for the 48-60-months-old age group, the focus on circle time routines like sharing feelings, greetings, and discussing weather can be seen in the following example taken from the December monthly program document;

...Children stand in a circle. The day starts with the song “Shake and Move! After the song, the children sit in a circle. First, they will talk about how they felt that day, how they came to school in the morning, what day it was, what the season was, etc. Together with the children, they predict the weather of the day and when they return to the classroom, they draw what they see in the garden in groups of two...

4.2. Action Cycles

To understand the needs and context of the research setting, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, the observation sessions and the document analysis demonstrated some key findings supporting the researcher and the volunteer teacher to plan action cycles. Based on the need and context analysis conducted in this study and the findings of the researcher’s master thesis, the researcher conducted the whole action cycle process with Ms.Güneş, the volunteer teacher wanting to develop herself in terms of outdoor education and parental involvement.

These key findings of the needs and context analysis demonstrated in the following table;

Table 4.16. *Key Findings of the Need and Context Analysis*

-
- The school has not been implementing volunteer parental–involvement activities since COVID-19.
 - Involvement in OPAL just occurred with communication
 - There is no parental involvement in plans.
 - Volunteer activities were proposed as one of the ways to enhance involvement in OPAL
 - More cooperation was emphasized to prepare involvement activities.
 - OPAL activities involve limited sensory experiences.
 - OPAL activities consisted mostly of free play.
-

CYCLE-1	CYCLE-2	CYCLE-3	CYCLE-4	CYCLE-5
Ms. Melda	Ms. Perihan	Ms. Eda	Ms. Feriha	Ms. Parla
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 years-old • Master graduation • Housewife • Has a son who is 62-months-old 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38 years-old • Bachelor graduation • Nurse • Has a son who is 66-months-old 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41 years-old • Bachelor graduation • Pilates Instructor • Has a son who is 72-months-old 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 years-old • Bachelor graduation • Diplomat • Has a daughter who is 60-months-old 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38 years-old • Bachelor graduation • Special educator • Has a daughter who is 62-months-old

Figure 4.9 Demographic Information about Parent Participants in Action Cycles

Before starting the action cycle process, the researcher and Ms. Güneş held two informative meetings. The first meeting was conducted to explain the aim and process of this research in detail. In this regard, the researcher also discussed what action research is; and how action research is used in schools to improve the quality of education or solve problems in education. The researcher and the teacher also discussed the parents' role of being a teacher who just implemented the OPAL activity. The second meeting was organized to discuss the significance of outdoor play and learning in early childhood development besides how parents can be involved in the development and learning experiences of their children.

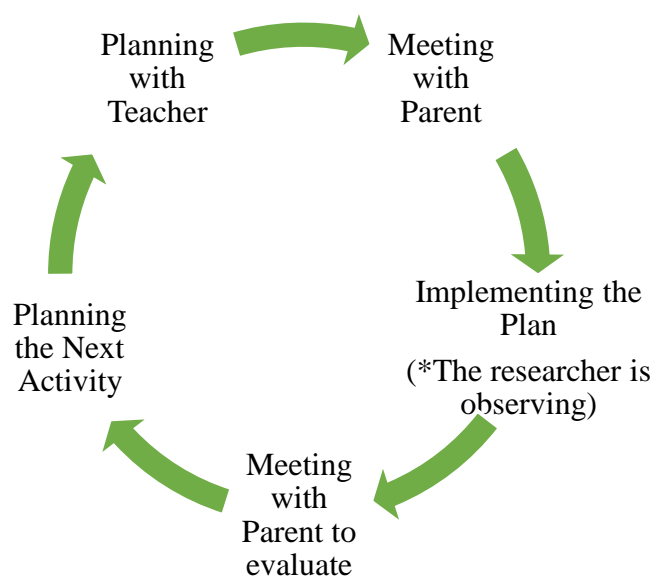


Figure 4.10 Steps of an Action Cycle

4.2.1. First Action Cycle

Before the first action cycle, which is the first parental-involved activity, the researcher and the teacher planned the cycle. In this cycle, it was decided to focus on the topic of worms. This topic was decided since the topic was associated with parents' concern for hygiene and safety during the discussion between the teacher and the researcher in the planning meeting, and the researcher observed that a structured activity related to animals was not carried out in the schoolyard.

Moreover, the teacher emphasized that children are currently most interested in the topic of worms. With the cooperation of the teacher and the researcher, a parent-involved activity was planned with a focus on worms. After the formation of the draft activity plan, one of the volunteer parents was invited to the school to have a meeting with the researcher and the teacher to complete the planning step of the action cycle. The researcher recorded the meeting, and the transcript was analyzed. The analysis led the researcher to form the theme which named as planning the first parent-involved OPAL activity. Based on the analysis, four categories were created for this theme. These categories were listed as structuring the activity, the role of the parent, the emotional state of the parent, and discovering the potential of the activity.

Table 4.16. *Planning the First Parent-Involved OPAL Activity*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Planning the First Activity	Structuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussing the purpose • discussing the content • discussing the flow • deciding the time • discussing learning materials
	Parent Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasizing the leadership role • emphasizing being a role model • emphasizing the collaborative role
	Emotional State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling confident • feeling pleasure • feeling incapable
	Discovering the Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring interest • supporting learning at home • connecting life and learning • exploring the knowledge of OPAL topic • having quality of OPAL time

The first category, structuring the activity, demonstrates how participants focused on planning the elements of the activity plan like materials.

This category was based on these formed codes; discussing the activity flow, discussing the content of the activity, explaining the purpose of the activity, discussing the learning outcomes of the activity, deciding the time of the activity, and guiding the preparation of the learning materials. With the guidance of the researcher, the teacher first emphasized the aim of the activity to the parent. After highlighting the aim, the parent's understanding of the learning outcomes of the activity was discussed in the meeting. The following exemplary quote was recorded during this discussion;

Ms. Güneş: ...the garden is actually a living environment. There are worms, there are insects. Snails, flowers...We want to work on this awareness and consciousness of this. Let the children go and observe worms and the world of worms. What the worms are doing to live...

Researcher: So what do you think children will learn from this activity? What do we want to give to children?

Ms.Melda: What I know is that they should get to know nature. Let them understand that we are intertwined with nature. We are not a separate world. We are in this world...respect for the soil...I really like it when my child talks about nature because for example he is always interested in cars but I think he also needs to know nature other than the car...

After the discussion on the activity's purpose, the teacher explained what the activity includes to the volunteer parent. With the focus on the worm topic, creating compost was explained to the parent. Furthermore, the steps that will be followed during the implementation of the activity, were also discussed with the parent. In this regard, the parent will start the activity by reading a book about worm-making compost, and how the compost by created through small group work was discussed with the parent. Moreover, what kind of materials would be used for the activity was decided with the parent, and the parent was guided to understand the right material like the type of compost bin. Lastly, the participants decided when the activity would be conducted based on the suitability of the volunteer parent and the schedule of the teacher.

The second category of this theme was named the role of the parents. Based on the data, these codes were created; emphasizing the leadership role of the parent as the teacher, highlighting how the parent becomes a role model for other parents, and emphasizing the collaborative role of the parent. During the meeting, the researcher and the volunteer teacher emphasized parents' different roles while discussing the

activity's structure. For instance, the parent's role in terms of leading children in the learning process was highlighted through discussing practices like instructing children.

Furthermore, the parent also reminded that the collaboration between the teacher and the parent was also maintained throughout the activity within practices such as providing classroom management, reminding the activity flow, dividing children into groups, and so on. The parent was also encouraged by how she set up a role model for the other parents by being the first one to implement volunteer parent-involved OPAL activity. The following exemplary quote was recorded during this discussion;

Ms. Melda: Well, don't children ask, why didn't my parents come? Why did you come first?

Ms. Güneş: You will encourage them. You will be the first example, the role model, and it will be such a good volunteer activity that other families will say, let's come too, let's participate. It's not just you.

Researcher: Yes, we had other volunteer parents. We are only starting with you.

According to the analysis of collected data, another category was formed and named as emotional state of the parent. This category depicts how Ms. Melda, who is the volunteer parent in the first cycle, feels during the planning process and activity implementation process. These codes were created for this category; concern about not being able to answer children's questions, concern about giving wrong answers to children's questions, having confidence in attracting attention, and feeling of pleasure.

Ms. Melda was first asked to describe her emotions and feelings for the following step which is implementing the OPAL activity. She pointed out that she was feeling a little bit concerned about possible dialogues conducted by the parent and children. She exemplified that she is concerned about not being able to answer questions of children or giving wrong answers to these questions. Furthermore, Ms. Melda was asked to describe how this planning meeting made her feel about the volunteer OPAL activity. She emphasized the feeling of pleasure due to being able to talk with the teacher about the process, and planning this process with the collaboration.

For this theme, the last category was named as discovering the potential of the activity. In the framework of this category, these codes were placed; learning about the child's

interest, exploring children's interests, supporting learning at home, connecting life and learning, exploring the parents' knowledge of the OPAL topic and exploring the opportunity to have a quality OPAL family experience. Throughout the planning meeting process, Ms. Melda highlighted how she observed the interest of her child toward insects has been thriving through his interactions with his peers who have also similar interests.

Moreover, the researcher and the teacher encouraged Ms. Melda to connect with her own previous learnings regarding OPAL so Ms. Melda highlighted what she knows about soil, worms, and composting in the meeting. Similarly, her experiences about these topics were emphasized to have potential for connecting learning and real life so the teacher and the researcher wanted Ms. Melda to share her experiences in the activity. Furthermore, Ms. Melda was encouraged to do the activity at home with her child before doing it in the schoolyard with other children. The researcher and the teacher pointed out that doing the activity before in the home environment would provide an effective preparation process and support learning occurring in the home environment. Lastly, Ms. Melda pointed out this activity as a good opportunity since she never had a chance to do this activity in the home environment. The following exemplary quote was recorded during this discussion;

The Researcher: So, with your child, do you find the opportunity to do activities similar to your experiences in your childhood? Worm examination, insects,...

Ms. Melda: We didn't. We just planted and harvested something in the apartment garden. We go down to it. We dug there. We tried to plant flowers or something. Then we tried to plant them at home. Other than that, there was no other activity so it will also be a good opportunity for me and O...(her child)

4.2.1.1. Implication and Observation of the Action Plan

The implication of the activity started by forming the group circle by the lead of the teacher. After forming the circle, the teacher introduced Ms. Melda and explained why she is there at that day. After the teacher, Ms. Melda again introduced herself and she explained that she was here to do a compost with children. After introducing the

activity, Ms. Melda explained why compost is important, the benefits of compost for nature, and how worms help to compost. While explaining the compost and worms, Ms. Melda tried to explain information at a level that children could understand. While Ms. Melda explained how worms help to make compost, one of the children said “*You mean, the worm will have a home?*” After this question, Ms. Melda started to refer to the compost bin as the worm house.

The Child: Some of the insects sting, some don't.

Ms. Melda: Yes, but for example, earthworms don't sting, they have no teeth. The worms live in the compost we will create and aerate that soil, creating a soil that is beneficial for the soil, beneficial for fruits and vegetables. This is very important for us, so we will observe it with this activity.

Because Ms. Melda forgot to bring the storybook related to worm-making compost, the book reading step had to be skipped so compost-making started to be done. The children were divided into small groups by the teacher. Ms. Melda gave materials and tasks for each group collecting soil, grass, and pebbles. It was observed that Ms. Melda is actively involving in the activity through digging the moist soil to find out worms. She also encouraged children who are afraid of touching the worm to examine it. After the groups collected all the necessary materials to make compost, Ms. Melda brought all the materials to make compost and she added and adds the worms found on top of the materials combined while she was saying “*Look, now he's going downstairs, he's going to build a house for himself, he's going to have a bedroom, he's going to have a living room*”

The Child: Are the thick worms poisonous?

Ms. Melda: No, no, worms do not do anything. Worms are the most harmless and hardworking animals.

After examining the movements of the worms in the compost while listening to Ms. Melda, the teacher decided to find a place to place the compost bin, namely the Hexagon worm house. The teacher stated that they will come regularly to observe the progression of the compost formation and worms. Ms. Melda also added that the compost needs humidity so the group needs to add water to the compost regularly. Following this conversation, the teacher directed the children to make a circle for assessment. The teacher asked the children to tell what they understood from this activity. While the teacher was conducting the evaluation, Ms. Melda stayed silent

by just observing. After a while, the teacher involved Ms. Melda in the assessment process by asking *“If we wanted to do this activity at home, what would we need to do? Let's ask Ms. Melda what the preparation process is like at home and listen to her?”* To answer this question, Ms. Melda summarizes how to compost food waste at home and how to compost it in their gardens by getting down to the eye level of children while showing the compost bin again. The teacher encouraged the children to repeat the knowledge given by Ms. Melda by asking *“Well you have learned and we want to do it at home. Who can tell us?..... For example, let's say we don't have fruit peel at home, but what else can we put in our compost?”* The activity was concluded by thanking Ms.Melda and taking a group photo.



Figure 4.11 Action Cycle-I Photos

4.2.1.2. Evaluation, Reflection, and Revision of the Action Plan

After completing the first volunteer parent-involved OPAL activity, the researcher had short individual interviews with the volunteer parent and the teacher on their OPAL experiences in the framework of this activity in order to conclude the first action cycle of the current study. For this purpose, two different themes were created; reflections of the parent and reflections of the teacher.

Table 4.18. *Reflecting on the First Parent-Involved OPAL Activity*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Parent Reflections	Recommendations	• involving visuals
	Emotional State	• feeling excited • feeling involved
	Experienced Benefits	• interacting with children • observing social environment
	Assessing	• observed interest • observed curiosity
Teacher Reflections	Recommendations	involving visuals starting with a story • providing appropriate explanation
	Experienced Benefits	• learning through observation • experiencing effective collaboration • connecting life and learning
	Assessing	• observed participation • observed interest • observed preparation • comparison with other activities

In terms of parent’s reflections, four different categories were formed. These categories were listed as recommendations for the next cycle, emotional state, experiencing the benefits, and assessing the activity. When asked how the activity went, Ms. Melda reflected on her observations during the activity implementation. As far as Ms. Melda stated, she observed that the children were very curious so she described the children as very interested during the activity. Furthermore, Ms. Melda described her emotions as being so excited during the implementation. She also pointed out the feeling of involvement in her child’s education process through the implemented activity.

In the experiencing the benefits category, Ms. Melda’s experiences were illustrated as associated with the benefits of parental involvement. Ms. Melda stated that she had the opportunity to learn about her child’s friends, how her child communicates with others, and how her child uses his social skills in the environment. According to Ms. Melda, this implemented activity was also beneficial for her to interact with other children in the environment since she has been interacting with just her child. Lastly, Ms. Melda recommended that she use more visuals if she had a chance to do this activity again. She exemplified her recommendation as usage of visuals belonging to different types of worm that were different from the ones existing in the schoolyard. The following exemplary quote was recorded during this interview;

The Researcher: Well, if you were to do this activity again, what would you do differently?...

Ms. Melda: ...the children already participated well. I thought they wouldn't be able to participate...Maybe photos or videos of different insects and worms would have been brought in, like this, like this. Because children say, what is the worm going to do here now? What happened now? What did we do? Maybe we could have answered these questions with an extra video. Other than that, I think everything was done well.

The second theme was named reflections of the teacher. Based on the interview data, these three categories were formed; assessing the activity, experiencing the benefits, and recommendations for the next cycle. Ms. Güneş's reflections about the activity process were illustrated in the category of assessing the activity including the codes of observed active participation, observed preparation for the activity, observing that the children are interested, and comparing the activity with other unstructured parental involvement activities.

In the interview, Ms. Güneş emphasized how Ms. Melda generally demonstrated active participation throughout the activity. Similarly, Ms. Güneş expressed how she liked that Ms. Melda came to the activity with preparation. With this preparation and active participation, Ms. Güneş also highlighted children were interested in the activity throughout the process. Furthermore, Ms. Güneş compared this conducted OPAL parental-involved activity with the indoor parental-involvement activities. In her opinion, parents tend to do art-craft activities focusing on the product instead of the process compared to outdoor activities connecting real life with learning process.

The second category constructed by Ms. Güneş's reflections was named as experiencing the benefits illustrating how she understood the benefits of parental involvement and OPAL through experiencing this process. In terms of Ms. Güneş's point of view, Ms. Melda became able to learn while she was observing how Ms. Güneş interacting with children and guiding them throughout the process so Ms. Melda took the role of teaching leader by the help of learning through observation.

Additionally, Ms. Güneş pointed out the effective collaboration constructed and maintained in the activity, between her and Ms. Melda. According to Ms. Güneş, her communication with Ms. Melda got stronger while they were helping each other in the activity, through practices like supporting given instructions and providing classroom

management. How OPAL supports teaching about the life through providing hand-on experiences like creating compost was also emphasized by Ms. Güneş as one of the benefits of this activity.

The last category regarding the reflections of Ms. Güneş was constructed as recommendations for the next cycle. According to Ms. Güneş, there are some practices that need to be focused on for planning and implementing a more effective parent-involved OPAL activity. These aspects were coded as involving visuals in the activity, starting the activity with a story, and focusing explanations more suitable for the developmental level. As associated with these codes, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this interview;

The Researcher: ...As you know, we want to enrich this activity and make it better. What could we do differently? If we were to do it again.

Ms. Güneş: ...I would start with a book. I would use many appropriate visuals. I think appropriate visuals would make the term compost more concrete for children...but I think we could have arranged something more child-centered...when we were defining compost, we defined it in our way but if we had used a book or a picture, it would have been more effective for children. I think this would have provided child-centeredness.

To summarize the reflections gathered from the volunteer parent and teacher, the teacher started the plan the second cycle involving visuals like flashcards and explanations regarding the chosen topic in a way that children can understand easily for second parent-involved OPAL activity.

4.2.2. Second Action Cycle

Based on the reflections made for the first action cycle, the second action cycle was planned with the volunteer teacher. In this cycle, another volunteer parent, whose pseudonym is Ms.Eda, was invited to the school to talk about the activity plan with the researcher and Ms.Güneş. This cycle was focused on the life cycle of a flower. Considering the volunteer parent's occupation which is Pilates instructor, garden yoga was included to the process besides different flower flashcards, and flashcards demonstrating the flower life cycles. For this plan, the parent tried to explain the life cycle of a flower firstly talking about the process with the help of flashcards, and

conducting some specific yoga movements representing the life cycle's steps like seed, growing, and blooming.

As stated above, the second cycle started after reflecting on the first cycle. These reflections assisted the researcher and Ms. Güneş in starting with the second cycle's first step, planning. The meeting conducted between Ms. Güneş and Ms. Eda with the researcher's guidance was recorded, and the analysis of collected data led to the construction of four themes: structuring the activity, the role of the parent, the emotional state of the parent, and discovering the potential of the activity.

Table 4.19. *Planning the Second Parent-Involved OPAL Activity*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Planning the Second Activity	Structuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussing the content • explaining the purpose • discussing the type • discussing the language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deciding the time • discussing the flow • discussing learning materials
	Parent Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasizing the leadership role • emphasizing the collaborative role
	Emotional State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling pleasure • feeling valued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling confident • feeling incapable
	Discovering the Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sharing sources of the activity • realizing learning occurs everywhere • exploring the knowledge of OPAL topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • realizing uniqueness • connecting life and learning • having quality of OPAL time

The first category, which is structuring the activity, illustrates the discussions conducted by Ms. Eda to plan the activity process. This category was constructed based on the formed codes which are discussing the content of the activity, explaining the purpose of the activity, discussing the type of activity, discussing the language of the activity, deciding the time of the activity, discussing the activity flow and guiding the preparation of the learning materials. As associated with these codes, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

...We have yoga poses in the activity. We thought we could focus on the basic poses. Now, as you know, our topic is on the outdoors, Ms. Eda. We want to teach children about this. How does a seed grow? We can also integrate the growth of the seed with that life cycle...But of course, you can direct the activity according to your expertise...

The second category of the planning theme was named the role of the parent after the construction of codes which are emphasizing the leadership role of the parent as the teacher, and the collaboration between the teacher and the parent. As associated with these codes, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

Ms. Güneş: ...I mean, the important point here is that we can actually do the yoga activity inside but why are we moving it to the outdoors? So that the children can better understand life in the garden...

Ms. Eda: So maybe we can also do animal yoga poses

Ms. Güneş: That would be very good. This way we can also extend our time even more...

The following category was created through the analysis of collected data focusing on the emotional state of the parent. This category portrays Ms. Eda's emotions and feelings in the preparation process for the activity. This category includes the codes that are feeling pleasure, feeling valued, having confidence in attracting attention, and concern about managing the classroom. Related to these codes, the following quote of Ms. Eda was recorded during this meeting;

...it was a very good meeting, I think you pay attention to this process. it is also very important to talk and share like this for me...this shows that you and Ms. Güneş take it seriously with care and devotion. So I am very pleased and feel important about sharing my ideas...

The last category of this theme was named discovering the potential of the activity due to the codes regarding the focus on the benefits of the planning process. These codes were listed as sharing sources of the activity, connecting life and learning, differentiating the activity according to interests and needs, exploring the parents' knowledge of the OPAL topic, exploring the opportunity to have a quality OPAL family experience, and supporting the understanding of learning occurs everywhere. As associated with these codes, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

The Researcher: ...do we teach children something different when we do it in the outdoor? What are you thinking about that?

Ms. Eda: ...the learning should be intertwined with nature. Through this way, we explain that very nice activities can also be done in nature to children. Because they are already indoors from morning to night...Also, people are

always happier outside with the sun, they feels better. So that's a good thing too.

4.2.2.1. Implication and Observation of the Action Plan

The activity started after the children took their place on the rainbow parachute, following the directions of Ms. Güneş, who also introduced Ms. Eda and explained why she was there with the children. After this step, Ms. Eda took the role of leader and explained what they would do in the activity. It was noted that she gave clear and basic instructions, like first doing the flower puzzle and then doing the flower yoga. In the beginning, Ms. Eda wanted children to look around them without going anywhere and tell the flowers that they see or ask them to name the flowers they remember in the schoolyard.

After discussing the type and color of flowers children know, Ms. Eda wanted children to find the flower flashcard puzzles hidden in the schoolyard and bring them back on the white cover placed in the middle of the rainbow parachute. During this process, children tried to find the pieces of flower but Ms. Eda was not involved in the process so she preferred to stay outside while observing and directing children by giving instructions like *“Are there any pieces left? Look I can see one under the slide”* After all the flowers completed on the white cover, Ms. Eda gather all children to make a circle around the flowers. She asked some questions like how many flowers see, what the color of these flowers are, and which flower did you like most that are not existed in the plan of the activity. During this process, Ms. Eda observed to attract attention of children with the usage of voice and body movement like pointing each of the flower while children counting. Ms. Eda also reminded children to speak in English if the children count and talk in Turkish. Ms. Güneş mostly involve in the process as play-friend who is actively also doing the activity just like children. After completing the flower puzzle game of the activity, Ms. Eda moved to another step while asking a question to children in the transition process. Ms Eda asked that *“So what does it take to have a flower in the first place?”* Children answered the question by giving answers like water and sun. After taking this answer, Ms. Eda stated to explain the stages of flower life cycle while showing related pictures on the flashcards. Sometimes, Ms. Güneş supported Ms. Eda by making additional comments to her explanation.

To illustrate, Ms. Güneş asked “*Do you remember the bean, how did the bean grow?*” making children remember their previous learning about the plant life cycle. Following the explanation of the life cycle of the flower, Ms. Eda said “*Now we will start yoga, are we ready? Everyone take your seats*” and then moved on to the flower yoga activity. During the activity, the teacher participated in the process by repeating the movements next to Ms. Eda. Furthermore, Ms. Eda started the flower yoga activity by warming up. In this yoga flow, the little seed is watered, and after the seed sprouts. The sprout grows through water and sun and becomes a flower. Each of these cycle steps was imitated by Ms. Eda through yoga movements. To illustrate, the growth of the seedling was done with movements like stretching arms upwards to the shining sun.

It was observed that Ms. Eda storytelling the yoga process in a way children can easily understand through instructions such as “*It's raining, the flower is growing, raise your arms*” The photo in the figure demonstrated the see position in the flower yoga flow. During doing yoga movement, Ms. Güneş supported Ms. Eda by providing classroom management with practices like calling the name of the child who is distracted from the activity. It was also observed that Ms. Eda gave some feedback like saying well done to children who do the movements well and saying straighten your body while doing the movement for the ones who need assistance for the movement by saying “*Come forward a little bit, look, your legs are overlapping*”.

After the completion of the flower's life cycle was improvised with yoga in the activity, Ms. Eda continued with other basic yoga poses and some poses resembling animal movements. Finally, Ms. Eda summarized the process in the assessment part of the activity. For this purpose, she directed questions like What have we done? After summarizing the process, she concluded the activity by saying “*Now you are small like seeds but you will grow taller and become bigger and become adults like flowers*”

4.2.2.2. Evaluation, Reflection, and Revision of the Action Plan

After completing the second volunteer parent-involved OPAL activity, the researcher had short individual interviews with the volunteer parent and the teacher on their

OPAL experiences in the framework of this activity to conclude the current study's second action cycle. For this purpose, two different themes were created; reflections of the parent and reflections of the teacher. In terms of parent's reflections, four different categories were formed. These categories were listed as recommendations for the next cycle, emotional state, experiencing the benefits, and assessing the activity.

Table 4.20. *Reflecting on the Second Parent-Involved OPAL Activity*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Parent Reflections	Recommendations	•enriching the content
	Emotional State	•feeling pleasure •struggling to maintain attention
	Experienced Benefits	•experiencing collaboration •interacting with children •observing social environment •observing development •understanding the OPAL benefits
	Assessing	•observed enjoyment •observed participation •assessing outcomes
Teacher Reflections	Assessing	•observed participation •observed preparation •observing the usage of visuals •observed effective management •observing child-centered process
	Emotional State	•feeling pleasure
	Recommendations	•enriching the content •more sensory learning

During the meeting, Ms. Eda emphasized that the cycle could be repeated with an activity with rich content. In other words, parents highlighted that involving other topics like the life cycle of an animal or giving more details about the topic could be considered for the next parent-involved OPAL activity. Furthermore, the analysis of coded data led to the formation of a second category describing the emotional state of the parent during the planning and implementation process of the activity. These codes constructed the emotional state category; feeling pleasure, and difficulty about maintaining concentration. As associated with these codes, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

...It went very well. Of course, it is difficult to keep so many children together and keep their concentration intact. But I saw that they had fun and they all received the instructions. Ms. Güneş's help was also good. It was very good for me... it is difficult when their concentration is broken...Other than that it was good...

The third category of the theme describes what kind of benefits Ms. Eda experienced during the process. This category was formed through the agency of these codes; experiencing collaboration, having the opportunity to interact with other children, learning about the child's social environment, observing the individual differences in child development and understanding the OPAL benefits. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

The Researcher: What would be the differences if we did this activity inside...

Ms. Eda: : I mean, it was a little wider area. I think it is much more beautiful and peaceful to be in contact with oxygen and air. Since we are doing something green and nature-themed, the advantages of doing it outside are much greater in terms of them feeling it, feeling the wind, feeling the sun.

The last category of the parent's reflections theme was named as assessing the activity. This category illustrates the experience and understanding of Ms. Eda in assessing the activity process. The codes formed for this category are listed as; observing that the children enjoy, observing that children follow the instructions, and experiencing that the activity has achieved its purpose. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

The Researcher: ...Do you think we achieved the objectives of the activity?

Ms. Eda: I think we did, yes. It was a very appropriate activity. We stayed on topic. We worked on the plants. It was good. We also talked about animals, we talked about colors, it was very good...I saw them having fun, and they all got their instructions.

The second theme, which is reflection of the teacher, was formed through the agency of three categories that are assessing the activity, emotional state, and recommendations for the next cycle. In terms of the first category, which is focusing of the teacher's observations for the purpose of the assessment of the process, these codes were formed based on the content analysis; observing the focus on being child-centered, observing the usage of visuals, observing active participation, observing preparation for the activity, and observing effective classroom management.

The following exemplary quota of Ms. Güneş was recorded during this meeting, as related to this category;

...It was very child-centered. The visuals were very supportive. Mr. Eda was already very active, she was very familiar with the field. That's why she used the photographs because she understood the language of the children very well. And the way she guided the children, her movements, etc. I think she was very child-centered. I don't think the children were bored or anything...

In the second category of the related theme, Ms. Güneş reflected on her own emotions during the process. Furthermore, another category was constructed through the formation of codes regarding what can be done to improve the activity for the next action cycle. In this regard, the codes of this category were listed as enriching the content, and more sensory learning. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

Ms. Güneş: Yes, I think these visuals were very useful. It could be just one thing. For example, it wasn't related to the topic, but we imitated the sounds of animals as an exercise. Maybe there could have been more playful animal sounds. If we were to develop something in the next stage...

The Researcher: A little more affective?

Ms. Güneş: Yes, I think we can use things that express children's auditory field



Figure 4.12 *Action Cycle-II Photos*

4.2.3. Third Action Cycle

After reflecting on the second cycle, it was emphasized that the parental involvement activity needs to include sensory learning so the third action cycle was planned to be focused on sensory learning. For this purpose, a muddy play activity was planned emphasizing the senses of touching and hearing. After the activity was planned, another parent volunteer was invited to the school to talk over the plan with the researcher and the teacher. In this activity plan, the parent focused on introducing different animals. Therefore, different animal voices were included in the process. Following hearing and recognizing these animal voices, the parent read a storybook about animal life, and then animals integrated muddy game was played with the children. The meeting conducted with the parent, whose pseudonym is Ms. Perihan, was recorded and the content analysis of the collected data resulted in four themes that are structuring the activity, the role of the parent, emotional state of the parent, and discovering the potential of the activity.

Table 4.21. *Planning the Third Parent-Involved OPAL Activity*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Planning The Third Activity	Structuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussing the type • discussing the content • explaining the purpose • discussing the flow • discussing the outcomes • discussing learning materials
	Parent Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasizing the collaborative role
	Emotional State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling valued • feeling pleasure • feeling confident • feeling incapable
	Discovering the Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sharing sources of the activity • having quality of OPAL time • minimizing hygiene concern • supporting learning at home • exploring the knowledge of OPAL topic • discussing the OPAL benefits

The first category of the theme describing the focus points of the planning process conducted by Ms. Perihan and Ms. Güneş with the guidance of the teacher. This category was constructed on the codes of discussing the type of activity, guiding the preparation of the learning materials, discussing the content of the activity, explaining the purpose of the activity, discussing the activity flow, and discussing the learning outcomes of the activity.

Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

- Ms. Güneş: ... We'd also be dealing with animals. What animal is this? Farm animals, wild animals...
- Ms. Perihan: So we can expect them to guess which animal it is when they are in the mud.
- Ms. Güneş: It could be something like that. Or we can read a storybook beforehand about animals. Then we can connect it to the mud and water game. That could be nice too.
- Ms. Perihan: Yes it can be

The second category of the theme name is the role of the parent after the formation of the code which emphasizes the collaboration between the teacher and the parent. The following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting as associated with the category;

- Ms. Güneş: For example, is there anything that comes to your mind or that you would like to do differently? It could be related to this or related to that.
- Ms. Perihan: That's good. Activities. The child participates one-on-one and his/her hand muscles are also developed. Feeling or oriented.
- Ms. Perihan: Actually, everyone can bring a small container from home.
- Ms. Güneş: It's a very good idea. We can also ask parents and families. For example, each child can bring their container. Maybe they can also bring dish sponges. We can think of it as a project scope. That would be nice.

The parent's emotional state was given as the name for the third category focusing on how Ms.Perihan feels during the planning meeting of the third action cycle. This category was constructed over the codes which are feeling valued, feeling pleasure, being concerned about managing the classroom, and having confidence in attracting attention. As related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

- The Researcher: And what do you mean in terms of difficulty?
- Ms. Perihan: You know, it can be something. Someone wants to do it first, they are more anxious to take their turn or something...like management.

The last category of the theme was discovering the potential of the activity. This category portrays how the third action plan could be beneficial for the volunteer parent and children.

The following codes were formed before this category; sharing sources of the activity, exploring the parents' previous experience of the OPAL topic, discussing the OPAL benefits on the development, exploring the opportunity to have a quality OPAL family experience, supporting learning at home, and minimizing the concern of hygiene. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

The Researcher: Well, do you do any mud or water activities at home?

Ms. Perihan: ...we lived in the city center, we had nothing like that. There is no possibility. Even if there is, these children can't play these things anymore. Everyone is on tablets...Also, mothers nowadays see soil as pollution...Then you are saying that you wish there were soil so he could play. If he could find soil and play. You can't find clean soil anyway...I mean it can get glass pieces. Pebbles or nails, cake nails.

4.2.3.1. Implication and Observation of the Action Plan

The implication of the activity started with Ms. Güneş's directions to make a circle with the children. After the greeting, Ms. Perihan takes the floor and begins to speak about why is she here today and what they will do together. Ms. Perihan explains what they will do with basic and clear language. She states that they will read a book and then they will try to find hidden animals in the mud. During this explanation, Ms. Perihan took assistance from Ms. Güneş to answer one of the questions of a child. The following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this observation;

The Child: Like the hot and cold game?

Ms. Perihan: Like the hot and cold game, Ms. Güneş?

Ms. Güneş: No, not like hot and cold. As Ms. Perihan said, there will be some mud and some water involved in this game.

After talking about the activity in the circle, Ms. Perihan asks the children one by one about the flashcards with animal photos on them. After knowing the name of the animal on the card, she asks them to imitate the animal. While showing a picture of a turtle, she asks "*So, does anyone have a turtle at home?*" Furthermore, one child calls a donkey a gazelle during this step. When talking about the animals through flashcards, Ms. Perihan shows the story of a tiger and says:

“Now I will read you the story of a tiger” to attract the attention of the children to the activity. The children opened the rainbow parachute to sit down in a circle on the parachute. *“Let's even listen to the animal sounds before the story starts,”* says Ms. Güneş. The children take off their coats and give them to Ms. Güneş before she says that everyone should close their eyes and turn on animal sounds. Children are asked to say the names of the animals they hear. Ms. Güneş leads this step of the activity. While she is directing, Ms. Perihan remains as an observer, just watching the children and Ms. Güneş's implementation. After completing the listening of animal sounds and trying to recognize them, Ms. Güneş says *“We know about animals, now let's learn the story of the lion”*

Ms. Perihan asks *“if we are going to show the book, teacher”*. Ms. Güneş says, *“Let's show the cover of the book like this and tell the title of the story.”* Ms. Perihan asks the children a question at the beginning of the book by saying *“These animals seemed a little different to me, don't you think?”* Occasionally, Ms. Güneş also directs attention to the book by asking questions about the story. Furthermore, Ms. Perihan not only reads the story but also shows the children the pictures in the story and talks about them. *“Can you show me how the tiger in the story roared?”* she says and some children roar. Ms. Perihan also asks questions like *“What do you think his friends think about this Tiger jumping from house to house?”* *“I mean, they look surprised, aren't they?”* *“And why do you think they might be shocked?”* When the story reading finished, the children stand up again and form a circle. The materials for the mud game are brought out. Children are divided into groups of three by Ms. Güneş . After, all children come to the center. In the center, Ms. Perihan finds the animals hidden in the big mud pot with the help of the children. Ms. Perihan does this first then the children do it. As they take the toys out of the mud one by one, they talk about which animal they are. The following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this observation;

The Child: This is a giraffe.

Ms. Perihan: How do you know that?

The Child: Because he has a very long neck

Ms. Perihan: Yes, his neck is long and his feet are long.

After the children find the animals in the mud, they wash these animals with water as a group. Ms. Perihan and Ms. Güneş allow the children to repeat finding animals in

the mud and washing them if the children want to do this activity more. The activity materials were taken before the assessment part. Ms. Güneş begins the evaluation by asking, “*What kind of activity did we do?*” “*We learned about animals,*” says a child. For the other parts of the activity, Ms. Güneş directed the assessment part while Ms. Perihan stayed observant mostly, except she participated in answering a teacher’s question. The following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this observation;

Ms. Güneş: Did you know it was mud when you first touched it?

The Child: Yes, because it was soft and stuck to our hands.

Ms. Güneş concluded the assessment part by asking a question about the ways to conduct this activity outside of the school. The following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this observation;

Ms. Güneş: How would you do this activity at home?

The child: I would take mud from the garden and pour water on it

Another child: We can do it with foam instead of mud

Ms. Perihan: I would to do it in the sand

Ms. Güneş: Then if we do it at home, send me photos and videos, okay?

The activity is ended by thanking Ms. Perihan and taking a group photo.



Figure 4.13 Action Cycle-III Photos

4.2.3.2. Evaluation, Reflection, and Revision of the Action Plan

After completing the implementation and observation step of the third cycle, the researcher also discussed the process with Ms. Perihan and Ms. Güneş to explore and understand their experiences throughout the process. The collected data analyzed and the analysis resulted in two themes, which are reflections of the parent and reflections of the teacher about the third action cycle.

Table 4.22. *Reflecting on the Third Parent-Involved OPAL Activity*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Parent Reflections	Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organizing more parent-involved activities
	Emotional State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feeling incapable feeling excited feeling good having fun being happy
	Experienced Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> experiencing collaboration having quality of OPAL time
	Assessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> observed interested observed curiosity
Teacher Reflections	Assessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> observing clear flow observed participation observed interest
	Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> asking more open-ended questions talking about questioning in the planning emphasizing open-ended questions doing more sensory activities
	Experienced Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> observing free movement observing discharged energy observed attention providing learning through observation

Based on Ms. Perihan's reflections, the first theme was constructed through the formation of these categories; recommendations for the next cycle, emotional state, experiencing the benefits, and assessing the activity. The first category demonstrates what Ms. Perihan thinks to improve parent-involved OPAL activity. With this focus, Ms. Perihan reflected that she needs more experience in doing activities with a group of children to conduct the activity in an efficient way so her reflection was coded as organizing more parent-involved activities.

The second category named emotional state portrays how Ms. Perihan felt during the implementation process of the activity. This category includes the codes of feeling

difficulty in initiating the activity, feeling difficulty involving all children, feeling excited, feeling good, having fun, and being happy. As related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

The Researcher: ...So do you think you had any difficulties during the process?

Ms. Perihan: Some children were not very involved in the game and were a little more cold, I tried to include them, but I think their temperament was like that. That's why I struggled a little there...

Another category reflects how the parent benefited from the collaboration and how she gained an understanding of the benefits of OPAL. This category was named as experiencing the benefits, and it was constructed through the agency of codes that are experiencing collaboration and understanding the lack of OPAL experience. The following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting as associated with this category;

The Researcher: ...ever have a chance to play with mud with your child?

Ms. Perihan: No, no. I stayed away from the mud too.

The Researcher: Maybe we can say this is a first then?

Ms. Perihan: Exactly, I felt that I stayed away. We say that children don't play, but I realized that parents do not play either. We stayed away from this process when we were in the city life.

The last category of this theme was constructed as related to the assessment of the activity process from Ms. Perihan's point of view. This category was created on the formation of codes which are observing that the children are interested, and observing the curiosity of children. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

The Researcher: ...what do you mean by good?

Ms. Perihan: It was fun; it is nice to do something with children. Children give positive emotions; they make you happy like that. They were curious; most of them also participated in the play...we did it all together...

The second theme was named as the reflections of the teacher, which explores the experiences of Ms.Güneş during the implementation of the third parent-involved activity.

Based on the content analysis of the collected data during this meeting led the researcher to reach three categories which are assessing the activity, recommendations for the next cycle, and experiencing the benefits. The first category of the theme was named as assessing the activity due to the focus on how the process was evaluated by the volunteer teacher. The codes of observing clear activity flow, observing that the children are interested, observing active participation, and observing children's interest in sensory materials were gathered together to construct this category. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

Ms. Güneş: ...I think it was very fun for Ms. Perihan. Laughing with the children. She shared their language, she shared their age. I liked this very much. You know, her reactions were like children. That was very nice.

The Researcher: For example, how was her interaction with the mud?

Ms. Güneş: She held back a little bit at the beginning of mud play but later she actively participated by directing the children with the mud, with those shovels...She also played with the mud and became a role model for the children, it was very nice. I like it very much.

Recommendations for the next cycle were formed as the second category of the teacher reflection theme. This category describes what can be done to improve the parent-involved activity for the next cycle from the point of Ms. Güneş's perspective. To form this category, the following codes were grouped; asking more open-ended questions, talking about questioning in the planning meeting, emphasizing open-ended questions in the activity plan, and doing more sensory activities. The following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting as associated with this category;

Ms. Güneş: At the beginning of the activity, maybe we could direct children to ask questions and think a little bit about why these are here...

The Researcher: So should we encourage parents more and give direction so that they can ask questions in this way?

Ms. Güneş: Yes, yes... You know, maybe instead of reading the book first, we could have the children question the materials, we have. Why are these materials here? I mean, what is this mud doing here? Why are the shovel, the box, and the containers here? I thought maybe we could do these things, first make them think, then move on to the animals, then move on to the book and give more details.

The last category of this theme was named as experiencing the benefits since it illustrated what kind of benefits of OPAL and parental involvement were observed by Ms. Güneş during the implementation of the third activity. This category involves the codes which are observing free movement, observing children to discharge energy, observing increased attention, and learning through observation for the parent. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

Ms. Güneş: ...the children's range of movement was not restricted. Children could move to the area they wanted in the schoolyard. I think this allows them to release their energy and focus on the activity at the same time...Maybe it would not be so much in a classroom environment. After all, it is a closed space.

The Researcher: So can we say that Ms. Perihan has also seen these things?

Ms. Güneş: Of course. I think that she also observed how a teacher interacts with children outdoors, and how a teacher controls children.

At the end of this cycle, the reflection process revealed that the activity process could support children's high-order thinking skills instead of directly explaining and directing them during the learning steps. For example, the parent can just show the materials of the activity and ask what can we do with these materials for this activity. Furthermore, creativity skills were planned to be more focused on for the following activity process.

4.2.4. Fourth Action Cycle

For the fourth action cycle, the researcher and the teacher planned a parental-involved activity focusing on mud paint. After planning the activity, another volunteer parent, whose pseudonym is Ms. Feriha, was invited to the school to hold a meeting about the plan with the researcher and the teacher. During the meeting, the story-telling part was also added to the plan within the consideration of the parent is bilingual who can speak English fluently. The activity was implemented with the children to let them try making mud, mixing food coloring with the mud, and painting with mud paint as they wanted after listening to a story related to a child who loved to paint with mud. The planning meeting conducted with Ms. Feriha and Ms. Güneş with the guidance of the researcher was recorded.

The collected data was analyzed and the analysis resulted in four categories which are structuring the activity, the role of the parent, the emotional state of the parent, and discovering the potential of the activity.

Table 4.23. *Planning the Fourth Parent-Involved OPAL Activity*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Planning The Fourth Activity	Structuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deciding the time • deciding the language • discussing the type • discussing the flow • discussing the content
	Parent Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasizing the collaborative role
	Emotional State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling motivated
	Discovering the Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring interest • exploring the knowledge of OPAL topic

The first category was constructed based on what Ms. Feriha and Ms. Güneş focused on during the meeting to plan the activity. This category was built on the following codes, which are deciding the time of the activity, deciding the language of the activity, discussing the type of activity, discussing the activity flow, and discussing the content of the activity. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

The Researcher: Regarding the activity we are going to do now, your German and English are very good as far as I learned. We thought that maybe we could do an activity in full English

Ms. Feriha: Yes, it would be nice for children.

The role of the parent was given as the name for the second category to highlight the role of Ms. Feriha in her collaboration with Ms. Güneş during the activity planning process. This category involves the code of emphasizing the collaboration between the teacher and the parent. Furthermore, another category was named as emotional state of the parent after the formation of getting motivated by seeing others code. The following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting as associated with the emotional state category;

The Researcher: ...It can be about a leaf, a seed, or the earth. Species of living things. For example, we made a worm house also in this project...

Ms. Feriha: She (her daughter) loved that activity so much. She was telling me that someone's mom came, we made a worm hotel so why don't you come too? I understood that they had a lot of fun. Then I said I'll come too, I'll do something too...

The last category of the theme is discovering the potential of the activity illustrating how the planning meeting assisted parents in understanding the benefits of OPAL and/or parental-involvement. This category resulted from the formation of the codes, which are learning about the child's interest, and exploring the parents' experience with the OPAL topic. As associated with the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

Ms. Feriha: Can it be something more active other than book reading, for example?

Ms. Güneş: I mean, apart from storytelling, if you are interested, of course, we can do something more different...

Ms. Feriha: I'm thinking about my daughter now, she likes coloring too much... We like those kinds of activities more. We already do storytelling a lot at home

4.2.4.1. Implication and Observation of the Action Plan

The fourth parent-involved OPAL activity started with Ms. Güneş's invitation for the children to make a circle. After forming the circle, Ms. Feriha first introduced herself and then the children introduced themselves by saying their names one by one. Ms. Feriha explained why she was there and without giving the details of the activity, Ms. Güneş led children to sit down on the rainbow parachute. Ms. Feriha showed the materials in front of her, which are soil and water. She asked the children what are these materials and what they can do with these materials. Ms. Güneş encouraged her to attract the attention of children by asking "*I wonder what these materials have to do with this event?*" and then she added "*Just raise your hand if you have an opinion*" when lots of children want to talk at the same time. To answer the asked question about the materials of the activity, one of the children said "*If we put water into the soil, the soil will not last long and will turn into mud*" After taking the ideas of the children Ms. Güneş says "*Let's learn from the story*" pointing to the storyboard held by Ms. Feriha. Before reading, Ms. Güneş says "*Criss, Cross, apple sauce, and now listen*" to the children. While Ms. Feriha's husband reading, Ms. Feriha draws pictures with mud, as simultaneously with the read sentences. For example when he says circle, Ms. Feriha is drawing a circle. Just like this example, she draws pictures of the sun, river, trees, mom, children, and so on in the mud. While drawing in mud, Ms. Feriha repeated

these words to emphasize the words in English. Ms. Feriha's daughter also helps their parents by holding papers of the story. While she is drawing with mud, one of the children says "*The child looks angry*" After Ms. Feriha asks this child "*Why do you think he might be angry?*" After the story reading, Ms. Feriha assisted the children in making mud by giving them water and soil. During this process, Ms. Güneş is helping Ms. Feriha with adding food coloring to mud cups for children who want green mud. Ms. Feriha gave the paper to the children who finished preparing the mud for mud painting. She leads them to sit down and paint the paper with mud the way they want. After a while, Ms. Feriha and her husband start to paint with mud on the papers, just like children. While painting, Ms. Feriha asked a child "*How is painting with mud*" The child answered "*Great*" while another one said "*There is grass in my mud paint*"

Furthermore, one of the children saw an insect near to him and said something about the insect. Ms. Feriha's husband said to him "Aren't you afraid of insects?" While the child is saying no, his friend says about him "because he's an insect hunter" After this individual mud painting, Ms. Feriha brought a long and big rectangle of white paper that all the children could do mud painting as a group. Most of the children do hand prints through mud on the paper, and then they start to draw things. While the children drew as a group, Ms. Feriha and her husband were involved in the process via drawing with mud on the paper. After this step, the children made a circle through the directions of Ms. Güneş who made the children wait in a circle to conduct the assessment part of the activity. Ms. Güneş asked the children what they did today in the activity, and children summarized the activity by giving answers like reading the story, making mud, and painting with mud. She also asked, "*If we want to do this activity at home, what can we use instead of mud?*" Children gave answers like water, watercolor paint, and so on. Ms. Güneş ended the parent-involved activity after the children thanked to volunteer parents.

4.2.4.2. Evaluation, Reflection, and Revision of the Action Plan

After the completion of the fourth action plan, the researcher conducted individual meetings to evaluate the plan implementation process from the perspective of Ms.

Güneş and Ms. Feriha by exploring their experiences in the process. The analysis of the collected data during the meetings led the researcher to reach two themes, which are reflections of the parent, and reflections of the teacher. Reflections of the parent theme were constructed through four categories, which are recommendations for the next cycle, emotional state, experiencing the benefits, and assessing the activity.

Table 4.24. *Reflecting on the Fourth Parent-Involved OPAL Activity*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Parent Reflection	Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not using artificial colorant • dressing appropriately
	Emotional State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling pleasure • feeling happy
	Experienced Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having quality of OPAL time • observing decreased hygiene concern • observing decreased sensitivity
	Assessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observing interaction with mud • observed enjoyment
Teacher Reflection	Assessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observing clear flow • observed motivation • observed participation • observed interest
	Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focusing on more interaction
	Experienced Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observing decreased sensitivity
	Emotional State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having fun • feeling pleasure

The first category portrays Ms. Feriha’s perspective on the improvement of the OPAL activity. This category was built on two codes which are not using artificial colorant, and dressing appropriately for the activity. The second category of the theme describes how Ms. Feriha feels while implementing the fourth OPAL parent-involved activity. This category was formed through the codes of feeling pleasure and feeling happy. Related to this category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

F: So it went well.

R: What do you mean by well?

F: It was nice to be together with the children. All the children were interested. Especially my daughter. She was like that my parents are here. I should say her pride...I saw her happy, and that made me happy.

Another category was named experiencing the benefits. Ms. Feriha’s observations and experiences regarding the OPAL benefits were demonstrated in this category. The

category of experiencing benefits involves the codes that are having a different outdoor experience, observing decreased hygiene concern, and observing decreased sensory sensitivity. As associated with the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

Ms. Feriha: So my daughter doesn't like to touch the mud very much...

The Researcher: Did you ever have the opportunity to play with mud out of school?

Ms. Feriha: At home, there are play doughs and stuff like that as activities. I mean, interacting with mud is the only thing that can be done in the outdoor. I mean, it was different for us too. As I said...there was some shyness in our daughter, but I saw that she overcame it today. At first, she doesn't enjoy getting dirty... But today, she relaxed a little bit with the mud just like her friends when they get dirty.

The last category of the parent's reflection theme was named assessing the activity focusing on Ms. Feriha's observations regarding the evaluation of the activity process. This category was constructed on the codes of observing interaction with mud and observing that the children enjoy.

In terms of the second theme, which is reflections of the teacher, four different categories were formed to describe what Ms. Güneş experienced and observed throughout the implementation of the fourth parent-involved OPAL activity. These categories were listed as assessing the activity, recommendations for the next cycle, experiencing the benefits, and emotional state. The first category, which is assessing the activity, illustrates what Ms. Güneş's evaluation belongs to activity process. This category is established based on the codes of observing clear activity flow, observed motivation of the parent, observing active participation, and observing that the children are interested. As associated with the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

The Researcher: In terms of involvement?

Ms. Güneş: Ms. Feriha also painted the pictures very enthusiastically. The father was very excited, he read the book. He also got the children's attention. Do you know what Hexie is doing? The mother showed her lip while drawing, Hexie's eyes, this is her lip, this is that. I think it was guiding for the children...the flow of the activity was very good.

The second category is named as recommendations for the next cycle. This category is constructed through the formation of codes that increase effective interaction between the parent and children, and emphasize effective interaction in the plan. In this category, Ms. Güneş's understanding of the improvement of the activity was demonstrated. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

The Researcher: But so let's say we are going to conduct one more cycle?

Ms. Güneş: ...I think parents really need to be aware of communication with children... because when they enter the environment, they don't know what to do. Because they are not familiar with it...

The Researcher: ...so you are saying that we could have emphasized this part a little bit?

Ms. Güneş: ...let's talk like this this...You can pay attention to this in communicating with children. I mean, so far I have observed a little bit of shyness in all four of our parents while chatting with the children...we could also convey something about it in the meetings we had beforehand...

After the formation of the code that observes the decrease in sensory sensitivity, the category of experiencing the benefits was constructed based on this code. The category demonstrates Ms. Güneş's experience on how she observed children playing with mud even though these children even if at other times they may not want to interact with different sensory materials such as soil and water. Lastly, Ms. Güneş reflected on her feelings about the implementation of the parent-involved OPAL activity. This category involves the codes of having fun and feeling pleasure. Ms. Güneş pointed out her emotions with the following exemplary quote;

...I had a lot of fun in the activity. I mean, I think it was very nice to integrate a ubiquitous material like mud with a book, to show it to children by drawing pictures, to draw children's attention to drawing with mud, and to make them connect a little bit with the heroes of the story. And the parents were very enthusiastic...

In conclusion, the reflection part of the fourth activity revealed that the parents also need some specific information regarding the interaction with the children, like how to read a story to be appropriate to the age group, how to ask guiding questions, and so on.



Figure 4.14 *Action Cycle-IV Photos*

4.2.5. Fifth Action Cycle

The last action cycle was planned based on the needs that arose after the implementation and evaluation of the fourth parental involvement OPAL activity. In this action cycle, the researcher and the teachers organized a meeting with a volunteer parent invited to do the activity.

In this meeting, the teachers focused on supporting the perspective of the volunteer parents on how to interact with children in an efficient way. For this purpose, diverse examples were discussed like what kind of questions needs to be asked and how scaffolding needs to be provided during the activity. In the framework of this focus, the activity was planned as a sensory activity integrated with math. In this activity, the volunteer parent used water balloons to work on numbers and simple addition operations through effective interaction practices with children in the age group. The planning meeting was recorded by the researcher.

The collected data analyzed and the analysis resulted in four categories which are structuring the activity, the role of the parent, emotional state and discovering the potential of the activity.

Table 4.25. Planning the Fifth Parent-Involved OPAL Activity

Theme	Categories	Codes
Planning The Fifth Activity	Structuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deciding the time • discussing learning materials • emphasizing the assessment • explaining the purpose
	Parent Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussing the learning outcomes • discussing the type • discussing the flow • discussing the content
	Emotional State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasizing the leadership role • emphasizing the collaborative role
	Discovering the Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling happy • feeling relaxed • feeling incapable
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring interest • exploring the knowledge of OPAL topic • having quality of OPAL time • experiencing effective interaction • experiencing effective assessment • exploring positive reinforcement

Structuring the activity was constructed as the first category explaining what kind of points were discussed during the meeting to shape the parent-involved activity. This category was created on the formed codes that are deciding the time of the activity, guiding the preparation of the learning materials, emphasizing the assessment part, explaining the purpose of the activity, discussing the learning outcomes of the activity, discussing the type of activity, discussing the activity flow, and discussing the content of the activity. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting; The second category of the planning theme was constructed based on discussed roles of the parent so it was named as the role of the parent. This category involves the codes which are emphasizing the leadership role of the parent as the teacher, and emphasizing the collaboration between the teacher and the parent. The following exemplary dialogue was recorded as related to this category during the planning meeting conducted with Ms. Parla;

Ms. Parla: It's (the activity plan) beautiful but we'll do it together, right?

The Researcher: We did the planning with Ms. Güneş but at the event, Ms. Güneş and I will be one step behind the field. We will be in the same environment but we will leave the leadership to you. Like a teacher, you will handle the process with our help.

Another category was created through the codes of feeling happy, feeling relaxed, and concerned about managing the classroom. Due to the codes related to emotions, this category was named as the emotional state of the parent which demonstrates how Ms.Parla felt throughout the implementation of the OPAL activity. Related to the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

The Researcher: Do you have any concerns about the activity plan we discussed?

Ms. Parla: No, I mean I just thought if I could manage 15 children because I am not a preschool teacher even though I am in the area of special education. I also have been away from my profession for 6 years now...but I know that preschool is not such an environment. It progresses more within the scope of interaction and communication with the child. I have a little bit of that concern, but other than that, I do not have any.

The last category of the theme was constructed with the focus of discovering the potential of the activity. This category was built on the codes of learning about the child's interest, emphasizing positive reinforcement, emphasizing effective interaction, emphasizing asking open-ended questions, explaining how assessment can be conducted, exploring the parents' previous experience with the OPAL topic, and exploring the opportunity to have a quality OPAL family experience. As associated with the category, the following exemplary dialogue was recorded during this meeting;

Ms.Parla: Or, I don't know, it could be like a reward for the kids, maybe a balloon or something.

The Researcher: Do you think there should be a reward?

Ms. Parla: ...I mean, children like it. But you know, it can be debated whether it is right or not. We can also support it with something else, of course. I mean by just saying nice things.

The Researcher: Because even a verbal reward is enough.

Ms.Parla: Exactly. There is no problem.

As related to the category of discovering benefits, Ms. Güneş also highlighted the importance of conducting an assessment at the end of the activity so Ms. Güneş emphasized how this step can be conducted with children. The following dialogue was recorded during the planning meeting;

Ms. Güneş: ...what have we done so far? Have we achieved what we set out to achieve? We can think of it as a process where we have a conversation with the children about the activity process.

Ms. Parla: Of course, of course, like a question and answer. We will gather all the children together I guess...What did we learn about it? How fun was the game?...

4.2.5.1. Implication and Observation of the Action Plan

The activity started by children making a circle through the instructions of Ms. Güneş. The volunteer parent, whose pseudonym is Ms. Parla, introduced herself after children made the circle. To meet the children in the group, Ms. Parla wanted them to find a natural material in the schoolyard, and come back to the circle. She counted them until 20 and invited children back to the circle. When children came back to the circle, Ms. Feriha encouraged them to speak one by one. In the circle, children firstly say their name, and then natural material that they found in the schoolyard. Ms. Parla listened them one by one in an attentive way.

After the greetings, Ms. Parla shows the yellow water balloon at her hand. By pointing the balloon, Ms. Güneş attracted attention of children by saying *“Ms. Parla has something for you. Look what she brought”* Ms. Parla took the floor while pointing the balloon by asking, *“What do you guys think this could be?”* Following to answers of children, Ms. Parla continues to play with the balloon by passing it from one hand to the other as if it were very hot, and by saying *“But it's so hot, could it be something else? My hand is on fire right now.”* Ms. Güneş asked, *“Could it be a hot potato?”* Then Ms. Parla explained the rules of the hot potato game that children need to pass the balloon to the next one in the circle without waiting while counting one by one. One of the children asked, *“Will it blow up?”* Ms. Parla answered the question of the child by saying *“If it blows up, no problem, we have another balloon”* While the children playing the hot potato game, Ms. Parla said that your hands burned if the child waited too much to pass the balloon to the next one. Some of the children struggled to pass the balloon to the next one in time since they spent time saying things like cold potato or touching and squeezing the balloon too much.

Following the hot potato game, Ms. Güneş helped Ms. Parla to go with the other activity step, which is water balloon parkour by dividing the children into two groups since the parkour was planned to be conducted as a contest. Then Ms. Parla

demonstrated how the parkour would be played step by step to children. After the demonstration, the children lined up in a single row, one behind the other, with the two groups side by side. At the beginning of the line, children carried the water balloons on the plate to the middle where two answer boxes were placed. When the children arrive in the middle, they do the math operation written on the balloon that they carried to the middle point. Ms. Parla helps the children with math. Anyway, the children put the balloon to the right answer box and they take a new balloon that there is no addition operation written on it.

Children carried this balloon to the end where there was the wall. There are shapes on the wall and children were directed by Ms.Parla to throw their water balloons to the top of the three shapes positioned on top of each other. During this process, children were observed cheering by telling their friends who were competing. After each child completed the parkour, Ms. Parla allowed the children to take the remaining water balloons and throw them randomly at the wall. During this process, Ms. Güneş reminded the children to throw the water balloons to the wall, not each other.

After the ending of the water balloon parkour, the assessment part conducted by Ms. Parla. First children made a circle with the help of Ms. Güneş, then Ms. Parla asked some closed ended and open ended questions. During this process, Ms. Güneş sometimes assisted Ms. Parla by making children to remember the classroom rules like do not talking without raising hand. The activity was ended by that children thanked and clapped to Ms. Parla for her volunteer activity. The following dialogue was recorded during the assessment part of the activity;

Ms. Parla: I had a lot of fun too. Well, what did we do in this activity?

Children: We got wet, We threw a water balloon, We got wet and carried a water balloon on a plate,

Ms.Parla: What we played with the balloon at the beginning?

Children: Hot potatoes, but they were cold, not hot

Ms. Parla: and what was the written on the balloons?

Children: Addition

Ms. Parla: Yes well done, we did addition. I'm curious about one thing. If you were to play this activity at home, how would you play it?

Children: I would play with my dad.....



Figure 4.15 *Action Cycle-V Photos*

4.2.5.2. Evaluation, Reflection, and Revision of the Action Plan

After completing the implementation and observation of the fifth parent-involved OPAL activity, the researcher first discussed with Ms. Güneş to evaluate the activity in general. With Ms. Güneş, it was discussed that the needs identified after the fourth cycle were observed to be met with the implementation of the fifth cycle. Therefore, the researcher and Ms. Güneş decided to end the implementation of the action cycle process. Hence, the researcher continued with the overall evaluation of the whole action process. Due to this reason, the ideas of Ms. Parla were taken in the overall evaluation process.

4.3. Overall Evaluation Regarding Whole Action Process

After the action cycles were completed, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with five of the parents who conducted volunteer parental involvement activities, and also the volunteer teacher who led the whole action process about supporting the involvement of parents in the OPAL process occurring in the schoolyard.

4.3.1. Perspectives and Experiences of the Teacher

To explore and understand the volunteer teacher, whose pseudonym is Ms. Güneş, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview including open-ended questions for the overall evaluation of the research process. The content analysis of the conducted interview resulted in five different themes representing changes in Ms. Güneş's experiences and understanding regarding OPAL and parental involvement. These themes were listed as experiences improvements, experienced barriers, implementation considerations, descriptions, and recommendations for further improvements. These themes were presented in detail in the following parts.

4.3.1.1. Experienced Improvements According to the Teacher

The theme of experienced improvements illustrates the changes Ms. Güneş directly experienced throughout the process. This theme was constructed through two categories: improvements regarding OPAL and improvements regarding parental involvement.

Table 4.26. *Experienced Improvements According to the Teacher*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Experienced Improvements	Improvements Regarding OPAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding OPAL benefits more • more teachable moments • more playfulness • better classroom management
	Improvements Regarding Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding the necessity of involvement more • overcoming the lack of involvement • increasing interaction • strengthening communication • empathizing more • guiding more • observed understanding of learning • observed more effort for involvement • increasing self-confidence

The first category, improvements regarding OPAL, includes different codes focusing on how Ms. Güneş directly experiences changes related to outdoor play and learning. These codes were listed as understanding the benefits of OPAL more, providing more teachable moments, supporting playfulness more, and providing better classroom

management. From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

...I would like my parents to volunteer more for these OPAL activities. I would like to have this experience with them because I think the indoor parent-involved activities were not very effective in comparison to the schoolyard activities...at the points in the classroom where the children are scattered, at the points where chaos starts, the activity starts to break down a little more. At that point, efficiency decreases a lot...

...in the OPAL activities, it was more important for parents to try to get down to the age of the children compared to what they did in the classroom. This was my biggest observation...when I compared it with other age groups, indoor and outdoor spaces...the parents' approach was more playful and more childish...there was a perception that the teacher should manage the class indoors, and it was more structured, it was more like a lesson. But outdoor activities were not like that. I was completely in the background, the families were in the foreground...

The second category focuses on improvements regarding parental involvement. This category was formed through the codes of understanding the necessity of parental involvement more, overcoming the lack of parental involvement, increasing interaction with parents, strengthening communication, empathizing with parents more, guiding parents more, observing the improvement in understanding learning, observing the increasing parents' effort for involvement and increasing self-confidence.

From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

...parents were thinking that parental involvement just occurs in inside. What they all had in mind was to have art activities, but they saw that the art activity also progressed wonderfully and smoothly in the schoolyard...The families were always focused on the product inside...almost everyone did an art activity indoors...they were always explaining that we would do the activity and this result would come out. There was no clear message given to the child, there were no stages...

...I have gained a different perspective as a result of all the activities we have done and the meetings we have had with you. Before, maybe I was not thinking so much about understanding of the parents but when I communicated so closely with the families, I was able to understand the situations they were in...Now it has increased communication and interaction a lot...In terms of their understanding of the teachers and our understanding of the families; involvement is something that should be included in the process...

4.3.1.2. Experienced Barriers According to the Teacher

To explore and understand the challenges of the process from the volunteer teacher's point of view, the researcher first asked whether she had trouble or not during the process. After, the researcher and the teacher discussed what kind of difficulties the teacher experienced if she believed she overcame them.

The content analysis of collected data led the researcher to reach one category that was named as a barrier to getting started since the teacher just shared that she had trouble while beginning this research study. According to the teacher's shares, these difficulties were coded as reaching out to parents and explaining the importance of parental involvement. From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

...in the first stage, I already had a big problem about not reaching my parents. I felt that we wanted to do something here, but did they care that much? Do they want this...at this point; I think the importance of involvement is not something that is grasped much in our country. Teachers do not grasp this either. This was a difficult point for me...

...the age group is also a bit effective in terms of involvement...the families in the younger age groups were more willing, I don't know if it's because the children are more babyish...the older age group seems to be able to do everything, control everything...There is an extra comfort in the older age group. Maybe my students have been here for years, they even came from two ages, maybe it's something that comes with that...

4.3.1.3. Implementation Considerations According to the Teacher

The theme of implementation considerations was reached after analyzing the data gathered by asking what practices the teacher showed importance to during the process. The codes of this theme were grouped under the category that was named supporting parental involvement. However, this category's codes were listed as learning about previous experiences of parents, recognizing self as a guide, guiding parents towards experiential learning, supporting the understanding of integrated

learning, supporting parents to be learning leaders, and demonstrating how assessment can be done with children.

Table 4.27. *Implementation Considerations According to the Teacher*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Implementation Considerations	Supporting Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning about previous experiences • recognizing self as a guide • guiding parents towards experiential learning • supporting the understanding of integrated learning • supporting parents to be leaders • demonstrating how assessment can be done

From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

...I took a bit more of a back seat in the final plans and the parent led the process more. For example, the last activity was completely managed by the parent herself...the aim was actually to get the parent completely involved in this. To get the parent to have a say, to guide different children, to have a say in the activity because there is something we talked about with them, something we planned with them. As far as I observed, most of the parents were very assertive. You know, this is what we were trying to give, but when combined with some guidance and desire, that quality of parents also emerged...

...we asked what the parents want, what is the interest of their child? What is it that they want to do with children? We actually tried to determine this. We tried to learn and understand their past experiences at some points...For example, is she afraid of insects? Or how will the parent react to muddy activities? We tried to learn this. We tried to measure their skills. For example, in the places where we read books, how is a book read, what is done? She asked us about this. How will I read it, how will it be, and so on and so forth? As I said, the time was enough. We did not go to a point that would confuse the parents. You know, by giving too much information, by overwhelming them with too much information. Nor did we leave them inadequate in this regard. I think the parents got what they needed to get. So we got the information we needed to get...

4.3.1.4. Descriptions of the Teacher

To explore and understand the teacher’s perspective regarding OPAL and parental involvement, the researcher asked what comes to her mind when she hears these words. The analysis resulted in the formation of two themes, which are the benefits of parental involvement and the benefits of OPAL. In terms of the first category, the teacher described what kind of benefits she directly observed or considered regarding

the benefits of OPAL on children. This category was constructed on the formed codes, which are discharging energy, supporting observing skills, supporting social interactions, and being more comfortable.

Table 4.28. *Descriptions of the Teacher Regarding the Study*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Descriptions	Involvement Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making excited • attracting attention • supporting understanding of assessment • enjoying collaboration
	OPAL Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discharging energy • supporting observing skills • supporting social interactions • being more comfortable

From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

...In the first two cycles, I was more at the forefront because I think the family was already lacking in this regard. But as we talked about the importance of assessment with the parents, it got better...the final stages of Ms. Eda's activity were already evaluated in itself. They did the movements again. After that, in Ms. Parla's activity, the evaluation was very obvious...

The second category of the description theme was named as benefits of parental involvement. This category illustrates what kind of benefits the teacher observed on parents and children during the study. The codes of this category were listed as making excited, attracting attention, supporting understanding of assessment and enjoying collaboration. From the interview, the following quote of Ms. Güneş was given as an example for the category;

...When Ms. Melda's class was very disorganized and she couldn't manage it, she naturally needed help, or she didn't know what to say at that point, and so on and so forth. I supported her at that point...

4.3.1.5. Recommendations for Further Improvements According to the Teacher

In order to learn about the teacher's perspective on improvements in this study, the researcher directed open-ended questions about what could be done to improve the action process if the process were done again. The content analysis of the collected data supported the researcher to reach two themes which are expanding parental involvement in OPAL and increasing the quality of parent-involved OPAL activities.

Table 4.29. *Recommendations for Further Improvements According to the Teacher*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Recommendations for Further Improvement	Expanding Involvement in OPAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • doing involvement in the winter season • conducting more involvement activity • organizing more play-based learning activities
	Increasing the Quality of Involvement in OPAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using more technology • using surveys • emphasizing assessment more

The first category illustrates the practices that can be followed for the purpose of increasing the frequency of parent-involved activities in the academic year. This category was constructed based on these codes; doing parental involvement in the winter season, conducting more parental involvement activities, and organizing more play-based learning activities. From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

...especially in my class, when there was something like ...project and graduation, it is too hard to do all things together.... we could have started at the beginning of the year so it would have been spread over a much wider period of time. From the beginning of the year....really wanted to do an activity in the schoolyard with snow...

The second of recommendations theme was named as increasing the quality of parent-involved OPAL activities. This category reflects the perspective of the volunteer teacher on what could be done to improve the activities and how activities could be organized in a practical way. The codes of this category were listed as using technology more in organizing the parental involvement activity, giving surveys before organizing the parental involvement activity, and emphasizing assessment more in the preparation process. From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

...even though we talked about assessment in the last cycles, I felt that the assessment part could be emphasized more because the parents already don't know how the activity worked...the assessment part should have been more visible with the flow of the event...

...actually, I would find it useful to have something like this: a calendar for each group, and the parents can choose something that suits them on that calendar and approve it, submit it. You know, instead of talking to each one of

them individually about whether you are available on this day or that day. It would be more practical... And I think it would be much easier to follow up here. Maybe we could reach the parent who has a problem with this issue more easily...

4.3.2. Perspectives and Experiences of the Parents

In order to explore and understand the changes in the parents' experiences and understanding throughout the research study, the researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews with five parents who also led the action cycles. The data collected from these five semi-structured interviews were analyzed through content analysis leading the researcher to reach six themes. These themes were listed as experienced improvements, experienced barriers, implementation considerations, descriptions, emotional state, and recommendations for further improvements. These themes were presented in detail in the following parts.

4.3.2.1. Experienced Improvements According to Parents

The theme of experienced improvements illustrates the changes parents directly experienced while participating in parent-involved activities. This theme was constructed through three categories: improvements regarding OPAL, improvements regarding parental involvement, and improvements regarding learning.

Table 4.30. *Experienced Improvements According to Parents*

Theme	Categories	Codes	
Experienced Improvements	Improvements Regarding OPAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • realizing OPAL benefits • understanding OPAL necessity • minimizing concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better classroom management • realizing learning also occurs outdoor • interacting with nature
	Improvements Regarding Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empathizing • overcoming involvement lack • recognizing the teacher as a guide • realizing school potential • understanding that involvement can happen anywhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding expectations • exchanging ideas effectively • strengthened communication • inspiring learning at home

Table 4.30. (continued)

Improvements Regarding Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understands integrated learning • realizing embodied learning • visualizing the learning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning about assessment • understanding learning outcomes
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The first category, improvements regarding OPAL, includes different codes focusing on how parents experience changes related to outdoor play and learning. These codes were listed as realizing the benefits of OPAL, understanding the necessity for OPAL, minimizing the concern about hygiene, supporting children to minimize their concerns, decreasing sensory sensitivity, realizing learning also occurs outdoors, providing better classroom management, and having the chance to interact with nature. From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

Ms. Melda

...this stepping out of the routine excited me a lot...you coming and starting this process with us. It was like turning right on a straight road. We used to think that education could only happen inside. I mean that there was not only one way, there was this way here. So it was something different. It gave us a different perspective. And it was very nice...

Ms. Perihan

...we put the toys in the mud and then washed them. If we had done it inside, it would have been a mess, but the children were freer in the schoolyard, they didn't have to worry about getting dirty. So yes, they were a bit more relaxed and free because they didn't have to break, spill, or clean...When they are free, when they are more relaxed, they learn better. We have no restrictions...

The second category focuses on improvements regarding parental involvement. This category was formed through the codes of overcoming the lack of parental involvement, empathizing with the teacher, recognizing the teacher as a guide, realizing the potential of the school, understanding that parental involvement can happen anywhere, understanding expectations, exchanging ideas effectively, more strengthened communication, and inspiring learning at home. From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

Ms.Melda

...I asked something about whether I was giving the right information here and there. But what was it about? The order. I mean, am I giving the correct order? I asked for help, because sometimes it gets forgotten. I was really excited at

that moment. I was excited because I felt like I was in something big. And I asked if I had given that sequence correctly...

Ms. Feriha

..the planning meeting was very important. Because I didn't know what I was going to do, I didn't know what was going to happen. But because Ms. Güneş gave me that information, I felt comfortable... That's why it went well, that sincerity between us. The children felt it too. That is of great importance...

The third category illustrates how parents' understanding on learning concept changed through their experiences in the study. Based on the analysis of collected data, these created codes formed the category; supporting the understanding of integrated learning, learning about how to assess an activity, understanding learning tools, realizing embodied learning, understanding the outcomes of the activity, and visualizing the learning process. From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

Ms. Parla

...I mean, the assessment is a thing. It's like a repetition, you know, the outcomes are emphasized. We are reminded of what we went through...

Ms. Eda

...The meeting was very useful. It was skills for me...It was flowers and so on. The meeting was useful for me. We didn't just do yoga movements, we talked about plants and flowers, so that was an advantage. Thanks to the meeting, we realized that we can combine it with different learning areas and subjects...

4.3.2.2.Experienced Barriers According to Parents

The interviews conducted by parents to evaluate whole process were also revealed what kind of barriers that volunteer parent participants experienced in the action research process. The collected data led the researcher to construct two categories which are self-related and school-related barriers.

Table 4.31. *Experienced Barriers According to Parents*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Experienced Barriers	Self-Related Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● trouble starting the activity ● confusion about role
	School-Related Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● overcrowded classroom ● struggling with the language ● not having enough time

The first category which name is self-related barriers was constructed through the formation of these codes, which are difficulty in initiating the activity and confused about the role at the beginning. From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

Ms. Perihan
 "...We talked about the process, but of course, I am not a teacher. I had some difficulty in the transition right away. My teacher helped me there. Now we are going to do this, now we are going to do that, and so on. She closed a gap there. She gave good reminders..."

The second category focuses on how school-related aspects constructed barriers for the implementation of the study in the process. Based on the analysis, these codes were created; in overcrowded classrooms, struggling with the language of implementation and not having enough time. From the interview, the following quote of Ms. Parla was given as an example for the category;

...so yes, the hot potato game was actually a good game. But it was a little difficult for children to think of it abstractly. You know, is that balloon a hot potato? Let's count. Let's burn my hand. You know, even though we said these things, they couldn't make them sit down. And when they did, the counting part was a little bit incomplete. Maybe the group was too big, It was the result of that. But it was still an enjoyable activity...

4.3.2.3.Implementation Considerations According to Parents

The theme of implementation consideration was created according to the analysis of collected data gathered through the question of what practices parents showed importance during the implementation of parent-involved activities. This theme includes two categories, which are teaching-related considerations and classroom management-related considerations.

Table 4.32. *Implementation Considerations According to Parents*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Implementation Considerations	Teaching Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving accurate information • being sure that children learn
	Classroom Management-Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acting according to plan • involving children
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicating well • maintaining attention

The first category portrays the practices that showed attention by parents while focusing on teaching during the activity implementation. This category includes the codes listed as providing accurate information, being sure that children learn, acting according to plan, and involving children in the process. The second category of the implementation considerations theme was named classroom-management-related considerations to explain the practices of parents to effectively manage the process of activity implementation. The codes of this category are communicating well with children, and focusing on maintaining attention. From the interviews, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

Ms.Eda

...I paid more attention to the attention of children...it was difficult to keep them all under control...I paid attention to whether they were learning, and whether they were doing the movements properly...

Ms.Parla

...I tried to establish a proper rapport ...listen to them one by one...I tried to focus on the open-ended questions written in the activity plan, especially the feedback with the children...

4.3.2.4.Emotional State of Parents

During the interview, the parents also reflected on how they feel while answering open-ended questions regarding to action process. The answers of parents were analyzed and the analyzed resulted in the formation of the emotional state theme describing parents' feelings, emotional situations and so on. This theme was constructed on two categories which are emotional state during planning and emotional state during implementation.

Table 4.33. *Emotional State of Parents*

Theme	Categories	Codes
Emotional State	During Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling included • feeling more ready • feeling free • enjoying collaboration
	During Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling happy • enjoying participation • being a role model • being more comfortable • getting excited • feeling confident

The first category, which illustrates the parents' emotions while planning the related action cycle, includes these codes; feeling included, feeling more ready, enjoying collaboration, feeling free to ask questions, and feeling free to share ideas. From the interviews, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

Ms.Melda

..I had some concerns before. It's not just your child there. You don't want to speak in a different way or show a different behavior. Children can directly imitate you. But through meetings, I was able to get ready by talking to you and Ms. Güneş so that I could feel that I belonged there during the activity...

Ms.Feride

...if I hadn't been able to participate, I would have felt a bit isolated...you know, the child is taking education in a separate place, you can't participate, you are outside. But when I was involved, I did it once, I wish I could do it more, I think it was good, it had a good effect...

The second category of the emotional state theme describes parents' emotions during the implementation of the parent-involved activity. This category was formed after the construction of codes, which are feeling like a child, feeling happy, enjoying participation, enjoying being with children, being a role model for other parents, being more comfortable, getting excited in the process, and feeling confident. From the interviews, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

Ms. Eda

...from the beginning to the end of the process, it was all very enjoyable. I can't say that this one was especially enjoyable. For example, yoga was already very fun for children. For me too. It was also nice to hide and find those flowers...

Ms. Melda

...I was the first to experience it, so I was even more excited. They even said, "You started it. You were the first. You raised the bar a bit. The children all talk about worms. They don't talk about anything else. I heard something like that from the moms. I like it a lot..."

4.3.2.5.Descriptions of Parents

The theme of descriptions was formed through the collected data regarding to answers of the questions asked to learn about what comes to parents' minds when they hear OPAL and parental involvement. The analysis led the researcher to reach three

categories which are describing the benefits of parental involvement, describing barriers to OPAL, and describing the benefits of OPAL.

Table 4.34. Descriptions of Parents

Theme	Categories	Codes
Descriptions	Describing Involvement Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attracting attention • increasing interest • more permanent learning • supporting out of school learning • supporting quality of time • making children happy • making children confident • making children excited • learning about the interactions
	Describing OPAL Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • losing interest with age • indoor-focused life • too much technology usage • being busy • increasing urbanization • inadequate schoolyard
	Describing OPAL Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discharging energy • benefiting from fresh air • being freer • being more comfortable • supporting brain development • supporting fine motor skills • supporting social skills • nature as learning tool • learning about nature • making learning more permanent • supporting learning by doing • enjoying more

The first category illustrates what participant parents think about the parental involvement's benefits in early childhood period. This category was constructed on these codes which are attracting attention, increasing interest in learning, making learning more permanent, supporting learning outside of the school, supporting quality of time at home, making children feel happy, making children feel confident, making children get excited, and providing information about the child's social interactions. From the interviews, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

Ms. Perihan

...When I say parent involvement, I mean the involvement of the child's parents in the child's own environment. Without this involvement, it would be as if the child went to school for a year but we could not be involved in the teaching and learning. But in this way, we had contact with his friends, we saw the activity areas, we saw his communication with the teachers, and the child felt valuable, he felt confident that his parents were with him...

Ms.Melda

...We continued after the activity... We literally memorized that storybook...Then my son now knows everything in it by heart. He can now tell us what the worm needs, how worms live, what we should pay attention to when throwing it in the garbage. He says this can dissolve in the soil, this cannot. Why did they throw plastic outside, it cannot dissolve....

...This needs to be in the garbage container. Here he says the worm cannot eat it. Why is it outside then, why is it in the soil? He is now questioning in this way. So it was good because without that event there wouldn't have been so much interest...

Following parental involvement, parents also reflected on OPAL, focusing on barriers and benefits. The second category of this theme describes what parents think about difficulties in OPAL. This category was formed after the grouping of codes which are losing interest with age, indoor-focused education, too much use of technology, more home-oriented life, changes in childhood, being busy, increasing urbanization, and inadequate schoolyard. From the interviews, the following quote from Ms.Parla was given as an example for the category;

...Children have to discharge their energy. That is why I think they should definitely go out and encounter fresh air. Even if it is just a walk, half an hour in winter...in today's conditions, we don't have such an alternative...he's always at the school until 6 pm...learning takes place in the natural environment...constantly structured environments kill children's creativity...

The last category of the theme focuses on what kind of descriptions parents shared regarding to OPAL benefits in early childhood education. This category was formed through diverse codes which were listed as considered discharging energy, benefiting from fresh air, being freer, being more comfortable, supporting brain development, supporting fine motor skills, supporting social skills, providing more stimuli, benefiting from nature as learning material, learning about nature, making learning more permanent, supporting learning by doing, more engaging, and enjoying more. The following quote of Ms. Perihan was given as an example for the category;

...children are much more comfortable and freer...there is no space that restricts them or different materials can be used outside...soil, and water...there can be more different materials and it's natural that way. The ones in the classroom are a bit more artificial...the child touches life a little more; they get a little closer to real life...examining the leaves, touching the texture, seeing the shape provides more permanent learning...

4.3.2.6.Recommendations for Further Improvements According to Parents

The last theme was named as recommendations for further improvement describing what could be done to improve the process if the action cycles wanted to be repeated

for one more time. This theme was constructed on the formation of two categories, which are expanding parental involvement in OPAL, and increasing the quality of parental involvement in OPAL activities.

Table 4.35. *Recommendations for Further Improvements According to Parents*

Theme	Categories	Codes	
Recommendations For Further Improvements	Expanding Involvement in OPAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs regular involvement • participating in more than one involvement activity • organizing large group involvement activities • organizing volunteer activities in winter • encouraging volunteering in field trips 	
	Increasing the Quality of Involvement in OPAL	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being a role model in the assessment • changing the assessment • conducting small group activities • providing longer warm-up </td> <td style="vertical-align: top; padding-left: 20px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving time to think • deepening the content • providing challenges • reminding the flow </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being a role model in the assessment • changing the assessment • conducting small group activities • providing longer warm-up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being a role model in the assessment • changing the assessment • conducting small group activities • providing longer warm-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving time to think • deepening the content • providing challenges • reminding the flow 		

The first category focuses on increasing the frequency of parent-involved activities throughout the academic year. This category involves the codes regarding needing regular parental involvement, participating in more than one parental involvement activity, organizing large group parental involvement activities, organizing volunteer activities in winter, and encouraging volunteering in field trips. From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

Ms. Eda

...even in the snow and rain, you can do activities, you dress accordingly, they could be shorter, but kids enjoy the snow, the rain, and sometimes the mud...

Ms.Melda

...not just one family, but 2-3 families can come together...the families can get to know each other and the children can get along this way. In other words, large parent participation...many families can be involved. Not only for education and learning, but also for families to meet, socialize and integrate...

Ms. Feride

...but I really wish this project had been done in previous years...at least once a year or once every three months, for example once in the fall or spring, it would have been great...

The second category of this theme was named as increasing the quality of parental involvement in OPAL activities. This category includes the codes of being a role model in the assessment, changing the assessment, conducting small group activities,

providing longer warm-ups, giving time to think, deepening the content, providing challenging activities, and reminding the activity flow. From the interview, the following quote was given as an example for the category;

Ms.Melda

...we had a good time, but we could have given a little more information on the subject...Maybe the children could have been asked one by one at the assessment, a single word. For example, if you were to describe it in one word, what would you say about this activity?...it would be fun...We couldn't talk fully there, we couldn't explain it fully. The children couldn't explain it either, they couldn't express themselves. Because we asked direct questions...But if you say a single word, the child says it in such a fun way...

Ms. Eda

...so there could have been more complex yoga poses. In the meeting, we thought that these poses would be enough but the children were really good so the activity took shorter and I had to do improvised yoga poses with the children. That's why there could have been other poses to develop them more...

Ms. Parla

...I mean, the group was crowded with children so it was very difficult to be able to handle all of them. Maybe it could have been played more comfortably with small groups. I am just thinking about whether it will be good to divide children into small groups...with fewer children to reach all of them. Still, I think that I communicated well with the children...

4.4. Summary of the Findings

4.4.1. Summary of the Need and Context Analysis

To examine the participants' understanding and experiences, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 preschool teachers and 17 parents whose children attend the school. Secondly, the OPAL practices of 12 teachers were observed during three months so observation data was collected from 15 sessions, which differed from 20 minutes to 60 minutes. Lastly, outdoor plans of the age groups were examined with document analysis. For this purpose, plans for six months were examined. The analysis of interview data demonstrated diverse experiences and understandings of parents on OPAL and parental involvement in early years.

Parents provided outdoor-related and parent-related descriptions. Outdoor-related descriptions were listed as descriptions regarding the schoolyard, risk, and weather. Parents explained the schoolyard as a productive area to support development and

learning. On the other hand, the schoolyard is also described as an uncontrolled area that can pose dangers to safety. By parents, the risk was described as unsafe situations such as falling, bumping, eating foreign material, and going out of school. The last description was constructed related to poor weather. According to parents, poor weather is the weather condition in which children experience physical discomfort because of extreme weather conditions like frost and storms. Parent involvement-related descriptions were listed as descriptions of involvement and significance of involvement. The parents described parental-involvement as a process of parents coming to school to do a learning activity in the classroom involving their children. Parents also described the significance of involvement regarding the exchange of information on the development process of children.

Parents reflected on what they know about and think about OPAL and parental involvement practices held in the school. In terms of OPAL, parents highlighted the activity types, activity duration, and communication on activity. The OPAL practices were listed as free play, nature examination, structured play, and botanic activities by parents. Furthermore, the frequency and duration were emphasized to be varied mostly according to the weather conditions. The communication on OPAL practices was emphasized to be constructed on the school's web application. In terms of parental involvement practices, parents pointed out that they experience involvement through communication, parenting, decision-making, and volunteering but they experience mostly communication and parenting as far as they reflected on. To illustrate, most of the parents emphasized regular sharing of information about children's development through different communication tools that are web applications and WhatsApp groups.

The parents also highlighted face-to-face meetings with the teachers and the school principal as beneficial to making recommendations on how to support their children's development outside of school. Moreover, parents shared what are they doing out of school with their children so they listed practices like going to the market, doing house chores, or playing in the park. When their ideas about OPAL in early childhood education were asked, parents shared their understandings about the benefits of OPAL on the development and learning experiences of children in their early years.

These benefits were listed for cognitive, physical, and social-emotional areas of development. Most of the parents emphasized that OPAL supports children to learn by doing so it makes learning more permanent. In terms of physical development, parents mostly focused on how OPAL supports the physical well-being of children through sunshine, fresh air, being active, and supporting motor skills. Furthermore, OPAL makes children feel better by promoting the feeling of being free, happy, and relaxed according to parents. In addition to this, children learn about social skills like waiting and sharing through their OPAL experiences as far as parents stated it.

While the parents believe in the benefits of OPAL, they also think that OPAL could carry some barriers. Regarding barriers, most of the parents reflected on their concerns related to safety and illnesses. Not involving regular and sufficient OPAL plan in the education program, being a newly graduated teacher, lack of OPAL policy, and inadequate classroom management were described as other barriers to OPAL according to parents. Additionally, socio-cultural changes like increasing urbanization, increasing work hours, advancement of technology, and getting used to spending more time indoors were also emphasized as the barriers to OPAL. Apart from the benefits and barriers of OPAL, parents also reflected on how OPAL can be enhanced in the school setting. Parents believed that OPAL practices could be enriched through strengthening parental involvement, re-arranging OPAL time, and setting an OPAL policy. In terms of strengthening parental involvement, more volunteer activities and parent seminars could be organized to learn expectations and minimize concerns as far as parents explained. Furthermore, parents highlighted that OPAL time could be re-arranged by providing more time, reorganizing the environment, and providing proper clothing for the weather conditions. The last recommendation of parents was about setting an OPAL policy by constructing a clear policy, which is not changed according to weather conditions or concerns.

Parents also explained what they were thinking about parental involvement in the early years. Based on parents' reflections, the benefits of parental involvement for children and parents were illustrated. Through involvement practices, parents become more able to empathize with teachers, strengthen communication, develop parenting skills, learn about their children's development, and trust the school more as far as parents emphasize.

Parents also expressed the benefits of involvement for children. The involvement of parents helping children in the transition process supports the quality of time spent at home, strengthens trust relationships, and attracts attention to the learning topic in terms of parents' point of view. Furthermore, parents also stated that involvement makes children feel happy, proud, and motivated. Parents also shared their understanding of how parental involvement could be enhanced through the agency of meeting the needs like organizing more volunteer activities and supporting collaboration. Apart from meeting the needs, some of the parents emphasized their diverse desires to be actively involved in the learning and development process of their children so the desire to be involved, contribute, and learn could be focused on while enhancing the involvement. Although most of the parents shared their understanding about the benefits of parental involvement, some of them highlighted the barriers like being unsure about the teaching competency of parents, not being able to take time off from work, and being a single parent.

Besides parents, the researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews to explore understanding and experiences of teachers regarding OPAL and parental involvement practices. For this purpose, open-ended questions were directed to the 12 teachers who are currently working in the school. Firstly, teachers were asked to describe what comes to their mind when they hear OPAL and parental involvement. Some of the teachers described OPAL as more valuable because it's less while some of the teachers describing OPAL as troublesome because of the lack of staff. Moreover, OPAL was described as a valuable opportunity to support different learning outcomes while it could be also formed based on just free-play according to teachers. Following the description of OPAL, teachers reflected on the risk descriptions by giving examples of falling, hitting, choking and running away from the school. Besides the risks of the outdoors, the teachers described what they understood from poor weather by emphasizing features like cold, wind, rain, thunderstorm and being under -5 degrees.

Describing the schoolyard function was another code constructed in analysis based on the teachers' responses. Teachers reflect on the schoolyard within diverse functions, which are an area to observe nature, a productive area where many activities can be done, a play area offering opportunities to play with open-ended materials, and a play area providing opportunities to enrich the games like hide and seek. Additionally,

teachers reflect on how they perceive the size of the schoolyard. The schoolyard size was described as large enough for children to play and conduct parental involvement activities by some teachers but others described being large as a barrier to ensure the safety of children. In addition to this, the schoolyard size was described as too small to observe children one-to-one and conduct structured learning and parental involvement activities. The teachers also described what they were thinking about the involvement of parents in the early childhood education process. Most of the teachers described involvement as coming to school to conduct activities or play with their children's class. Teachers highlighted that parental involvement needs to be in the process since parents are the best information source about children but there needs to be limits to involvement like not involving parents too much in making decisions about the process. According to teachers, parents could take different roles, which are learning leaders, material providers, experience transmitters, field experts, information providers, and implementers.

Practices of teachers were reported as related to parental involvement and steps of OPAL, which are planning, implementation, and assessment. In terms of the planning step, teachers emphasized that they are paying attention to learning outcomes, weather conditions, time, materials, environment, differences among children, attracting attention, child participation, and having adequate content knowledge about the OPAL topic while preparing their OPAL plans. Furthermore, teachers highlighted that ensuring safety, minimizing problematic behaviors, attracting attention, improving the teaching quality, managing time effectively, discharging energy, proper clothing, and weather conditions are significant aspects that they are paying attention during OPAL implementation. Moreover, teachers pointed out that the time and duration of their OPAL practices are changing with weather conditions. In this context, teachers stated the OPAL time as 15-20 min in poor weather and 45-50 min. in good weather. In addition to this, teachers generally emphasized that they are doing science and nature activities in the schoolyard.

Most of the teachers pointed out that they are not able to assess OPAL experiences. Just some of the teachers emphasized the OPAL assessment through usage of open-ended questions and observation for assessing children, conducting self-assessment, and activity assessment. Furthermore, it was emphasized that teachers generally

communicate with parents on the self-care and weather conditions regarding OPAL, through usage of communication tools which are school's web application, WhatsApp group and face-to-face meetings. In terms of involvement practices, it was reached that teachers conduct involvement practices through communicating with parents on the progress of their children, and also giving homeworks to support learning at home. Similar to OPAL practices, teachers mention their communication tools for involvement practices as school's web application, WhatsApp group and face-to-face meetings.

Teachers explained benefits of OPAL in terms of cognitive, physical and social-emotional development. According to teachers, OPAL practices support cognitive development through providing chances for learning by doing, which occurs with the help of sensory learning and play-based learning. Through OPAL practices, children also become aware of that learning also occurs in the outdoor environment from the viewpoints of teachers. In addition to learning, OPAL also emphasized to facilitate curiosity, creativity, attention span and memory according to teachers.

Teachers also pointed out that OPAL support children to develop skills related to comparison and risk taking. The second developmental area was emphasized as physical development that teachers observed benefits of OPAL on it. In this context, children's motor skills and physical well-being were listed as benefits of OPAL according to teachers. Furthermore, teachers emphasized that OPAL enables children to move and discharge their energy more besides benefiting from sunshine and fresh air. Lastly, teachers emphasized benefits on social-emotional development. Teachers shared their observations as observing children as more relaxed, happy, free, more motivated and patient during the implementation of OPAL practices.

Besides benefits of children, the teachers also pointed out barriers of OPAL. According to teachers, OPAL practices carry barriers related to social-cultural changes, adults, children and school. In terms of adult related barriers, teachers mostly reflected on concerns of teachers and parents. These concerns were argued as safety, illnesses and hygiene related concerns. In addition to these barriers, teachers also mention their concern about academic development of children as associated with completing the plans in the education program. Moreover, some of the teachers shared

their concern on experiencing conflicts with parents and school management, on the implementation of OPAL so they stated avoiding conflicts through doing the things that parents and management wants about the OPAL practices. The second category of barriers expressed to be related with children. Teachers highlight fall-related accidents, getting sick, not being able to understand body temperature, lack of OPAL experience, not dressing according to the season and not being able to focus as barriers resulted from children during the implementation of OPAL practices. Thirdly, teachers emphasized school-related barriers as work intensity, lack of staff, being a private school, crowded classroom, inadequate schoolyard, inadequacy of the materials, and the workshop system. Lastly, teachers noted sociocultural changes like the disappearance of neighborhood culture, indoor-focused living, safety concerns, being a nuclear family, and COVID-19.

According to teachers, OPAL practices could be enhanced through diverse practices that strengthen parental involvement and improve classroom management. In terms of supporting the involvement of parents in OPAL practices, teachers recommend that volunteer activities be done in the schoolyard. Furthermore, teachers specified that parents can be involved in not only just implementation but also parts of planning and assessment of the OPAL practice. Apart from involving parents more in the process, teachers also highlighted that they need to develop their classroom management practices if they want to enhance the OPAL. Teachers illustrated their recommendations through practices like the usage of nursery rhymes to attract attention, understanding children's needs, and managing time effectively.

Teachers also reflected on how involving parents in learning and development experiences provide benefits for not only children but also parents. Regarding benefits for parents, teachers pointed that parents become able to emphasize more and communicate more with teachers through involvement practices since they observe and be a part of what are teachers are doing in the process. Similarly, the concerns of parents are minimized since parents become more able to understand teacher practices when they experience these practices in the real context according to teachers. Moreover, parents have opportunities to spend quality of time with their children and feel better as far as teachers stated it. These involvement practices also support parents to understand development progress of their children since parents are able to observe

and compare their children with others in the same age group. Secondly, teachers reflected on what kind of benefits that they are observing for children resulted from the implementation of involvement practices. In this context, teachers shared their observation on how children feel happy, proud, and confident. Furthermore, involvement practice provides more permanent learning since it attracts attention of children more according to teachers' point of view. The last benefit emphasized as facilitating the school adaptation process by teachers.

Barriers of parental involvement practices also stated by teachers beside benefits. The first barrier was highlighted as adult-related barriers which are concern about having conflict with parents or school manager, inadequate classroom management, weak communication, discrepancy between theory and practice, concern about not meeting expectations, parents' over expectations, parents' judgmental attitude, parents' workload, and not being able to understand that learning occurs everywhere. Teachers emphasized school-related barriers as another focus regarding parental involvement. These school-related barriers were listed as not implementing volunteering because of COVID-19, lack of parental involvement in activity plans, inadequate learning environment, and being a private school. Lastly, teachers focused on child-related barriers, which are not being jules about sharing the parent and seeing parents as home reminders.

To understand the context and needs, the researcher also conduct 15 sessions of OPAL observations in different age groups, which varied from 20 minutes to 60 minutes. The observation data led the researcher to reach three themes, which are practices during OPAL time, OPAL materials, and OPAL roles. OPAL time practices were constructed within practices followed before, during, and after OPAL time. It was observed that teachers pay attention to clothing and remind classroom rules right before OPAL time.

During OPAL time, children were observed to have free playtime. Following free playtime, teachers were observed to implement science and nature OPAL activities focusing on exploring nature in the schoolyard. Close to the end of OPAL time, it was observed that teachers generally did not implement assessments to evaluate the conducted OPAL activity with children. Furthermore, the routines of changing

clothes, going to the toilet, and washing hands were observed after coming inside from the schoolyard. Following OPAL time, most of the teachers were observed to provide free time for children inside.

In terms of used materials, it was observed that open-ended, natural materials, storybooks, and structured toys are used in OPAL time. Moreover, teachers were observed to use the front yard to conduct their OPAL activities while a part of the backyard, involving a sand pool and tables, was not to be used during OPAL observation sessions. Teacher roles were the last theme reached through OPAL observation. During observations, the researcher observed teachers to take different roles, which are directors/redirectors, teachers as play-leaders, teachers as photographers, and teachers as co-players. The researcher observed mostly directors/redirectors role during OPAL time through observing teachers as giving directions about how the game needs to be played or ensuring safety of children.

Document analysis of monthly plans regarding OPAL was also conducted to understand OPAL activities in the schoolyard. For this purpose, the researcher analyzed the monthly plans starting from September to March so six six-month periods. The analysis illustrated monthly distribution of OPAL plans; activity types of OPAL plans, materials used in OPAL plans, and focused subjects in OPAL plans. In terms of distribution of OPAL activities, it was reached that the age group of 24-36-month-old children has the highest number of OPAL activities (n=27) while the 36-48-month-old and 48-60-month-old age groups have the least OPAL activity plans (n=22) during six months. Furthermore, it was found that most of the OPAL activities were written to be conducted in September (n=26) and October (n=22). November was found to be at least OPAL activities (n=3) were conducted with age groups in the schoolyard. Moreover, mostly science-based OPAL activities (n=46) were found to be implemented in the schoolyard unlike math activities (n=1). Regarding used material in OPAL plans, it was found that most other materials (n=33) that are ribbons, papers, pencils, baskets, balls, plates, glasses, magnifiers, flashcards, and ropes placed in plans. Following these materials, vegetation (n=24) was mostly used in the examined plans. Lastly, the document analysis revealed that OPAL plans mostly focused on the vegetation subject (n=25) related to examining nature in the schoolyard.

4.4.2. Summary of the Action Cycles

According to need and context analysis, five action cycles were implemented with the cooperation of the volunteer teacher whose pseudonym is Ms. Güneş. With the cooperation of Ms. Güneş and the researcher, the five cycles were conducted in turn by parents with the following pseudonyms; Ms. Melda, Ms. Eda, Ms. Perihan, Ms. Feriha, and Ms. Parla.

Before the first action cycle, which is the first parental-involved activity, the volunteer parent is invited to the school to have a meeting with the researcher and the teacher. To the first volunteer parent, the researcher and teacher offered the compost activity which was planned based on children's interest related to examining worms in the schoolyard. In this meeting, firstly teacher and researcher focused on the aims of the activity, then the steps of the learning process, namely what parents need to do, and activity materials were discussed with the volunteer parent. At the end of this cycle, the researcher had a short interview with the volunteer parent on her OPAL experience in the school. After the researcher conducted an interview with the teacher on the activity. This interview led the teacher and the researcher to plan a parental involvement activity including more visuals like flashcards and picture books supporting to internalization of the topic. Secondly, the process was thought to be more child-centered in a way that information (like how to compost) is explained in a way that children can understand easily.

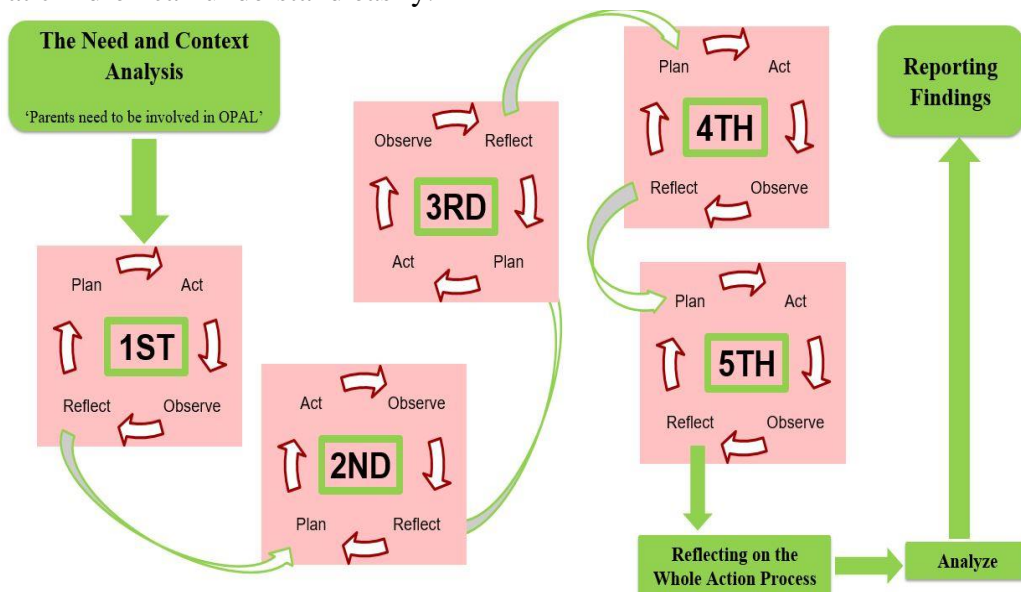


Figure 4.16 The Whole Action Research Process

Based on the reflections made for the first action cycle, the second action cycle was planned with the volunteer teacher. In this cycle, another volunteer parent was invited to school to talk about the activity plan with the researcher and teacher. This cycle was focused on the life cycle of a flower. Considering the volunteer parent's occupation which is pilates instructor, the garden yoga was included to the process besides different flower flashcards, and flashcards demonstrating the flower life cycles. For this plan, the parent tried to explain the life cycle of a flower firstly talking about the process with the help of flashcards, and conducting some specific yoga movements representing the life cycle's steps like seed, growing, and blooming. At the end of the cycle, the researcher had interviews with the parent and the volunteer teacher and it was reflected that the parental involvement activity needs to include sensory learning. Following this meeting, a parent newsletter was prepared by the researcher and teacher. This newsletter focused on benefits of spending time outdoors for early childhood period and what parents can do with their children in outside. The ideas of parents were taken after they examined this newsletter so the parents shared their ideas on how this newsletter can be developed in terms of being more beneficial to help them parenting in the framework of OPAL.

The third action cycle was planned to be focused on sensory learning. For this purpose, a muddy play activity was planned emphasizing the senses of touching and hearing. After the activity was planned, another parent volunteer was invited to school to talk over the plan with the researcher and the teacher. In this activity plan, the parent focused on introducing different animals. Therefore, different animal voices were included in the process. Following hearing and recognizing these animal voices, the parent read a storybook about animal life, and then animals integrated muddy game was played with the children. At the end of this cycle, the reflection process revealed that the activity process could support children's high-order thinking skills instead of directly explaining and directing them during the learning steps. For example, the parent can just show the materials of the activity and ask what can we do with these materials for this activity. Furthermore, creativity skills was planned to be more focused on for the following activity process.

For the fourth action cycle, the researcher and the teacher planned a parental-involved activity focusing on mud paint. After planning the activity, another volunteer parent

was invited to the school to hold a meeting about the plan with the researcher and the teacher. During the meeting, the story-telling part was also added to the plan within the consideration of the parent is bilingual who can speak English fluently. The activity was implemented with the children to let them try making mud, mixing food coloring with the mud, and painting with mud paint as they wanted after listening to a story related to a child who loved to paint with mud. The reflection part of the fourth activity revealed that the parents also need some specific information regarding the interact with the children, like how to read a story to be appropriate to the age group, how to ask guiding questions, and so on.

The last action cycle focused on supporting the perspective of the volunteer parents on how to interact with children efficiently. For this purpose, diverse examples were discussed like what kind of questions needs to be asked and how scaffolding needs to be provided during the activity. In the framework of this focus, the activity was planned as a sensory activity integrated with math. In this activity, the volunteer parent used water balloons to work on numbers and simple addition operations through effective interaction practices with children in the age group. After completing the fifth activity, the researcher and Ms. Güneş discussed that the needs identified after the fourth cycle were observed to be met with the implementation of the fifth cycle. Due to this reason, the researcher and Ms. Güneş decided to end the implementation of the action cycle process.

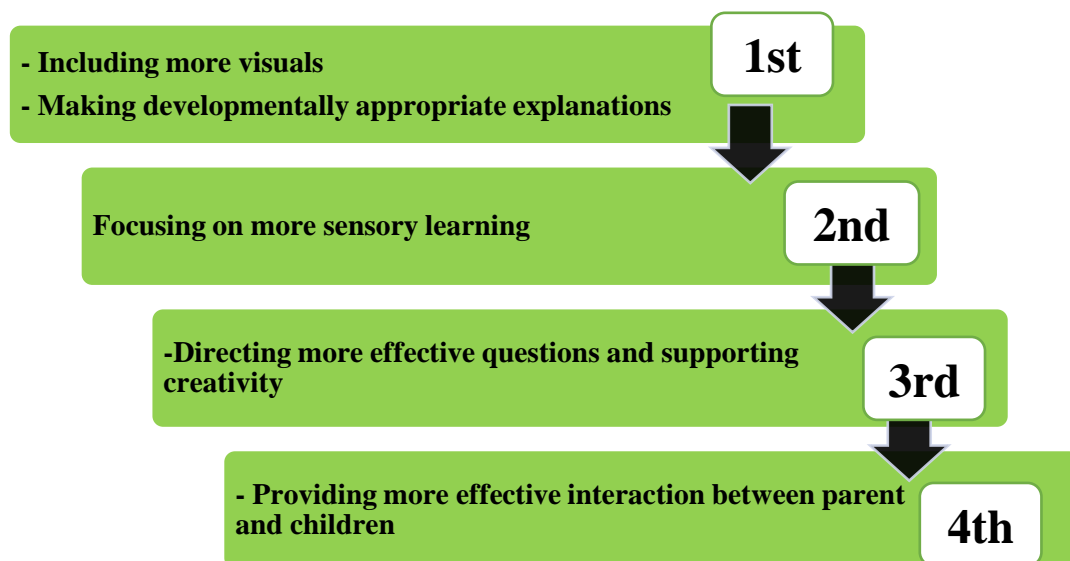


Figure 4.17 *The Needs based on the Cycles*

4.4.3. Summary of the Overall Evaluation

After the completion of action cycles, the researcher conducted the overall evaluation regarding the whole action process by implementing semi-structured activities with Ms. Güneş and the parents who led the parental involvement activities.

The conducted overall evaluation with Ms. Güneş demonstrated how her understanding and experiences changed throughout the action process. These changes were illustrated through the themes of experienced improvements, experienced barriers, implementation considerations, descriptions, and recommendations for further improvements. In terms of experienced improvement, Ms. Güneş stated that she became more able to understand OPAL benefits which are providing more teachable moments, supporting playfulness more, and providing better classroom management. The second focus reflected by Ms. Güneş was related to parental involvement. As far as she stated, she became more able to understand the necessity of involvement, overcome the lack of involvement, increase interaction, strengthen communication, empathize guide parents more, and so on. Regarding the experienced barriers, Ms. Güneş highlighted that she struggled to reach parents and explain the importance of parental involvement at the beginning of the study. Furthermore, Ms. Güneş emphasized that she paid attention to supporting the involvement of parents in the process through learning about their previous experiences, trying to take the role of being a guide, directing to experiential learning, supporting the understanding of integrated learning, supporting parents to be leaders, and demonstrating how assessment can be done. Moreover, Ms. Güneş provided descriptions related to the benefits of involvement and OPAL in the overall evaluation process.

According to Ms. Güneş, involvement creates excitement, attracts attention, and supports collaboration and understanding of learning assessment. In terms of OPAL benefits, Ms. Güneş pointed out benefits that are discharging energy, being more comfortable, supporting observing skills, and social interactions. Lastly, Ms. Güneş provided recommendations related to expanding involvement in OPAL and increasing the quality of involvement in OPAL. Ms. Güneş pointed out that the process could be more enriched through involvement in the winter season, conducting more involvement activities, and organizing more play-based learning activities. In addition

to these recommendations for expanding involvement, Ms. Güneş also highlighted using technology more, using surveys, and emphasizing assessment more to increase the quality of involvement in OPAL.

The conducted overall evaluation with five volunteer action cycle parents demonstrated how their understanding and experiences changed throughout the action process. These changes were illustrated through the themes of experienced improvements, experienced barriers, implementation considerations, emotional state, descriptions, and recommendations for further improvements. By the help of this action study, it was reached that parents become more able to understand the benefits of OPAL through gaining experiences in the real context. These involvement experiences also facilitated parents to understand the necessity of OPAL more through helping them to interact more with the nature, minimize their concerns toward OPAL and understand learning also occurs in the outdoor environment.

Secondly, parents expressed what kind of changes they experiences regarding the involvement throughout the process. As far as parents expressed, they become more able to empathize with the teacher, understand the potential of school and their expectations, and communicate more with the teacher through exchanging ideas effectively. Furthermore, the process helped to minimize the lack of involvement, emphasize the role of teacher as guide and create the understanding that learning can occur everywhere. In terms of experiences improvements, parents also gained insight about integrated learning, embodied learning, assessment, learning outcome and visualizing the learning process. Regarding experienced barriers, it was reached that some of the parents struggled about starting the activity and understanding their role as teaching leader. Furthermore, some of the parents also pointed out that they had trouble because the large number of children, implementation language and not having enough time to conduct each activity step in deep. Parents highlighted that they tried to pay attention some practices associated with teaching and classroom management.

In terms of teaching-related practices, parents pointed out the aspects like providing accurate information, being sure that children learn, acting according to plan, and involving children in the process. Moreover, parents tried to communicate well with children, and focus on maintaining attention. The third theme reached through parent

interview was emotional state of parents during the action process. Parents highlighted that they feel included and ready in the planning process. In addition to this, parents stated that they feel like cooperate with the teacher effectively since they enjoy planning process, share their ideas and ask questions freely. While implanting the activities, parents described their feelings as happy, comfortable, excited and confident besides feeling like children.

While conducting interviews with parents for overall evaluation, parents also provide some descriptions related to benefits of parental involvement, describing barriers to OPAL, and describing the benefits of OPAL. In terms of the parental involvement benefits, parents focused on how involvement activities makes learning permanent through attracting attention and increasing interest. Moreover, these activities also makes children to feel confident, happy and excited from the viewpoints of parents. In addition to this, parental involvement activities also support learning outside of the school, and quality of time spending at home according to parents. Parents also can observe the social interactions of their child as far as they pointed out. In terms of benefits on OPAL, parents emphasized that OPAL supports children to discharge their energy while making them feel freer and comfortable. Additionally, OPAL also facilitate the learning to be more permanent through making children to engage more in the process and enjoying the process more from the point of view of parents. Through OPAL, children also learn about nature while developing skills related to cognitive, social, and motor areas as far as parents highlighted.

Lastly, parents provided some recommendations with a focus of expanding parental involvement in OPAL and increasing the quality of parental involvement in OPAL activities. In terms of expanding parental involvement in OPAL, parents recommend that involvement practices need to be implemented regularly. Furthermore, parents also shared their desire to participate in more than one parenting activity and be involved in different involvement activities such as large group (whole-class) activities and field trips or activities organized in the winter season. Related to increasing the quality of parental involvement in OPAL activities, parents also shared recommendations that are being a role model in the assessment, changing the assessment, conducting small group activities, providing longer warm-ups, giving time

to think, deepening the content, providing challenging activities, and reminding the activity flow.

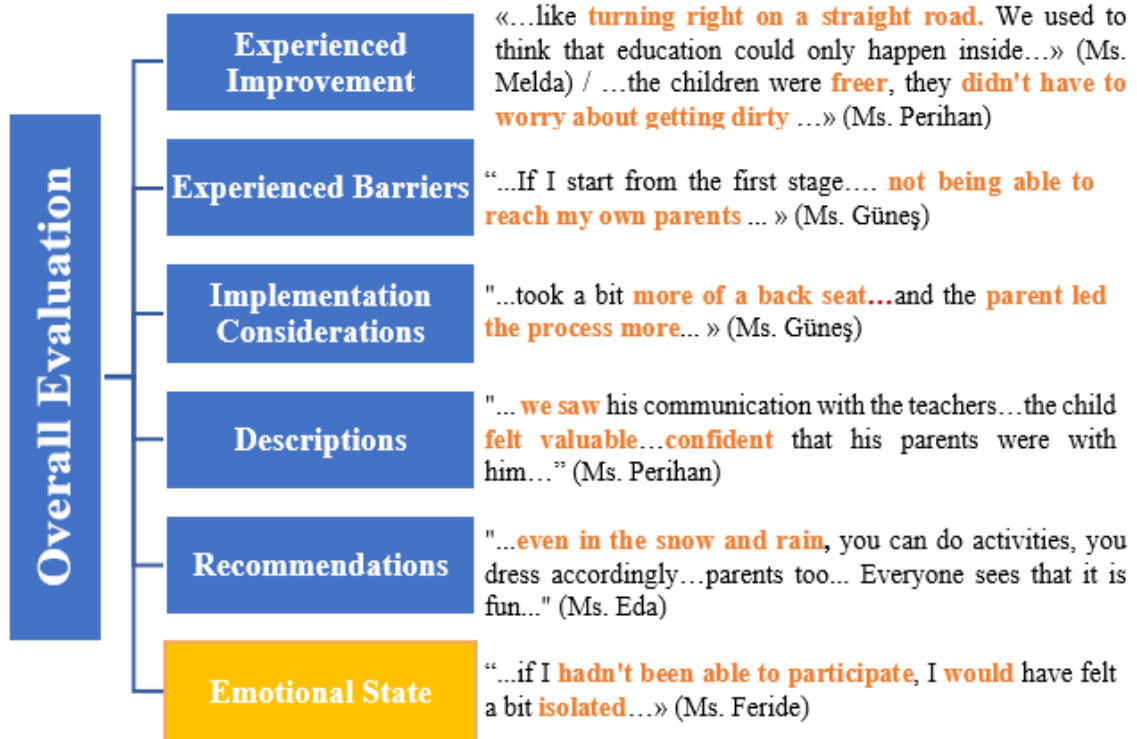


Figure 4.18 Summary of Overall Evaluation

Note. Emotional state is the sixth theme which was reached through interviews with parents.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the current study's findings within the guidance of the relevant literature. In parallel to this, this chapter involves four main sections. In the first section, the key findings of the study are discussed within the context of the current relevant literature. The second section focuses on some implications derived from the key findings for educators and policymakers in the area. Moreover, the limitations and recommendations for further studies are discussed in the last section. This participatory action study was conducted to enhance the involvement of parents in the OPAL activities conducted in the schoolyard. In the first step of the study, the need and context analysis was conducted to understand the perspectives and experiences of teachers and also parents as related to OPAL and parental involvement in early childhood education. For this purpose, the researcher collected qualitative data from 12 teachers and 17 parents who volunteered to be involved in the study. Semi-structured interviews, observation sessions of OPAL practices, and document analysis of OPAL plans were conducted in this step. After understanding the context and needs, the researcher continued to work with a volunteer teacher who was motivated to learn more about involving parents in the OPAL process. With the guidance of the researcher, the volunteer teachers implemented five different action cycles each cycle focused on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of a parent-involved OPAL activity. Each cycle was planned based on the needs of the previous cycle in the process. After the completion of action cycles, the researcher conducted semi-structured individual interviews with five parent participants and also with the teacher to examine and understand what kind of changes participants experienced throughout the implementation of this participatory action study. The following figure demonstrating the key findings reached with this study as associated with the research questions.

5.1. Key Findings

The key findings of the conducted participatory action study were given based on the research questions in the following tables.

Table 5.1. *Key Findings Regarding the First Research Question*

How do teachers and parents perceive and interpret parental involvement in OPAL?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Participants believe OPAL and parental involvement benefits for children.- The benefits of parental involvement were also described for parents via examples like observing their children’s development, supporting trust relationships with school, spending quality time with their children, and so on.- Participants have different understandings regarding OPAL-related aspects such as schoolyard, risk, and poor weather conditions.- Participants mostly described involvement as doing activities in the school with parents.- Participants emphasized OPAL barriers like increasing urbanization, advancement of technology, the disappearance of neighborhood culture, effects of COVID-19, increasing work hours, and so on.- The barriers to involvement were described as over-expectations, judgmental attitude, concern about having conflict, inadequate classroom management, excess workload, being a single parent, and being unsure about parents’ teaching competency.- Parents and teachers recommended strengthening involvement to enrich OPAL.

Table 5.2. *Key Findings Regarding the Second Research Question*

What are the experiences of teachers and parents with parental involvement in OPAL?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Parental involvement in OPAL occurred at the level of communication and parenting.- Volunteer involvement activities has not been implemented approximately six years.- Parents generally know about the OPAL duration, frequency, and activity types.- Free play and nature activities were found to be implemented mostly in the schoolyard- OPAL plans are mostly implemented in warm months, and younger groups have more OPAL plans.- Parents have limited OPAL experiences with their children out of the school.- Teachers are not implementing regular OPAL time because of barriers like getting ill and safety concerns.- Teachers were mostly observed to take the role of director/redirector, and most of the teachers do not assess OPAL time.

Table 5.3. Key Findings Regarding the Third Research Question

What are the characteristics of action-based practices enhancing the involvement of parents more in OPAL?

- The conducted action-based practices which are parent-teacher meetings and parent-involved volunteer activities, some characteristics were reached to be important to support enrichment of involvement in the process.
 - These characteristics were emphasized to be establishing clear communication with the parent, taking the role of a guide for teacher, supporting the parent's leading role, planning accessible volunteer activities that parents can implement, giving space to the parent to discover the potential of OPAL and involvement, and supporting parent to contribute the OPAL plan.
-

Table 5.4. Key Findings Regarding the Fourth Research Question

How has parental involvement changed through action-based practices regarding OPAL?

- More effective communication and cooperation were established by involving parents in the planning of OPAL activity. In this way, parents also felt more confident to be teaching leaders during the implementation of the OPAL activity.
 - With each repeated action cycle, the volunteers tried to create and implement an OPAL activity focused on more interaction, sensory learning, and focusing on the parent as the teaching leader.
 - The lack of parental involvement was minimized according to participants.
 - The volunteer teacher expressed the change in her perspective about being a guide, effective interaction and cooperation, OPAL benefits, and the necessity of involvement in OPAL.
 - The five volunteer parents expressed a change in their perspective about understanding the OPAL benefits better, understanding that learning also occurs outside, and feeling more included, In addition to this, some of the parents described the minimization of hygiene and safety concerns in the outdoor.
-

5.2. Discussion of the Findings

The need and context analysis was conducted with the participation of 12 teachers and 17 parents. To understand the participants' perspectives and experiences regarding OPAL, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, observed OPAL practices, and analyzed the OPAL activity plans.

The need and context analysis demonstrated that participants believe in the benefits of OPAL on the learning and development experiences of children in the early years. Not only parents but also teachers discussed the benefits of OPAL in terms of cognitive, motor, and social-emotional areas of development. Regarding cognitive development, all participants emphasized learning by doing through using the senses and benefiting from play. In addition to this, participants pointed out that the outdoor environment takes more attention, and facilitates curiosity and creativity. Due to these reasons, learning becomes more permanent when it occurs outdoors according to participants. In terms of physical development, teachers emphasized the acquisition of motor skills like grasping and running while parents were more focused on physical well-being through sunshine, fresh air, and being active. Both groups of participants agreed on the point that OPAL makes children feel better by promoting the feeling of being free, happy, motivated, and relaxed since children become more able to move and use their bodies to discharge their energy. In addition to this, children learn about social skills like working in groups, waiting, and sharing besides socializing with others according to participants.

The reached findings on benefits of OPAL for development and learning are parallel to the findings of diverse studies in the related area. In these studies, it was emphasized that outdoor environments afford to assist the well-being and physical activity of children in the early childhood period (Sando, 2019; Sando & Sandseter, 2022). The benefits of the outdoors on the development of physical skills were also emphasized by Fjørtoft (2004) as one of the crucial findings of the researcher's experimental study. Besides physical skills, the conducted mixed-method systematic review by Johnstone and others (2022) demonstrated that positive associations exist between outdoor activities and children's social-emotional skills besides biophilia, self-regulation, and nature awareness.

Even though both teachers and parents emphasized these benefits in terms of different developmental perspectives, it was found that teachers' OPAL activities are not regular and systematic. This finding could be the consequence of experienced OPAL barriers to effectively implementing OPAL activities in the schoolyard. These barriers were mostly emphasized, as a result of the participants' concerns. In this regard, most of the barriers were highlighted as being caused by parents' concerns about safety and

getting ill. To illustrate, some parents shared how they see the outdoors as an uncontrolled area involving many risks. At that point, parents described the risk as falling, bumping, eating foreign material, and going out of school. Parents emphasized that it is hard to take responsibility for all children and ensure their safety in the schoolyard. These findings are parallel to the findings of a cross-cultural study conducted by Ivrendi and others (2019) to examine Turkish and Norwegian children, parents, and teachers' perspectives on play. The researchers demonstrated that Turkish mothers are more concerned about injuries and being ill related to playing outside compared to Norwegian mothers.

Besides safety, it was seen that participants carry a concern about getting sick if the child has OPAL time in winter involving mostly cold weather conditions. Being sure that not every child gets a cold is a difficult task for teachers because they are dealing with a large number size of children in classrooms according to parents. Through the interviews and observations, it was found that the concern of getting sick limits teachers from providing regular OPAL time, which is changing with the different weather conditions because teachers avoid experiencing conflicts with parents and the school manager when children get sick. Similar to these concerns, teachers were also mostly observed to take the role of director/redirector who gave warnings like being careful while running to be sure about the safety of children in the play. These findings are also parallel that even though parents believe in the benefits of outdoor, they restrict their children's outdoor activities because of their different concerns and inadequacy of environmental conditions (Mart, 2021; Kandemir & Sevimli-Celik, 2021; Cevher-Kalburan, 2014; Küçükkurt, 2021; Tunçeli & Şenöz, 2022; Yalçın&Tantekin-Erden, 2021).

The same schoolyard was described differently by the participants. While some parents described the schoolyard as a productive area, some of them described it as an uncontrolled area. Similarly, some of the teachers described the schoolyard as quite adequate to conduct different learning activities while some of them described the schoolyard as inadequate to do parental involvement activities. This finding could take place due to the diversity of participants' demographic characteristics, culture, experiences, and how they understood outdoor education. Yalçın and Tantekin-Erden (2021) highlighted that culture and geography as some of the significant aspects

shaping individuals's behaviors and beliefs so a thing could be well for someone while not good for another person.

Most of the teacher and parent participants described parental involvement as just coming to school and engaging in an activity with children. This finding may have been caused by participants' misconception about that involvement just occur in the school environment. In contrast to this finding, Güzelyurt et al., (2019) demonstrated that preschool teachers described parental involvement as communication between teachers and parents in the study conducted with 36 teachers to determine their perspective on parental involvement. When it comes to the involvement in OPAL, it was illustrated that parental involvement regarding OPAL just occurs through communication which teachers generally give information regarding whether they are conducting OPAL time on that day or not. In addition to this, parents expressed the desire to take feedback as specific to their child was emphasized due to their curiosity about aspects like what their child is doing or how her social interactions with others during the OPAL time.

In terms of assessment and evaluation of OPAL, most of the teachers were observed to not implement assessment and evaluation for OPAL time. Even though the teachers emphasized that they are benefiting from observation during OPAL, no usage of the assessment record tool was observed to be used during OPAL time. Safety concerns and lack of staff could be reasons for not using assessment tools because teachers expressed concern about accidents that occur while they taking observation notes. This finding was also supported by Gelebek-Üstün and Uzun (2020) who emphasized that teachers have a more positive attitude about assessment if there is someone more in the class to take care of the children while the teacher is assessing the process.

Parents generally know about OPAL time in terms of activity types and duration of the activity since the OPAL assessment was not implemented by many teachers. In terms of activity types, it was reached that parents just consider children to engage in free play or botanic activities in the schoolyard. The examined OPAL plans were also mostly found to be science and nature activities focusing on the vegetation subject and using vegetation as learning materials. The examined OPAL plans also illustrated that age groups generally implement OPAL activities in months involving better weather

conditions. In addition to this, it was reached that younger age groups have more OPAL activities to do in the plans. Furthermore, children's OPAL experiences with parents are limited since parents emphasize that they mostly engage in free play in the parks if they can find time from their work and school as far as teachers stated it

Another barrier is explained as the intensive education flow involving teachers' efforts to complete planned indoor activities and intensive branch courses like robotic coding and Orff. Some of the parents also expressed their wishes for their children to have more OPAL time but they explained that the teachers conveyed this intensity to parents as a reason for not going out. The teacher participants who put forward the intense education program as an OPAL barrier also supported this finding. This finding could be reached because of the academic concern of parents. Many schools are reducing the OPAL time to provide more structured learning activities inside of the school because of academic concerns (Bullard, 2014). Similarly, Burgess and others (2014) also pointed out that parents prefer schools with higher academic standards so the academic concern is mostly directed to them to choose the suitable school for their children.

The intense education program was also reached as an OPAL barrier by Ata (2016) who found that a high number of indoor activity plans limits teachers to create time for outdoor activities and also demonstrated a similar finding. The current study also pointed out barriers like increasing urbanization, advancement of technology, the disappearance of neighborhood culture, social effects of COVID-19, increasing work hours of parents, getting used to spending time indoors, and increasing concern on providing safety were emphasized by both parents and teachers as the other barriers of OPAL in early childhood period. Similarly, Waller and others (2010) also highlighted that the opportunities for OPAL decrease day by day in American and European schools because of too much focus on indoor living. Furthermore, characteristics of children's outdoor activities changed after Covid-19 according to findings of the study conducted by Bozkurt (2021). The researcher revealed that fewer children visit outdoor playgrounds and they play less outdoors compared to times before COVID-19.

Teachers highlighted that they are generally communicating with parents more about the topics of activity duration and providing care like clothing or hygiene in terms of OPAL time. Despite the usage of the school web application tool mostly, participants also highlighted different communication tools like WhatsApp groups and face-to-face meetings. Besides involving parents at the communication level, it was found that the school also supports parenting in terms of parental involvement. In other words, both teachers and parents gave examples of how the school manager or teacher guides parents when they have a conflict about supporting the development of the child out of the school. A similar finding was also demonstrated by the study conducted by Ogelman (2014) who found that individual meetings are the easiest and most common parental involvement practice preferred by preschool teachers. Ok (2016) also demonstrated that teachers generally involve parents by providing daily briefings via messages or phone calls. In contrast to the finding, which is related to communication, in the current study, Güzelyurt et al., (2019) illustrated that communication is the least parental involvement practice implemented by preschool teachers compared to in-class volunteer activities.

On the other hand, it was found that the school has not been implementing volunteer parental-involvement activities for a long time which is approximately 6 years starting from COVID-19. The decision to implement volunteer activities was taken with the starting of this action research study so all age groups started to implement volunteer activities. Nevertheless, generally, it was observed that these volunteer parental involvement activities were conducted in the indoor environments of the school. Kutlu-Abu and Kayar (2020) who examined preschool teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding parental involvement in and out of the school also reached a similar finding. The researchers conducted interviews with seven teachers, and they concluded that teachers prefer to conduct involvement activities inside of the classroom because of diverse reasons such as parents' concerns and biases regarding OPAL, concerns about ensuring safety, changing weather conditions, and so on. The researchers also emphasized that inadequate cooperation between teachers and parents, and also not providing enough information about OPAL activities could be the reasons of not preferring to involve parents in OPAL.

Before the OPAL time, teachers are observed to remind the rules and pay attention to clothing according to weather conditions. During OPAL time, children are generally observed to have free play, and teachers are generally observed to conduct nature-related activities like examination of leaves and providing children with structured play experiences. Besides vegetation, teachers were observed to use materials like storybooks, open-ended materials like rope, and structured toys to conduct OPAL time. The observation data on OPAL materials and activity types are parallel to document analysis which also demonstrated that OPAL activities are mostly conducted as nature examination activities benefiting from vegetation as learning materials. Similarly, Çetken and Sevimli-Çelik (2018) reached that children benefit from natural materials like pine cones to construct and maintain their outdoor play.

The conducted interviews with teachers and parents also assisted in the formation of some recommendations on how OPAL can be enhanced. Strengthening parental involvement, re-arranging OPAL time, and setting an OPAL policy were given as recommendations by parents. As the common answer, strengthening parental involvement was also given by teachers as a recommendation to enhance OPAL but teachers also said that they need to improve their classroom management practices to enhance OPAL. This conclusion may have been reached because of teachers' low self-efficacy regarding classroom management in outdoor environment. Managing class was also described as an OPAL barrier by the studies conducted by diverse studies conducted with Turkish preschool teachers (e.g., Çetken & Sevimli-Çelik, 2018; Kutlu-Abu & Kayar, 2020)

Strengthening parental involvement, which both teachers and parents recommend, was recommended through the ways which are organizing parental involvement volunteer activities in the schoolyard. Teachers highlighted parents' involvement in these volunteer activities in terms of not only the implementation step but also the planning and assessment steps of the activity. Similar to teachers, parents emphasized the need for more collaboration between them and teachers. In addition to this, parents also recommend the organization of parent seminars on OPAL besides volunteer activities in the schoolyard. Some of the parents also highlighted that they desire to be involved more in the education experiences of their children to contribute to these experiences. Burçak (2024) also recommends that teachers' sharing of

outdoor activities organized as part of family participation and children's outdoor experiences in various bulletins, bulletin boards, parent meetings, web pages, or communication groups could play an effective role in informing families

All participants emphasized the benefits of parental involvement in terms of children and parents. In terms of children, it was indicated that school adaptation is getting easier for new children if their parents are involved in the process more. This benefit was exemplified by the organization of an orientation program by most of the parents. Furthermore, the relationship between the child and the parents was emphasized to be stronger through supporting trust and the quality of time they spend together with the help of involvement practices. In addition to this, children are described as happier, more confident, and prouder through the implementation of parental involvement. Participants also observed effects in terms of learning for children by highlighting that volunteer activities attract more attention of children to the learning topic and make them more motivated to learn. In this way, learning becomes more permanent according to participants. Permanent learning was emphasized as a benefit also in another study, which was conducted by Kutlu-Abu and Kayar (2020) to examine teachers' perspectives on parental involvement. Similar findings were also reached in the study conducted by Tezel-Şahin et al. (2024). In this study, which was conducted through interviews with 23 teachers, the researchers demonstrated what teachers think about emphasizing involvement benefits such as increasing happiness, being more motivated to come to school, socializing with others, stronger communication between the child and parent, and so on.

Regarding benefits for parents, the participants described that involvement practices facilitate parents to observe the development of their children while supporting their parenting skills. Moreover, the communication and trust relationship between the parents and the teacher becomes stronger while parents empathize more with the teacher. In addition to this, teachers highlighted that parents feel more like partners when parental involvement practices are included in the school. In the study conducted by Tezel-Şahin et al. (2024), it was also highlighted that involvement practices support the trust relationship between the school and parents, increase parenting skills, learn about the development, and facilitate quality of time spent with the child.

The barriers to parental involvement were emphasized to be being unsure about the teaching competency of parents, not being able to take time off from work, and being a single parent. Teachers who also emphasized that parents' over-expectations and their judgmental attitude create barriers for them also give the workload of parents as a barrier. In addition to this, teachers exemplified the concern about having conflict with parents, inadequate classroom management, and concern about not meeting expectations as barriers to parental involvement.

After determining the needs and understanding the context, the researcher and the volunteer teachers start the plan for the first action cycle, which will be implemented to meet the needs regarding the enhancement of the involvement of parents in OPAL activities. Each cycle was planned based on the needs, which were understood with the evaluation of the previous action cycle. Through implementing action based practices which are parent-teacher meetings and parent involved volunteer activities, the process facilitate the formation of some implementation characteristics. These characteristics were listed as establishing clear communication with the parent, taking the role of a guide, supporting the parent's leading role, planning accessible volunteer activities that parents can implement, giving space to parent to discover the potential of OPAL and involvement, and supporting parent to contribute the OPAL plan. In all, five different action cycles were implemented with the participation of five different volunteer parents who took the role of teaching leader in the cycles.

The whole process of planning, implementing, and evaluating five action cycles led the researcher the reach some findings. Firstly, by involving parents in the planning process of OPAL activity, the teachers and parents become more able to communicate effectively and cooperate to enrich the OPAL experience of children. To illustrate the role of guidance and the role of teaching leadership were more emphasized in the planning process. In addition to this, involving parents in planning facilitates them to feel more confident in the implementation process. Furthermore, the volunteer teacher tried to increase the interaction, involve more sensory learning, and emphasize the teaching role of parents more with each repeated cycle. After the completion of five action cycles to enhance the involvement of parents in OPAL activities, the researcher conducted an overall evaluation to understand the changes in experiences and perspectives of participants regarding parental involvement in OPAL. For this

purpose, the researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews with the volunteer teacher and five volunteer parents. The collected data in the overall evaluation process demonstrated how the volunteer teachers' and parents' experiences but also perspectives changed throughout the process.

In terms of the changes that occurred in the experiences and perspectives of the volunteer teacher whose pseudonym is Ms. Güneş, the lack of parental involvement in OPAL was described to be minimized. In this context, Ms. Güneş described her experiences as focusing more on being a guide for parents, trying to communicate effectively, and increasing the interaction. Besides these changes, Ms. Güneş reflected on the change that she became more able to understand the necessity of parental involvement outdoors when she experienced benefits like open communication with parents, understanding parents' expectations, learning about parents' perspectives, and cooperating with parents for the benefit of children from the context of OPAL in early childhood education.

Ms. Güneş emphasized that she better understood the effects of OPAL on the learning and development of children through her OPAL observations on providing more teachable moments, supporting the playfulness of parents more, providing better classroom management, and motivating children to be more curious and paying attention to learning topic more. Apart from the improvements, Ms. Güneş also described the barriers she experienced in the study. As far as she emphasized that, it was difficult to reach parents and explain why their involvement is important for the benefit of children. To enhance the involvement of parents, Ms. Güneş paid attention to learning about parents' previous experiences, guiding them to be learning leaders in the process, shaping their understanding of learning to be more experience-based and integrated, and creating awareness about the assessment of learning experiences. Ms. Güneş also provided recommendations like implementing volunteer activities in the winter season, conducting more involvement practices, organizing more play-based learning experiences, emphasizing assessment more to increase the quality of experiences, and making involvement more practical via using technology more.

In terms of the changes that occurred in the experiences and perspectives of the volunteer parents, all parents highlighted that they became more able to understand the

benefits of OPAL on children's development and learning through gaining real-life experiences in the schoolyard with the guidance of Ms. Güneş. In the study conducted by Ata-Aktürk and Demircan (2024), it was also indicated that the involvement of parents in the children's experiences supports their interest and motivation toward the subject while creating a positive attitude toward the subject.

Parents emphasized that OPAL supports children in discharging their energy while making them feel freer and more comfortable. Additionally, OPAL also facilitates learning to be more permanent by making children engage more in the process and enjoy the process more from the point of view of parents. As related to themselves, most of the parents emphasized that they became aware that learning does not just occur inside of the school, it also occurs in the outdoor environment. The need for this awareness was also indicated as a finding resulting from the qualitative study conducted by Kandemir and Sevimli-Çelik (2021) who examined OPAL perspectives and experiences of teachers and parents in early childhood education.

Furthermore, some of the concerns as if hygiene and safety understood to be minimized outdoors because parents highlighted the flexible environment of OPAL which supports security and facilitates children to move without worrying about getting dirty. Additionally, it was reached that parents feel included and cooperate with the teacher effectively since they enjoy the planning process, share their ideas, and ask questions freely. Gessiou (2022) who conducted participatory action research to enhance OPAL in a preschool also reached a similar finding.

The researcher illustrated that cooperation between parents and the teacher was supported by involving parents in the process of redesigning the schoolyard environment. In this process, parents also have a chance to internalize how the outdoor environment supports their children's learning and development process so the need for informing parents on outdoor benefits was met as far as the researcher discussed. In addition, Bohling and others (2013) who conducted a case study to examine the involvement of parents in outdoor learning reached similar findings. Through the participation of 4 educators and 93 parents in a family center, the researchers implemented a program for two years, supporting parents' understanding related to outdoor learning. The findings demonstrated that parents become more able to

understand the significance of outdoor learning and its benefits on health. Parents also gained confidence in guiding their children's outdoor learning experiences occurring outside of the school.

Related to the experienced barriers, it was reached that some of the parents had difficulty starting the activity, understanding their role as teaching leaders, managing the classroom, not having enough time for implementation, and the language of the implementation. To conduct the activities effectively, it was emphasized to provide accurate information, be sure that children learn, act according to plan, involve children in the process, communicate well with children, and focus on maintaining attention by the volunteer parents. As the last point, parents provided some recommendations such as conducting parental involvement practices regularly and organizing different involvement practices like field trips or winter activities. In terms of increasing the quality of activities, parents also shared recommendations that are being a role model in the assessment, changing the assessment, conducting small group activities, providing longer warm-ups, giving children time to think, deepening the content, providing challenging activities, and reminding the activity flow.

5.2. Implications

This study was conducted to enrich the involvement of parents in OPAL activities, which are conducted in the schoolyard. Therefore, this study is expected to deliver benefits for different parties, which are preschool teachers, school managers, program developers, policymakers, and researchers.

In addition, teachers' sharing of outdoor activities organized as part of family participation and children's outdoor experiences in various bulletins, bulletin boards, parent meetings, web pages, or communication groups will play an effective role in informing families. Establishing an educational policy that values the use of outdoor spaces in schools encourages teachers to plan outdoor activities regularly. It also increases the use of outdoor spaces, making them more efficient. Since children regularly access outdoor learning opportunities, their interaction with the natural environment improves (Burçak, 2024) This participatory action study found that

OPAL practices of preschool teachers are changing for different reasons including parental concerns, teacher concerns, intensity of the daily schedule, and so on even though teachers emphasize the benefits of OPAL development and learning of children in the early childhood period. Because of this reason, it is highly significant to develop the preschool teachers' awareness that OPAL is indispensable in the children's lives so it must be a priority instead of being an option. In this context, the development of this awareness needs to be started from the undergraduate courses and it should also be continued while teaching.

One way to support the OPAL awareness of pre-service teachers could be regarded as designing compulsory outdoor education courses for undergraduate degrees of the Early Childhood Education departments. Besides compulsory courses, it is important to revise the course syllabus of other department courses to include outdoor education as a topic. As a compulsory course or integrated with another course, it is important to address the practicum besides theoretical parts regarding outdoor education. For this purpose, pre-service teachers could conduct OPAL practices in the yards or through going to field trips to forests or botanic gardens for at least three or four weeks of the semester. Through the agency of these implications, the concern of managing class or the ability to prepare a developmentally appropriate OPAL activity could be supported while supporting OPAL awareness of pre-service preschool teachers. Sevinç-Özgen and Tantekin-Erden (2024) also recommend the integration of field trips into undergraduate courses to enable pre-service teachers to be more competent in their teaching practices after graduation.

Similar to those undergraduate courses, supporting the awareness of OPAL necessity is important for in-service teachers. For this reason, in-service seminars or trainings also need to focus on the topic of outdoor education in the early years. It is also important to design these seminars as involving practicum parts so that in-service teachers can create OPAL activities and implement them with supervision. In the current study, it was found that teachers carry concerns about ensuring the safety of children, and they consider falls and bump situations as child-related barriers to OPAL practices. Because of this reason, in-service teacher training also could focus on the topics of risk play, first aid, and the role of being supervised during outdoor play. Hastuti and Musiana (2024) highlight that teachers can work with children to teach

about basic safety rules while playing, be supervisors who observe and are involved in play and provide safe environments for children.

The current study also found that school principals have a crucial role in setting school policies on parental involvement and OPAL. Therefore, similar practicum-based in-service training about creating OPAL awareness could be organized for the school principals of early childhood education institutions. Moreover, the school principals need to work on creating clear policies about OPAL and parental involvement practices not changing from teacher to teacher because of different aspects like concerns, weather conditions, or education program intensity. To illustrate having at least 30 min. OPAL time in a day needs to be implemented systematically in each early childhood education institute. Aysu and Aral (2024) also recommend that there could be in-service trainings teaching about agriculture practices specific to region.

The conducted study also found that OPAL activities are placed less than indoor activities in the education programs. Not just the number but also the frequency of OPAL activities need to be the same for each month of the year. Furthermore, it was also seen that the same activities were written for different age groups without considering the developmental differences among these age groups. In addition to this, it was seen that the parts of assessment and parental involvement were not emphasized in the OPAL plans. Because of these reasons, it is crucial to work with program developers in the area of early childhood education. The program developers need to pay attention to designing more developmentally appropriate OPAL activities including part for assessment and parental involvement, and balance OPAL and indoor activities in the education programs. Different models of parental involvement could be included in the plan alongside volunteer activities conducted in the school. Besides creating OPAL activities, the program developers could also work on designing outdoor environments and materials supporting the holistic development of the children in the OPAL process.

The conducted action study demonstrated that the involvement of parents becomes easier when the teacher provides opportunities for exchanging ideas and sharing expectations regarding development and learning experiences. For this reason, there needs to be different opportunities to involve parents in the process. Therefore,

regarding involvement in OPAL, bulletins or seminars could be organized to share current scientific research about the benefits of OPAL on development and learning, and some parenting recommendations could be given about how parents can support their children's out-of-school OPAL experiences with different practices. Similarly, Ok (2016) recommends diversifying and making parental involvement practices more frequent based on the study conducted by the researcher to examine the cooperation between parents and schools. Furthermore, it was reached that parents desire to contribute to the process more. Wildmon et al. (2024) emphasized that if the school appreciates their efforts, parents will be more motivated to be involved in experiences so diverse field trips could be organized that parents as helpers on these trips. Additionally, parents expressed their desire to meet with other parents in the group to create a solidarity group to discuss children's needs. For this purpose, whole group (class) parent activities could be organized.

Lastly, parents emphasized that they are curious about what their children are doing in OPAL activities more than what the activity is about. Bullard (2014) emphasized that outdoor environment is an efficient place for teachers to observe gross motor skills and social-emotional skills. Therefore, a systemic assessment needs to be implemented to demonstrate the progress of children in OPAL activities. Furthermore, the teachers expressed that they are not using an assessment record tool even though they are observing children in each OPAL activity so teachers could be motivated to use an observation form or other assessment tools like a checklist in the OPAL activities. To illustrate, usage of an anecdotal record could be beneficial for teacher to understand which specific social skills needs to be supported for the child while she is having outdoor play (Bullard, 2014)

In addition to this, pedagogical documentation could be implemented for OPAL activities conducted in the schoolyard. At the end of the process, parents could also get information about their children through the shared pedagogical documentation board. The researchers could also conduct further qualitative studies about how pedagogical documentation could be used to assess OPAL and involve parents in the process more.

5.3. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Studies

This participatory action research aimed to enhance the involvement of parents in OPAL conducted in the schoolyard. The findings and implications of this study were discussed in the previous chapters. This section focuses on recommendations based on some limitations that the current study carries.

The current study was conducted with a volunteer teacher who desires to professionally develop in terms of parental involvement practices in OPAL. Even though the teacher was a volunteer, she mostly experienced the struggle of getting the school principal's approval for each of the research steps such as communicating with parents, sending messages, inviting for meetings, and so on. As one of the limitations of the study, this struggle caused a slowdown in the research process. During the data collection process, it was also realized that the school principal holds a crucial role in setting the policies regarding parental involvement and OPAL practices in the school besides being a negotiator between parents and teachers. Due to these reasons, further studies could be conducted while also involving the school principal as a participant in the study to provide another perspective and make the process more effective for the study. Similarly, the participation of children in the process can bring different perspectives to the whole research process.

Another limitation of the current study could be related to the homogeneity of the participants. Except for one parent as father participating in the need and context analysis of the study, all of the participants were female in the study. About the participation of fathers, diverse studies emphasize that it is usually mothers who participate in the parent involvement studies (e.x.; Tezel et al., 2024). In the current study, some parental concerns about safety and getting ill were emphasized. Bringing a male perspective to the study could provide a different understanding regarding the concerns associated with OPAL practices in the early years. Tezel et al. (2024) emphasized that the involvement of fathers could be encouraged through planned father-only activities as far as teachers pointed out in this study. In addition to this, working with a small sample and qualitative design could carry some limitations so

further studies could work with more participants if the studies would aim to generalize the findings.

Furthermore, this study was conducted in a private school located in Çankaya, Ankara. Conducting the study in a public school or a school located in a different location or city could provide different perspectives regarding the effects of diverse socioeconomic status or socio-cultural background. Moreover, the school's language of instruction was English so parents were sometimes confused about whether they needed to speak English or not even though the researcher and the volunteer teacher emphasized that they could speak in Turkish during activities. Still, the given English instructions by the teacher to the children could be a limit affecting the flow of the activity. In further studies, the whole activity process could be conducted in one language if the research setting has an international context or the language of instruction is English.

It was also difficult for the researcher to conduct observations in poor weather conditions because the participant teachers rarely took children out if there was no sun outside. The teachers' intense daily flows also slowed down the need and content analysis process. Because of this reason, the volunteer parent-involved activities were implemented in had to be implemented in spring, which generally includes good weather conditions. If further studies would focus on just minimizing parental concerns regarding OPAL, the implementation could be carried out in winter months, which involve mostly poor weather conditions. Similarly, the volunteer teacher's other duties like preparing a graduation ceremony, conducting the school's projects, or completing the education program caused the volunteer teacher's motivation to decrease by the end of the study. For this reason, further studies could be more careful about considering the workload of the teacher while involving the teacher in the study, and a better time management plan could be done based on the workload of the volunteer teacher.

Even though the limits of decreasing motivation of the volunteer teachers and limited time because of the intensity of the followed school program. Further studies could be executed over a longer period. This participatory action study facilitated the formation of parent-involved OPAL plans. Based on these findings, further studies can focus on

developing education modules or an education program enhancing the involvement of parents in the OPAL experiences of their children. Besides program development studies, the attitudes of parents and teachers can be the focus to be changed in favor of regular implementation of OPAL in the schools. In addition to this, scale development studies could be implemented as related to OPAL attitudes of parents and teachers, and self-efficacy of teachers on OPAL implementation in early childhood education.

5.4. Summary of the Discussion

This participatory action research study was conducted to enrich the parental involvement in OPAL so different parent-teacher meetings and volunteer parent involved OPAL activities were implemented to enrich experiences and perspectives of parents related to OPAL. The need and context analysis of this study demonstrated that there is a need to involve parents in OPAL and this need could be met through volunteer involvement OPAL activities and parent-teacher meetings. So, the volunteer teacher and researcher planned the first action cycle. Each cycle followed these steps which are planning the OPAL, meeting with parent to discuss OPAL plan, implementing the plan and evaluating the plan. After completing all action cycles, the researcher conducted overall evaluation with five volunteer parents and one volunteer teacher.

The findings demonstrated that participants believe the benefits of OPAL and parental involvement on development and learning, and also they exemplified these benefits by emphasizing different developmental skills. As parallel to this finding, OPAL benefits were highlighted as well-being, being active, motor skills, social-emotional skills, self-regulation, and love of nature in diverse studies (e.g., Fjørtoft, 2004; Sando, 2019; Sando & Sandseter, 2022; Johnstone et al., 2022) As well as OPAL benefits, parental involvement benefits were also exemplified as permanent learning, increased happiness, being more motivated to come to school, socializing with others, and stronger communication in different researches (e.g., Tezel-Şahin et al., 2024; Kutlu-Abu&Kayar, 2020).

Furthermore, participants described parental involvement is about doing activities at the school the current study. In contrast to this finding, parental involvement was

described as communication in the study conducted by Güzelyurt et al., (2019). It was reached that teachers are not implementing regular OPAL time because of concerns and the intensity of the education program. Despite believing the benefits, OPAL is restricted because of concerns and inadequate environment (Mart, 2021; Kandemir & Sevimli-Celik, 2021; Cevher-Kalburan, 2014; Küçükkurt, 2021; Tunçeli & Şenöz, 2022; Yalçın&Tantekin-Erden, 2021) Moreover, the current study pointed out that involvement in OPAL just occurred at the level of communication. According to Kutlu-Abu and Kayar (2020) teachers prefer to do indoor parental involvement because of concerns, inadequate cooperation, and not providing enough information about OPAL. Communication and parenting were mostly indicated to be implemented in this action study. Similarly, individual meetings are the easiest and most common parental involvement practice according to teachers in the study conducted by Ogelman (2014).

The overall evaluation of the study demonstrated that participants considering outdoor as also a learning environment after the process. The need for this awareness was indicated as a finding resulting from the qualitative study conducted by Kandemir and Sevimli-Çelik (2021). Parents expressed a change in their perspective about understanding the OPAL benefits better. The involvement supports interest and motivation toward the subject while creating a positive attitude toward the subject for parents (Ata-Aktürk & Demircan, 2024). The lack of parental involvement was minimized. Parents felt more confident to be teaching leader, and felt more included. Involving parents in redesigning the schoolyard environment more able to understand the significance of outdoor learning and its benefits on development (Bohling et al., 2013; Gessiou, 2022)

This participatory action research study carries some limitations like involving school principal, being public school, doing involvement OPAL activities in not poor earlier conditions and medium of instruction as in English. Based on the findings, some implications could be given as strengthening in-service training, making outdoor education compulsory in preservice education programs and developing education programs valuing OPAL activities as much as indoor activities.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
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ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

18 OCAK 2024

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Doç.Dr.Serap Sevimli Çelik

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Melike Kandemir'in "*Building Parental Involvement in Outdoor Play And Learning: Action-Based Opal Activities*" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek 0058-ODTÜİAEK-2024 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

B. VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION FORM FOR TEACHERS

GÖNÜLLÜ KATILIM FORMU

Bu çalışma, ODTÜ Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Bölümü doktora öğrencisi Melike Kandemir tarafından ~~Doc.Dr.Özr.Üyesi~~ Serap Sevimli Çelik danışmanlığındaki doktora tezi kapsamında yürütülmektedir. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

Bu Çalışmanın Amacı Nedir? Çalışmanın amacı, erken çocukluk döneminde okul bahçesinde yürütülen oyun ve öğrenme süreçlerinde aile katılımına ilişkin görüş ve uygulamaları incelemek ve incelenen uygulamaları güçlendirmektir.

Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz? Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, sizden çalışmanın amacına yönelik olarak hazırlanan sorulardan oluşan bireysel görüşme, odak grup görüşmesi, gözlem, günlük tutma ve aile katılımı etkinlik planlama-uygulama-değerlendirme gibi uygulamalara katılmanız istenecektir. Daha sonra içerik analizi ile değerlendirilmek üzere bireysel ve odak grup görüşmelerinde ses kaydı, aile katılımı etkinliklerde ise ses ve görüntü kaydı alınacaktır.

Sizden Topladığımız Bilgileri Nasıl Kullanacağız? Çalışmaya katılımınız tamamen gönüllülük temelinde olmalıdır. Çalışmada sizden kimlik veya kurum belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız tamamıyla gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırmacı tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Elde edilecek bilgiler sadece bilimsel amaçla ve araştırmacının yüksek lisans tezi için kullanılacak, isminiz ve kimlik bilgileriniz, hiçbir şekilde kimseyle paylaşılmayacaktır.

Katılımınızla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler: Çalışma, genel olarak kişisel rahatsızlık verecek sorular veya uygulamalar içermemektedir. Ancak, katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz çalışmayı yarıda bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda çalışmayı uygulayan kişiye çalışmadan çıkmak istediğinizi söylemek yeterli olacaktır.

Bu çalışmayla ilgili daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz çalışmayı yürüten Okul Öncesi Eğitimi bölümü doktora öğrencisi ile (e-posta: _____) ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz. Bu çalışmaya katılımınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz.

Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum ve bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum. !

(Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad

Tarih

İmza

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C. VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION FORM FOR PARENTS

GÖNÜLLÜ KATILIM FORMU

Bu çalışma, ODTÜ Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Bölümü doktora öğrencisi Melike Kandemir tarafından Doc.Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Serap Sevimli Çelik danışmanlığındaki doktora tezi kapsamında yürütülmektedir. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

Bu Çalışmanın Amacı Nedir? Çalışmanın amacı, erken çocukluk döneminde okul bahçesinde yürütülen oyun ve öğrenme süreçlerinde aile katılımına ilişkin görüş ve uygulamaları incelemek ve incelenen uygulamaları güçlendirmektir.

Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz? Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, sizden çalışmanın amacına yönelik olarak hazırlanan sorulardan oluşan bireysel görüşme, odak grup görüşmesi ve tasarlanan aile katımlı etkinliklere katılmanız istenecektir. Daha sonra içerik analizi ile değerlendirilmek üzere bireysel ve odak grup görüşmelerinde ses kaydı, aile katımlı etkinliklerde ise ses ve görüntü kaydı alınacaktır.

Sizden Topladığımız Bilgileri Nasıl Kullanacağız? Çalışmaya katılımınız tamamen gönüllülük temelinde olmalıdır. Çalışmada sizden kimlik veya kurum belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız tamamıyla gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırmacı tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Elde edilecek bilgiler sadece bilimsel amaçla ve araştırmacının doktora tezi için kullanılacak, isminiz ve kimlik bilgileriniz, hiçbir şekilde kimseyle paylaşılmayacaktır.

Katılımınızla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler: Çalışma, genel olarak kişisel rahatsızlık verecek sorular veya uygulamalar içermemektedir. Ancak, katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz çalışmayı yarıda bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda çalışmayı uygulayan kişiye çalışmadan çıkmak istediğinizi söylemek yeterli olacaktır.

Bu çalışmayla ilgili daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz çalışmayı yürüten Okul Öncesi Eğitimi bölümü doktora öğrencisi ile (e-posta: _____) _____ ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz. Bu çalışmaya katılımınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz.

Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum ve bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum.

(Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz.)

İsim Soyad

Tarih

İmza

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D. PARENT INVITATION LETTER TO STUDY

EBEVEYN ARAŞTIRMAYA DAVET DUYURU METNİ

Değerli Ebeveyn,

İsmim Melike, ODTÜ Okul Öncesi Eğitimi bölümü doktora programı öğrencisiyim. Doktora tez çalışmamın konusunu okul bahçeleri oluşturuyor. Erken çocukluk döneminde yapılan araştırmalar dış mekân öğrenme ortamlarından olan okul bahçesinin çocukların gelişim ve öğrenme süreçlerini olumlu yönde etkileyen güçlü bir deneysel öğrenme ortamı olduğunu sunmaktadır. Okul öncesi dönemde çocuklar için yaparak ve yaşayarak öğrenmeye imkân sağlayan bu disiplinler arası öğrenme ortamı sayesinde, çocuklar yakın çevreleriyle fiziksel iletişime girerek ilk elden deneyimler yaşamaktadırlar. Yapılan araştırmalarda aynı zamanda etkili aile katılımı sağlandığında, çocukların dış mekânda oyun ve öğrenme deneyimlerinin daha çok zenginleştiği ve çocukların gelişim süreçlerinin daha çok desteklendiği vurgulanmıştır.

Bu bilgiler doğrultusunda tez çalışmamda amacım erken çocukluk döneminde okul bahçesinde yürütülen **oyun ve öğrenme süreçlerinde aile katılımına ilişkin görüş ve uygulamaları incelemek ve incelenen uygulamaları güçlendirmektir**. Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, sizden çalışmanın amacına yönelik hazırlanan sorulardan oluşan yüz yüze ya da online **bireysel görüşme** etkinliğine **programınızın uygunluğuna göre** katılmanızı isteyeceğim. Çalışmada sizden kimlik belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmeyecek olup cevaplarınız tamamıyla gizli tutulacak ve sadece çalışmayı yürüten araştırmacı olarak benim tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Elde edilecek bilgiler sadece bilimsel amaçla ve doktora tezi için kullanılacak, isminiz ve kimlik bilgileriniz, hiçbir şekilde kimseyle paylaşılmayacaktır. Ayrıca katkınız sayesinde okulunuzun bahçesinde yapılan uygulamaların geliştirilmesine destek olmanız hem çocuklar hem de okul için önem taşımaktadır.

Çalışmaya katılarak sağlayacağınız görüş ve öneriler okulunuzun bahçe uygulamalarına farklı bir bakış açısı getirecektir. Çalışmaya gönüllü olarak destek verirseniz çok sevinirim.

Bu çalışmayla ilgili daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz çalışmayı yürüten Okul Öncesi Eğitimi bölümü doktora öğrencisi ile (e-posta: _____) ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz. Bu çalışmaya katılımınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederim.

Saygılarımla
Melike Kandemir

E. THE NEED AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS-TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Görüşme Formu-I

A-Kişisel Bilgiler

1-Yaşınız	<input type="radio"/> 18-20 <input type="radio"/> 21-25 <input type="radio"/> 26-30 <input type="radio"/> 31-35 <input type="radio"/> 36-40 <input type="radio"/> 41-45 <input type="radio"/> 45-51
2-Cinsiyetiniz	<input type="radio"/> Kadın <input type="radio"/> Erkek
3-En son mezun olduğunuz eğitim düzeyi	<input type="radio"/> Lise <input type="radio"/> Lisans <input type="radio"/> Yüksek Lisans <input type="radio"/> Doktora
4- Kaç yıllık öğretmensiniz?	
5-Dış mekânda oyun ve öğrenme konusunda mesleki gelişiminize dair hangi etkinliklere katıldınız?	<input type="radio"/> Lisans Dersi <input type="radio"/> Lisansüstü Dersi <input type="radio"/> Seminer <input type="radio"/> Kongre <input type="radio"/> Kurs <input type="radio"/> Atölye <input type="radio"/> Diğer:
6-Dış mekânda oyun ve öğrenme konusunda katıldığınız etkinlik hakkında kısaca bilgi verir misiniz?	-Etkinliğin türü: Teorik / Pratik -Etkinliğin süresi (gün/saat): -Etkinliğin içeriği: -Diğer bilgiler:
7-Aile katılımı konusunda; mesleki gelişiminize dair hangi etkinliklere katıldınız?	<input type="radio"/> Lisans Dersi <input type="radio"/> Lisansüstü Dersi <input type="radio"/> Seminer <input type="radio"/> Kongre <input type="radio"/> Kurs <input type="radio"/> Atölye <input type="radio"/> Diğer:
8- Aile katılımı konusunda katıldığınız etkinlik hakkında kısaca bilgi verir misiniz?	-Etkinliğin türü: Teorik / Pratik - Etkinliğin süresi (gün/saat): -Etkinliğin içeriği:

	-Diğer bilgiler:
--	------------------

B-Okul/Sınıf ile İlgili Bilgiler

1-Görev yaptığınız okulda kaç yıldır çalışıyorsunuz?	
2-Çalışmakta olduğunuz sınıfın mevcudu nedir?	
3-Sınıfınızda yardımcı personeliniz/öğretmeniniz var mı?	O Evet O Hayır
4-Çalışmakta olduğunuz sınıfın yaş grubu nedir?	O 24-36 Ay O 36-48 Ay O 48-60 Ay O 60-72 Ay

C-Eğitim Akışı ile İlgili Bilgiler

1-Günlük eğitim akışınızda serbest oyun için ayrılan zaman ortalama ne kadar?	O 0-15 dk. O 15-30 dk. O 30-45 dk. O 45-60 dk. O 60 dk. ve üstü
2-Günlük eğitim akışınızda okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme için ayrılan zaman ortalama ne kadar?	O 0-15 dk. O 15-30 dk. O 30-45 dk. O 45-60 dk. O 60 dk. ve üstü
3-Eğitim akışınızda okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme etkinlikleri uyguluyor iseniz, bu etkinliklerden kısaca bahseder misiniz?	-Etkinliğin türü: -Etkinliğin içeriği: -Diğer bilgiler:
3-Eğitim akışınızda aile katılımlı etkinlikler uyguluyor musunuz?	O Evet O Hayır
4-Eğitim akışınızda aile katılımlı etkinlikler uyguluyor iseniz, bu etkinliklerden kısaca bahseder misiniz?	-Etkinliğin türü: -Etkinliğe ayrılan gün /saat: -Etkinliğin içeriği: -Diğer bilgiler:
5-Eğitim akışınızda okul bahçesinde aile katılımlı oyun ve öğrenme etkinlikleri uyguluyor musunuz?	O Evet O Hayır

<p>6-Eđitim akışınızda okul bahçesinde aile katılımı oyun ve öğrenme etkinlikleri uyguluyor iseniz, bu etkinliklerden kısaca bahseder misiniz?</p>	<p>-Etkinliđin türü:</p> <p>-Etkinliđe ayrılan gün/saat:</p> <p>-Etkinliđin içeriđi:</p> <p>-Diđer bilgiler:</p>
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1- Okul öncesi eğitiminde dış mekânda oyun ve öğrenme hakkında neler düşünüyorsunuz?

2- Okul öncesi eğitiminde aile katılımı hakkında neler düşünüyorsunuz?

3- Okul öncesinde okul bahçesinin eğitimde kullanımı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

4- Okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme etkinliklerinin **planlanması** ile ilgili görüşlerinizi almak istiyorum;

- Etkinlikleri planlama sırasında nelere dikkat ediyorsunuz?

- Karşılaştığınız zorluklar var mıdır? Varsa ne gibi zorluklar ile karşılaşıyorsunuz?

- Planlama sürecinizde aile katılımı yapıyor musunuz?

Evet ise,

- Ailelerin planladığınız etkinliklere ilişkin bakış açıları hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Bu bakış açıları planlama sürecinizi etkiliyor mu? Nedenleriyle açıklar mısınız?

Hayır ise nedenleriyle kısaca açıklar mısınız?

5- Okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme etkinliklerinin **uygulanması** ile ilgili görüşlerinizi almak istiyorum;

- Etkinlikleri uygularken nelere dikkat ediyorsunuz?

- Karşılaştığınız zorluklar var mıdır? Varsa ne gibi zorluklar ile karşılaşıyorsunuz?

- Uygulama sürecinde aile katılımı yapıyor musunuz?

Evet ise,

- Ailelerin uyguladığınız etkinliklere katılım motivasyonu/ilgisi hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Bu bakış açıları uygulama sürecinizi etkiliyor mu? Nedenleriyle açıklar mısınız?

- Aileleri uyguladığımız etkinliklere katma motivasyonunuz/ilginiz hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Uygulama sürecinde gerçekleştirmekten keyif aldığımız şeyler var mıdır?
- 6- Okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme etkinliklerinin **değerlendirilmesi** ile ilgili görüşlerinizi almak istiyorum;
- Değerlendirme sürecinde amacınız ve kriterleriniz nelerdir? (öz değerlendirme, etkinliğin değerlendirilmesi, öğrenimin değerlendirilmesi,...)
- Gözlem uygulamalarınız nasıldır? Varsa kullandığınız gözlem kayıt araçları nelerdir?
- Değerlendirme sürecinde karşılaştığınız zorluklar var mı? Evet ise kısaca açıkla mısınız?
- Bu değerlendirme bir sonraki etkinliğinizi planlamanızda nasıl yardımcı oluyor?
- Bu değerlendirme sürecine aileleri katıyor musunuz?

Evet ise,

- Ailelerin değerlendirme sürecine katkısı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Bu katkıları değerlendirme sürecinizi etkiliyor mu? Nedenleriyle açıkla mısınız?
- 7- Sizce okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme deneyimleri kapsamında aile katılımı nasıl güçlendirilebilir?
- 8- Okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme deneyimleri kapsamında aile katılımını geliştirme ve güçlendirmeye ilişkin bir eylem araştırması (uygulamalara ilişkin ihtiyaç giderme ya da uygulama zenginleştirmeye ilişkin araştırma) sürecine katılmayı düşünür müsünüz?

Evet ise

- Neden bu araştırma sürecine katılmak istersiniz? Bu araştırma sürecinden beklentileriniz nelerdir?
- Okul bahçesinde aile katılımı oyun ve öğrenme etkinliklerini;
 - Planlamak için nelere ihtiyaç duyuyorsunuz?
 - Uygulamak için nelere ihtiyaç duyuyorsunuz?
 - Değerlendirmek için nelere ihtiyaç duyuyorsunuz?

F. THE NEED AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS-PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Görüşme Formu-II

A-Kişisel Bilgiler

1-Yaşınız	O18-20 O21-25 O26-30 O31-35 O36-40 O41-45 O45-51
2-Cinsiyetiniz	O Kadın O Erkek
3-En son mezun olduğunuz eğitim düzeyi	O Lise O Lisans O Yüksek Lisans O Doktora
4-Mesleğiniz?	
5-Çocuğunuzun cinsiyeti	O Kadın O Erkek
6-Çocuğunuzun yaş grubu?	O 24-36 Ay O 36-48 Ay O 48-60 Ay O 60-72 Ay
7-Çocuğunuz kaç yıldır okul öncesi eğitimi alıyor?	
8- Çocuğunuz bu kuruma ne kadar süredir devam ediyor?	
8-Çocuğunuzun sahip olduğu kardeş sayısı? (Çocuğun doğum sırası: 2.çocuk, 3.çocuk ?)	
9-Dış mekânda oyun ve öğrenme konusunda herhangi bir etkinliğe katıldınız?	O Evet O Hayır
5-Dış mekânda oyun ve öğrenme konusunda herhangi bir etkinliğe katıldıysanız hangi etkinliklere katıldınız?	O Seminer O Kongre O Kurs O Atölye O Diğer:
6-Dış mekânda oyun ve öğrenme konusunda katıldığınız etkinlik hakkında kısaca bilgi verir misiniz?	-Etkinliğin türü: Teorik / Pratik -Etkinliğin süresi (gün/saat): -Etkinliğin içeriği: -Diğer bilgiler:

- 1- Okul öncesi eğitiminde dış mekânda oyun ve öğrenme hakkında neler düşünüyorsunuz?
- 2- Okul öncesinde okul bahçesinin eğitimde kullanımı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- 3- Öğretmeninizin okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme etkinliklerine ilişkin uygulamalarını nasıl buluyorsunuz?

- 4- Sizce öğretmenlerin ve ailelerin bakış açıları okul bahçesi uygulamalarını etkiliyor mu? Nedenleriyle açıklar mısınız?
- 5- Sizce öğretmenler okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme ile ilgili zorluklar ile karşılaşılıyorlar mıdır? Eğer evet ise bu zorluklar ile nasıl baş edebilirler?

B-Eğitim Akışı ile İlgili Bilgiler

1-Sizce günlük eğitim akışında serbest oyun (öğretmen tarafından yapılandırılmayan) için ayrılan zaman ortalama ne kadar olmalı?	O 0-15 dk. O 15-30 dk. O 30-45 dk. O 45-60 dk. O 60 dk. ve üstü
2-Sizce günlük eğitim akışında okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme için ayrılan zaman ortalama ne kadar olmalı?	O 0-15 dk. O 15-30 dk. O 30-45 dk. O 45-60 dk. O 60 dk. ve üstü
3-Okul bahçesinde uygulanan oyun ve öğrenme etkinlikleri hakkında bilginiz var mı? Evet ise bu etkinliklerden kısaca bahseder misiniz?	O Evet O Hayır -Etkinliğin türü: -Etkinliğin içeriği: -Diğer bilgiler:
3-Okulunuzda aile katılımlı etkinlikler uygulanıyor mu?	O Evet O Hayır
4-Okulunuzda aile katılımlı etkinlikler uygulanıyor ise, bu etkinliklerden kısaca bahseder misiniz?	-Etkinliğin türü: -Etkinliğe ayrılan süre: -Etkinliğin içeriği: -Diğer bilgiler:
5-Okulunuzun bahçesinde aile katılımlı oyun ve öğrenme etkinlikleri uygulanıyor mu?	O Evet O Hayır
6- Okulunuzun bahçesinde aile katılımlı oyun ve öğrenme etkinlikleri uygulanıyor ise, bu etkinliklerden kısaca bahseder misiniz?	-Etkinliğin türü: -Etkinliğe ayrılan süre: -Etkinliğin içeriği: -Diğer bilgiler:

1. Okul öncesi eğitiminde aile katılımı hakkında neler düşünüyorsunuz?
2. Sizce okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme deneyimleri kapsamında aile katılımı nasıl güçlendirilebilir?
3. Okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenme deneyimleri kapsamında aile katılımını geliştirme ve güçlendirmeye ilişkin bir eylem araştırması sürecine katılmayı düşünür müsünüz? Evet ise neden bu araştırma sürecine katılmak istersiniz? Bu araştırma sürecinden beklentileriniz nelerdir?

G. ACTION CYCLES-SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Görüşme Formu-III

Okul bahçesinde gerçekleştirdiğiniz aile katımlı etkinlik hakkında konuşmak istiyorum;

1. Etkinliğinizden kısaca bahseder misiniz?
2. Etkinliğin planlaması ve uygulaması arasında farklılıklar oldu mu? Evet ise nedenleri ne olabilir?
3. Aile katımlı bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız planlama ve uygulama süreçlerinizde herhangi bir değişiklik olur muydu? Evet ise kısaca bahseder misiniz?
4. Yapılan etkinliğin ailelerin okul bahçesinde oyun ve öğrenmeye yönelik
 - Görüşlerini nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Motivasyonlarını / İlgilerini nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Katkılarını nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsunuz?
5. Okul bahçesinde gerçekleştirilen aile katımlı etkinliğin daha çok geliştirilmesi için önerileriniz nedir?

H. OVERALL EVALUATION-SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Görüşme Formu-IV

- 1- Okul öncesinde okul bahçesinin eğitimde kullanımı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- 2- Okul bahçesinde aile katımlı oyun ve öğrenme etkinlikleri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- 3- Bu çalışma kapsamında planlanan ve uygulanan etkinliklerin aile katılımını sağlama konusunda etkili olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Evet, / Hayır, ise kısaca bahseder misiniz?
- 4- Bu çalışma kapsamında okul bahçesinde aile katımlı oyun ve öğrenme etkinliklerine ilişkin yapılan bilgilenme toplantılarının yeterliliği hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- 5- Bu çalışma kapsamında yapılan bilgilenme toplantılarında öğrendiğiniz bilgiler etkinlikleri planlama, uygulama ve değerlendirme süreçlerinde yararlı oldu mu?
 - Evet ise kısaca bahseder misiniz?
 - Hayır ise bilgilenme toplantılarının daha etkili olması için neler yapılabilir?
- 6- Okul bahçesinde gerçekleştirilen aile katımlı oyun ve öğrenme etkinliklerinin **planlama aşaması** ile ilgili neler düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Planlama sürecinde nelere dikkat ettiniz?
 - Planlama sürecinde keyif alarak yaptığınız şeyler oldu mu? Evet, / Hayır, ise kısaca bahseder misiniz?
 - Planlama sürecinde yaşadığınız zorluklar oldu mu? Evet, / Hayır, ise kısaca bahseder misiniz?
 - Planlama sürecinde aile ile kurduğunuz işbirliği ile ilgili ne düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Planlama sürecinin daha etkili olması gerektiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Hayır ise neden? Evet ise daha etkili olması için neler yapılabilir?
- 7- Okul bahçesinde gerçekleştirilen aile katımlı oyun ve öğrenme etkinliklerinin **uygulama aşaması** ile ilgili neler düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Uygulama sürecinde nelere dikkat ettiniz?
 - Uygulama sürecinde keyif alarak yaptığınız şeyler oldu mu? Evet, / Hayır, ise kısaca bahseder misiniz?
 - Uygulama sürecinde yaşadığınız zorluklar oldu mu? Evet, / Hayır, ise kısaca bahseder misiniz?
 - Uygulama sürecinde aile ile kurduğunuz işbirliği ile ilgili ne düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Uygulama sürecinin daha etkili olması gerektiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Hayır ise neden? Evet ise daha etkili olması için neler yapılabilir?
- 8- Okul bahçesinde gerçekleştirilen aile katımlı oyun ve öğrenme etkinliklerinin **değerlendirme aşaması** ile ilgili neler düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Değerlendirme sürecinde nelere dikkat ettiniz?
 - Değerlendirme sürecinde keyif alarak yaptığınız şeyler oldu mu? Evet, / Hayır, ise kısaca bahseder misiniz?

- Deęerlendirme sürecinde yařadığınız zorluklar oldu mu? Evet, / Hayır, ise kısaca bahseder misiniz?
- Deęerlendirme sürecinde aile ile kurduğunuz işbirliği ile ilgili ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Deęerlendirme sürecinin daha etkili olması gerektiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Hayır ise neden? Evet ise daha etkili olması için neler yapılabilir?

I. THE NEED AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS-OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Gözlem Formu-I

Date:	Duration:
Observed Teacher:	Used Areas:
Season / Weather:	Materials:
Number of Children:	
Preparation for the activity:	
Implementation of the activity:	
Assessment of the activity (assessment of the learning, teacher implementation, and activity plan):	
Field Notes:	

J. ACTION CYCLES-OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Gözlem Formu-II

Date:	Duration:
Weather:	Used Areas:
Number of Children:	Materials:
Preparation for the activity: How parental involvement was provided for preparation:	
Implementation of the activity: How parental involvement was provided for implementation:	
Assessment of the activity: How parental involvement was provided for assessment:	
Field Notes:	

**K. THE NEED AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS-DOCUMENT ANALYSIS
PROTOCOL**

Doküman Analizi Formu

- **Yaş Grubu:**
- **Tarih:**
- **Etkinlik Türü**
- **Kullanılan Alan:**
- **Kullanılan Materyaller:**
- **Tema/Konu:**

L. THE NEED AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS-PHOTOS OF OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING (OPAL) EXPERIENCES



Photo 1 (24-36-months age group)

The child tries to transfer the pebbles from one container to another container.



Photo 2 (24-36-months age group)

The child smells the flower given by his teacher.



Photo 3 (24-36-months age group)

Children examine storybooks with their teacher.



Photo 4 (24-36-months age group)

Children take balls from the box, carry them to the wheel with a cup, and throw them in with the teacher's instructions.



Photo 5 (36-48-months age group)

Two children play with rainwater accumulated in a wheel.



Photo 6 (36-48-months age group)

The child tries to complete the parkour by his teachers under the supervision of the teacher.



Photo 7 (36-48-months age group)

With the help of the teacher, the child makes music by sitting on one of the wheels and playing the other like a drum.



Photo 7 (48-60-months age group)

Three children play with the wheels. After stacking the wheels on top of each other, they try to get inside.



Photo 8 (48-60-months and 60-72-months age groups)

Older age groups compete on the parkour prepared for them, accompanied by their teachers.





Photo 9 (60-72-months age group)

The teacher reads a storybook for the children.



Photo 10 (60-72-months age group)

Children tries to match colors in nature color hunt activity, which was prepared by the teacher.



M. ACTION CYCLES-PLANS OF IMPLEMENTED PARENT INVOLVES OPAL ACTIVITIES

Etkinlik Adı: Hexagon Solucan Oteli

Etkinliğin Amacı: Okul bahçesinde yaşayan canlılara ve sürdürülebilirlik konularına ilişkin farkındalık yaratmak; Kompost ve yaşam döngüsüne dikkat çekmek; Doğa sevgisini vurgulamak

Malzemeler: Büyük plastik bidon, çakıl taşı, kum, çimen, kağıt parçaları, meyve kabukları, solucan, taşıma kapları

Etkinlik Süreci:

- Kompost ile ilgili çocuklar ile konuşulur.
- Çocuklar 3 kişi olacak şekilde gruplara ayrılır ve her gruba birer taşıma kabı verilir (4 grup, 4 kap)
 - 1. gruptan bahçe ortamında çakıl bularak getirmeleri istenir.
 - 2. gruptan bahçe ortamında çimen bularak getirmeleri istenir.
 - 3. gruptan bahçe ortamında kum bularak getirmeleri istenir.
 - 4. gruptan bahçe ortamında toprak bularak getirmeleri istenir.
- Her gruptan ayrıca iki solucan bularak getirmeleri istenir.
- Getirilen malzemeler şu sıra ile büyük plastik bidona yerleştirilir; çakıl, toprak, kum, yaprak/solucan/kağıt parçaları/portakal kabukları (tüm parçalar karıştırılarak), toprak, çimen
- Solucanların yaşam döngüsü, beslenmeleri ve ayrıca kompost hakkında tekrar çocuklar ile konuşulur.
- Etkinlik sonunda şu sorular sorular çocuklar ile değerlendirme yapılır;
 - Bu etkinlikte neler yaptık?
 - Etkinliği yaparken neler hissettiniz? (Sizin için kolay mıydı, desteğe ihtiyaç duyduunuz mu?)
 - Evde bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız, ailenize etkinliği nasıl anlatırdınız?
 - Evde bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız, farklı olarak neler yapmak isterdiniz?

Kaynaklar:

<https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/458593174575545163/>

<https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/458593174575545156/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7ETr0JS3ag>

Etkinlik Adı: Çiçek Yaşam Döngüsü

Etkinliğin Amacı: Bir bitkinin yaşam döngüsünü öğrenmek; Sağlıklı gelişim ve etkili öğrenme için fiziksel aktiviteyi vurgulamak; Doğa sevgisini pekiştirmek.

Malzemeler: Mat, çiçek puzzle çıktıları, bitkinin yaşam döngüsü kartları

Etkinlik Süreci:

- Çocuklardan bahçede hangi bitkilerin olduğunu gözlemlmeleri ve söylemeleri istenir.
- Kısa sohbetin ardından, çocuklar ile çiçek puzzle etkinliği yapılır. Bu etkinlik için bahçenin farklı yerlerine saklanmış çiçek puzzle parçalarını çocukların bulması ve belirtilen yere getirerek, burada puzzle'ı birleştirmeleri istenir. Puzzle parçaları birleştirildikten sonra çocuklara şu soru sorularak "Bahçemizdeki farklı bitkilerin ve bu çiçeklerin nasıl oluştuğunu biliyor musunuz?" bitkinin yaşam döngüsü konuşulmaya başlanır.
- Bir bitkinin yaşam döngüsü kartları sıralanırken, çocuklar ile bitkinin yaşam döngüsü hakkında şu açıklama yapılarak konuşulur;
 1. Tohum: Yeterli miktarda nem ve sıcaklık olduğunda uyku hâlinde olan bitki harekete geçer ve kabuğunu kırar.
 2. Çimlenme: Kök toprağa sıkıca tutunmaya ve küçük bir filiz ışığa doğru yükselmeye başlar.
 3. Erişkin bitki: Bitki gelişir, büyür ve kendi besinini üretmeye başlar.
 4. Çiçek, yeni tohum: Kendi tohumlarını üretir ve yaşam döngüsü sonlanır.
- Çocuklara bitkilerin yaşam döngüsünü daha iyi anlayabilmek için bitki yogası etkinliğini yapacakları söylenir. Herkes matına yerleştikten sonra çocuklardan kendilerini sanki birer tohum gibi hayal etmeleri istenir ve sırayla yoga hareketleri yaptırılır (*yaşam döngüsünün ardından zamana göre hayvanlar ile ilişkili pozlar da yaptırılabilir. Örnek; şimdi bir çiçek olduk, bakın bir kelebek üzerimize kondu, haydi kelebek duruşu yapalım....)
- Etkinlik sonunda şu sorular sorular çocuklar ile değerlendirme yapılır;
 - Bu etkinlikte neler yaptık?
 - Etkinliği yaparken neler hissettiniz? (Sizin için kolay mıydı, desteğe ihtiyaç duyduunuz mu?)
 - Evde bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız, ailenize etkinliği nasıl anlatırdınız?
 - Evde bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız, farklı olarak neler yapmak isterdiniz?

Kaynaklar:

<https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/757519599843961813/>

<https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/703756185687608/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O13bejrmCSI>

Etkinlik Adı: Bay Kaplan Yabana Çıkıyor

Etkinliğin Amacı: Hayvan türlerini öğrenmek; Doğa ve hayvan sevgisini pekiştirmek; İnce motor becerilerini desteklemek

Malzemeler: Hayvan resim kartları, “Bay Kaplan Yabana Çıkıyor” hikaye kitabı, çamur, su, karıştırma kabı, sabun

Etkinlik Süreci:

- Çocuklar ile çember olunarak, paraşüt üzerine oturulur ve hayvanlardan sohbet edilmeye başlanır. Sohbetin ardından farklı hayvan sesleri açılır. Çocuklardan gözlerini kapamaları ve bu hayvanların hangi hayvanlar olduklarını tahmin etmeleri istenir.
- Ardından çocuklar bahçe içerisinde farklı hayvanların saklandığı söylenir. Hayvanlar ile ilgili bir şarkı açılır. Şarkı çalarak çocuklardan bahçedeki hayvanları bulmaları ve paraşüt üzerine getirmeleri istenir. Tüm hayvan resim kartları bulunduktan sonra, kartlardaki hayvanlar üzerine çocuklar ile sohbet edilir.
- Sohbetin ardından “Bay Kaplan Yabana Çıkıyor” hikaye kitabı çocuklara etkileşimli bir şekilde (okuma sırasında sorular sorarak, resimleri inceleyerek, vb. gibi) okunur.
- Hikayeden sonra çocuklara şu açıklama yapılarak sonraki ativiteye geçilir “Bay Kaplan ormanda arkadaşlarıyla birlikte çamurda oynamayı çok seviyormuş ama arkadaşları o kadar çamura bulanmışki Bay Kaplan arkadaşlarını tanıyamaz olmuş. Bay Kaplan’a arkadaşlarını bulması için yardım edelim mi?” denilerek çocuklara içinde çamur ve çamurun içerisinde farklı hayvan oyuncakları olan kap gösterilir.
- Çocuklar ikiye bölünür. Her gruptan büyük kaptan içerisinde iki hayvan bulmaları ve bu hayvanları onlara verilen küçük kap içerisinde yıkamaları ve geri getirmeleri istenir. Eğer vakit olursa bay kaplan ve arkadaşlarının karnı çok acıkmış denilerek çocuklardan çamur pastası yapmalarını istenir.
- Şu değerlendirme soruları sorularak tamamlanır;
 - Bu etkinlikte neler yaptık?
 - Etkinliği yaparken neler hissettiniz? (Sizin için kolay mıydı, desteğe ihtiyaç duyduunuz mu?)
 - Evde bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız, ailenize etkinliği nasıl anlatırdınız?
 - Evde bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız, farklı olarak neler yapmak isterdiniz?

Kaynaklar:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTrC_McU62Q

Etkinlik Adı: Hexie'nin Çamur Resimleri

Etkinliğin Amacı: Çamur oluşumunu öğrenmek, bilişsel ve ince motor becerileri desteklemek.

Malzemeler: Çamur, farklı renklerde gıda boyaları, suluboya kağıdı, mukavva karton, kağıt bardak

Etkinlik Süreci:

- Çocuklar ile çember olunarak, paraşüt üzerine oturulur. Etkinliğin malzemeleri (toprak, su, gıda boyası, kağıt) çocuklara gösterilerek; "Sizce bugün sizlerle hangi etkinliği yapacağız?" sorusu çocuklara sorulur.
- Çocukların fikirleri alındıktan sonra çamur oluşturma aşamasına geçilir. Çamur'un nasıl yapılabileceği ilk olarak çocuklara sorulur (Ne kadar toprak, ne kadar su gerekli?). Çocuklar cevapları verdikten sonra, çocukların önünde çamur oluşturulur.
- Çamur oluştururken "Sizlere çamur ile resim yapmayı seven bir çocuğun hikayesini anlatayım mı?" denilerek şu hikaye anlatılır;

Hexie's Mud Pictures

1. In a small town, there was a little child named Hexie who loved to paint. He had lots of colors—reds, blues, and even shiny golds. But Hexie's favorite thing to paint with wasn't paint at all; it was mud! (kağıda bir çocuk/çöp adam çizilir)
2. One rainy day, Hexie saw his garden turn into a squishy, soft mess. "Mom, can I paint with the mud?" he asked with a big smile. His mom nodded, helping him get ready. "Okay, let's dress you up for some fun in the mud," she said, putting an old shirt and boots on him. (Cümlenin başında kağıda pencere ve yağmur damlaları çizilir)
3. Hexie ran outside and filled his empty paint buckets with gooey mud. He loved how it felt cold and slippery in his hands. "It's perfect!" he shouted. ("It's perfect" denilir kağıt üzerine çamur ile daire çizilir)
4. He laid a big piece of paper on the ground. He grabbed handfuls of mud and used his fingers to draw pictures: circles turned into suns, lines into rivers, and blobs into trees. (çamur ile kağıda güneş, nehir ve ağaç çizilir)
5. Hexie worked until his paper was full of muddy pictures. When his mom came to see him, she was very happy. "Hexie, your picture is wonderful! It looks like you brought the garden inside!" she said. Hexie was proud. "I love painting with mud, Mom! It's fun!" he told her. (Gülümseyen iki yüz, biri Hexie biri de annesi olacak şekilde çizilir)
6. The next day, Hexie's mom invited all his friends from preschool to come over for a mud painting party. She gave each child a piece of paper and a bucket of mud. Hexie taught his

friends how to use the mud. They made mud sky, mud planets, and even mud spaceships!
They all laughed and had a great time (çamur ile kağıda uzay resmi çizilir)

7. At the end of the day, Hexie was happy he could share his love of mud painting with his friends. Now, Hexie was known as the best mud painter, and his backyard was everyone's favorite place for fun painting parties. And whenever it rained, Hexie would smile, knowing the rain meant more mud for more fun pictures! (çizim yapılmasına gerek yok, şimdiye kadar yapılan tüm çizimler toplu olarak yere serilip gösterilir)

- Hikaye anlatıldıktan sonra çocuklara kağıt verilir ve çocuklardan çamur boyaları yapmaları istenir. Ardından hikayedeki çocuk gibi hayalgüçlerini ve parmaklarını kullanarak çamur ile resim çizmeleri istenir.
- Her çocuk resmini tamamladıktan sonra tekrar çember olunur ve uzun bir resim kağıdına grup çamur ile grup resmi çizer. Bu resmin hikaye için bir kapak sayfası olacağı söylenir. Tamamlandıktan sonra, çizilen resim üzerine konuşulur ve resme bir isim verilir.
- Şu değerlendirme soruları sorularak tamamlanır;
 - Bu etkinlikte neler yaptık?
 - Etkinliği yaparken neler hissettiniz? (Sizin için kolay mıydı, desteğe ihtiyaç duyduunuz mu?)
 - Evde bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız, ailenize etkinliği nasıl anlatırdınız?
 - Evde bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız, farklı olarak neler yapmak isterdiniz?

Kaynaklar:

<https://theresjustonemommy.com/mud-painting-messy-art/>

Etkinlik Adı: Su Balonu

Etkinliğin Amacı: Ritmik ve algısal sayabilme; matematiksel problem çözümleyebilme; farklı çevre ve fiziksel etkinliklerde büyük kas becerilerini etkin bir şekilde uygulayabilme

Malzemeler: Su balonları, su, elektrik bandı, hulahoplar, kovalar

Etkinlik Süreci:

- Bahçede çember olunur ve tanışma oyunu oynanır. Oyun için her çocuk verilen sürede (20'ye kadar sesli bir şekilde sayılır) bahçede bir doğal materyal bulup, çembere geri gelmesi gerekmektedir. Çembere geri geldikleri zaman adlarını söyleyip doğal materyali çemberde göstererek neden bu materyali seçtiklerini anlatmaları gerekmektedir. Mesela "Benim adım Pınar. Bu yaprağı buldum çünkü rengi çok güzel ve benim en sevdiğim renk yeşil. Bu taş buldum çünkü şekli çok ilginç ve ben taş toplamayı severim." Oyuna başlamadan önce çocuklardan yerde olan bir materyali ya da birden fazla bulunan bir materyali (sadece bir tane olan çiçeği koparmaları gibi) getirmeleri gerektiği söylenir.
- *Tanışma oyununda etkileşimi arttırmak için şu ve benzeri cümleler söylenebilir;*
 - "Pınar, neden bu yaprağı seçtin? Yeşil rengi başka nerelerde görüyoruz?"
 - "Ne kadar ilginç bir seçim yapmışsın! Bu taşın şekli gerçekten çok ilginç."
- Tanışma oyunun ardından hazırlanan etkinlik materyalleri gösterilerek hangi etkinliğin yapılacağına yönelik tahminler alınır ve ardından planlanan etkinlikler anlatılır.
- *Tahminleri alırken etkileşimi arttırmak için şu ve benzeri cümleler söylenebilir;*
 - "Sizce bu malzemelerle ne yapacağız? Hangi oyunları oynayabiliriz?" gibi merak uyandırıcı sorular sorulabilir
 - "Harika bir tahmin! Başka ne tür oyunlar oynayabiliriz?" diye sorularak çocukların tahminleri dinlenebilir.
- Çember de sıcak patates oyunu oynanacağı söylenir. Bu oyun için bir su balonu alınır ve balonun bir sıcak patates olduğu dolayısıyla ellerin yanmaması için çemberde elden ele dolaştırılması gerektiği söylenir ama patatesi (balonu) elden ele hızlıca dolaştırırken aynı anda saymaları gerekmektedir. Eğer balon patlarsa ya da sayı sayarken yanlış bir sayı söylenirse, oyun ve sayı sayma tekrardan başlar.
- *Oyun içerisinde etkileşimi arttırmak için şu ve benzeri cümleler söylenebilir;*

- *"Hadi bakalım, sıcak patatesi elden ele geçirirken dikkatli olun! Ellerimiz yanmasın." gibi eğlenceli yönlendirmeler yapılabilir.*
- *"Balon patladıysa sorun değil! Birlikte yeniden deneyelim, neleri farklı yapabiliriz?" gibi hataları fırsata çevirmeye yönelik dönütler verilebilir.*
- Su balonu parkuru çocuklara tanıtılır (parkur anlatılırken oynanmış gibi tamamlanır) Parkurda ilk olarak çocuklar düz bir plastik tabak içerisinde su balonu taşıyarak belirtilen hedefe doğru hızlıca yürürler (koşmazlar). Belirtilen hedefe geldiklerinde su balonu üzerinde yazan basit toplama işleminin (7+1, 6+2, 5+3, 4+4, 5+1, 4+2, 3+3, 3+1, 2+2) cevabını söylerler ve işlemin sonucunun yazmış olduğu kovaya (4, 6 ya da 8) su balonunu atarlar. Burada cevabı doğru bilirler ise yeni bir su balonu alarak parkura devam ederler, ~~bilemezler ise parkura baştan başlarlar.~~ Parkurun sonuna kadar taşıdıkları su balonunu en sonda yer alan 1, 2, ve 3 numaralı hedeften en yükseğine atmaları istenir. Bu hedeflerden 3 numaralı hedefe atılır ise 3 puan kazanılır. Parkur sonunda takımların kazanmış oldukları puanlar hesaplanarak, en çok puan alan takım belirlenir.
- *Su balonu parkuru oyunu için etkileşimi arttırmaya yönelik şu ve benzeri cümleler söylenebilir;*
 - *"Harika gidiyorsun! Biraz daha dikkatli taşı, düşürmeden bitirebilirsin." Gibi cesaretlendirici cümleler söylenebilir.*
 - *"Bu balonda 5+3 yazıyor. Peki, 5'e 3 eklersek kaç eder? Birlikte sayalım." Gibi toplama işleminde yardımcı olmaya yönelik yönlendirmeler yapılabilir eğer ihtiyaç var ise.*
 - *"Bu sefer olmadı, ama harika denedin! Birlikte tekrar deneyelim mi?" gibi parkura baştan başlamak zorunda olan çocuklar için söylenebilir.*
- Şu değerlendirme soruları sorularak tamamlanır;
 - Bu etkinlikte neler yaptık?
 - Etkinliği yaparken neler hissettiniz? (Sizin için kolay mıydı, desteğe ihtiyaç duyduunuz mu?)
 - Evde bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız, ailenize etkinliği nasıl anlatırdınız?
 - Evde bu etkinliği tekrar yapacak olsaydınız, farklı olarak neler yapmak isterdiniz?

N. THE EXEMPLARY TEACHER JOURNAL PAGES

Bygün bir velim aile katılımı etkinlikleri için çok heyecanlı olduklarını söyledi. Ancak etkinlik olarak ne yapacaklarını bilmediğini ve çekindiğini ekledi. Ben de her türlü destek olacağımı ve etkinlik fikirlerinde yardımcı olmak için hazır olduğumu söyledim. Ben böyle deyince velim çok mutlu oldu ve iletişime geçeceğini söyledi. Bu hafta yeniden habereceğiz.

14 Mart Perşembe

Geçen pazartesi telefonda konuştuğum veli ile yeniden iletişime geçtik. Velim iş yoğunlukları nedeniyle bazı pelemeyebileceklerini ekledi. Sanırım etkinlik sürecini yönetme ile ilgili kaygıları var çünkü konuşurken ne yapacaklarını bilmediğini söyledi. Ben de ne zaman isterlerse süreci başlayabileceğimizi belirttim ve konuyu sonlandırdım.

15 Mart Cuma

Bygün meslektaşımın gerçekleştirdiği aile katılımı etkinlikleri hakkında konuştuk, velilerinin çok istekli olduğunu anlattı. Yaptığı etkinlikleri gösterdi. Bu rolde neden kendi

ve ile birlikte "Hexie'nin Camur Resimleri" isimli etkinlik gerçekleştirildi. Aile etkinliği için çok istekliydi.

Kitabı okurken camur kullanarak hikayeyi resmetti. Çocuklar samut bir örnek gördükleri için çok ilgisini çekti. Gıda boyası ile renklendirdiğimiz camurlara oynarken çok istekliylerdi. Bu istekleri çocuklara da yansıdı. Çocuklarla don iletişimleri, yönlendirmeleri ve çocuk dilizle konuşmaları süreci akıcı hale getirdi. Bu velilerin daha sonra baraj dönüştürme yaptıklarında çocuklarının camurla olan etkileşiminde farklılık gözlemlediklerini daha önce hiç camura dokunmadan bu etkinlikle deneyimini kirazlarını anlattılar. Ailelerin istediği konulara sekti, oyuncu olmaları ve kendilerinden bu etkinliğe para katkıları hem çocukların hem de velilerin yeni bir bakış açısı kazanmalarına sebep oluyor.

CS CamScanner ile tarandı

getirdi. Çocukların çok ilgisini çekti. "Öğrencim nasıl yaşamı alanı oluşturduğunu anlattı.

Bu tarz bir etkinliğin aileler ile çok keyifli ilerleyeceğini düşündüm. Çocuklar böceklerle çok ilgili, aile katılımlarında veliler ile konuşarak bu tarz etkinlikleri yaygınlaştırabiliriz.

ile ilgili de konuştuk. (Bu konuda destekleyici bir etkinliğin gerekliliğine karar verdim).

Etkinliğin ardından serbest zamanla geçtik.

Her bahçeye çıktığımızda çocuklardan biri düşer ve bir yerini incitir diye çok feriliyorum. Yine tetikteyim. Çocuklar ağaçlara tırmanıp tekarleklerin üzerine çıkıyor

bahçedeki. Riskli oyunlarda nasıl kontrol

Safalayacağım konusunda ikilem yaşıyorum. Bunun en büyük sebebi de ailelere hesap verme kaygısı olabilir.

CS CamScanner ile tarandı

5 tane aile katılımı etkinliği yaptık. Her etkinliğin dinamiği ailelerin bakış açısı, kültürel yaşantıları ve iletişim becerileri açısından birbirinden farklıydı. Bazı etkinliklerde velilere her noktada yönlendirme yapmak gerekirken bazılarında hiç gerekmedi. Bu noktada velilerin süreçle ilgili bilgi ve becerileri etkileyici bir faktördü. Tüm bu aile katılımı etkinliklerinden önce velilere çocuklarla iletişim ve etkileşimleri hakkında bilgilendirici bir eğitim verilebilirdi. Bu yolla etkileşimlerini daha çok arttırmak amaçlanabilirdi.

Aile katılmaları ile velilerimle daha yakın bir bağ kurduğumuzu hissettim. Ortak bir noktada (çocukları) birleştik ve birbirimizi destekledik. İletişim kurarken kendileri ile ilgili özel bilgileri de benimle paylaştılar. Bu ev-okul arası yaşantılarını daha iyi tanımamı sağladı. Sanirimi bir ortam oluşturdu. Aile katılmalarından sonra velilerin sınıf dinamiğinin ne kadar değiştiğini öğrendim, öğretmenliğin zor olduğunu çocuk dilinden nasıl öğrendiğimizi sorular. Ev-okul-öğretmen iletişiminin çok önemli olduğunu bu noktada yeniden fark ettim.

Gecirdiğimiz birkaç ay içinde velilerimle olan iletişimin değiştiğini gözlemledim. Aileyi daha yakından tanıdım. Öğrenme ortamını aileyle birlikte nasıl tasarlayacağımızı öğrendim. Öğrenme ortamını ihtiyaçlara göre nasıl değiştireceğimizi konusundaki deneyimlerim arttı. Ailelerle yaptığımız ön görüşmeler onların bilgilerini öğrenmek ve bu doğrultuda davranışlar yapmamı sağladı. Aile katılmalarıyla velilerin hayatlarındaki yoğunluğu şahit oldum, onlar da okuldaki işlemleri gördüler. Karşılıklı anlayışa dayalı bir bağ kurduk. Kendimdeki planlama-yönetim becerilerimi geliştirdim. Eğer farklı yapabileceğim bir şey olsaydı, tüm sınıftaki veliler ile birlikte bir etkinlik yönetmek isterdim. Aile katılımı süreci benim için geliştirici ve destekleyici bir süreçti.

O. CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
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BS	TEDU, Early Childhood Education	2017

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2025-2022	TED University, Early Childhood Education	Lecturer
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PUBLICATIONS

Journal Papers

Kandemir, M., & Sevimli-Celik, S. (2021). "No Muddy Shoes, No Dirty Clothes!" Examining the Views of Teachers and Parents Regarding Children's Outdoor Play and Learning. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2021.2011339>

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Kandemir, M. (2017). *Anaokulundan Birinci Sınıfa Geçiş Sürecinde Öğretmen, Veli ve Akademisyen Görüşleri*. Sözlü Sunum. XII. Ulusal Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Öğrenci Kongresi. Sakarya Üniversitesi.

P. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Giris

Dış mekanda oyun ve öğrenme (OPAL), Frobel, Pestallozi ve Rousseau gibi teorisyenlerin ışığında dış mekan ortamlarının çocukların öğrenme ve gelişim deneyimleri üzerindeki faydalarını araştıran çeşitli çalışmalarla yıllar geçtikçe önem kazanmaktadır. Bu teorisyenler, çocukların erken yaşlardaki önemli gelişim deneyimlerinde doğanın rolünü vurgulayarak OPAL'in öncülerinden olmuşlardır (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000; Morrison, 2015). OPAL'in faydalarından bazıları, alanda özgürce hareket etmek (Bilton, 2010), iyi oluşu teşvik etmek (Hinkley vd., 2018) ve sorgulamaya dayalı becerilerin geliştirilmesi (Power ve Williams-Ridge, 2019) olarak vurgulanmıştır.

Çeşitli çalışmalar OPAL'in çocukların öğrenme ve gelişim deneyimleri için faydalarını ortaya koysa da, okuldaki OPAL uygulamalarını şekillendiren faktörler hala mevcuttur. Bu faktörlerden bazılarının öğretmenlerle ilgili olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Örneğin, öğretmenlerin OPAL hakkında sahip oldukları yanlış anlamalar OPAL uygulamalarını sınırlandırabilir (Frost vd., 2004) veya öğretmenlerin güvenlik endişesi, dış mekânda ebeveyn katılımı etkinlikleri yürütmelerini kısıtlayabilir (Kutlu-Abu ve Kayar, 2020). Ayrıca, ebeveynler de çocukların OPAL'e ilişkin bakış açılarını ve deneyimlerini şekillendirmek açısından önemlidir. Bir örnek vermek gerekirse, Kandemir ve Sevimli-Çelik (2021) ebeveynlerin endişelerinin öğretmenleri okulda düzenli olarak OPAL etkinlikleri yürütme konusunda sınırlandırdığı sonucuna ulaşmıştır. Öğretmenler ve ebeveynler arasındaki işbirliği eksikliği de bu çalışmada belirtilmiştir. Buna ek olarak, Bilton (2010) araba kazaları, çok fazla teknoloji kullanımı veya yabancı tehlikesi gibi engelleri erken yıllarda OPAL için toplumla ilgili engeller olarak örneklendirmiştir.

Verilen bilgiler ışığında, ilgili çalışma, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ve ebeveynlerin bakış açılarını ve deneyimlerini zenginleştirmeye odaklanan çeşitli eylem temelli uygulamalar yoluyla OPAL'de ebeveyn katılımını zenginleştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu araştırma amacına dayanarak, bu çalışma aşağıdaki araştırma soruları rehberliğinde yürütülmüştür: (i) Katılımcılar OPAL ebeveyn katılımını nasıl algılamakta ve yorumlamaktadır? (ii) Katılımcıların OPAL ebeveyn katılımı ile ilgili deneyimleri

nelerdir? (iii) OPAL için ebeveynlerin katılımını daha fazla artıran eylem temelli uygulamaların özellikleri nelerdir? ve (iv) OPAL'e ilişkin eylem temelli uygulamalar yoluyla ebeveyn katılımı nasıl değişmiştir?

Yürütülen çalışmanın çeşitli nedenlerden dolayı önemli olduğuna inanılmaktadır. İlk olarak, çalışmanın sadece öğretmenleri değil aynı zamanda ebeveynleri de dahil ederek OPAL'e ilişkin daha geniş bir perspektif sunarak literatüre katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir. Buna ek olarak, mevcut çalışmanın katılımcı eylem çalışması olan metodolojisiyle de önemli olduğuna inanılmaktadır. İkinci olarak, mevcut çalışmanın erken çocukluk eğitimi uygulamalarına katkı sağlaması açısından da önemli olduğuna inanılmaktadır. Örneğin, bu çalışmanın bulguları OPAL uygulamalarının ve ebeveyn katılımı uygulamalarının zenginleştirilmesine ışık tutabilir. Çalışma, OPAL zamanını uygularken karşılaştıkları engelleri en aza indirmek isteyen öğretmenleri de yönlendirebilir. Son olarak, çalışmanın OPAL deneyimlerini çocukların yararına olacak şekilde zenginleştirmek için ebeveynleri OPAL'e dahil etmenin etkili bir yolunu gösterdiğine inanılmaktadır.

Alanyazın Taraması

Bu çalışma, eyleme dayalı uygulamalar yoluyla açık havada oyun ve öğrenmeye (OPAL) ilişkin ebeveyn katılımını zenginleştirmek amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışma, çocuk eğitimi tarihindeki Rousseau (1712-1778), Pestalozzi (1746-1827) ve Frobel (1782-1852) gibi çeşitli önemli figürlerin fikirlerine dayanarak yürütülmüştür. Literatür taraması, Rousseau'nun (1712-1778), Pestalozzi (1746-1827) ve Frobel (1782-1852) üzerindeki ideolojik etkileri ve açık hava eğitimiyle ilgili eğitim uygulamaları aracılığıyla doğada eğitim fikrinin öncüsü olarak kabul edildiğini göstermiştir. Bu tarihi şahsiyetler, açık hava deneyimlerinin erken yaşlardaki çocukların sağlıklı gelişimi ve verimli öğrenme deneyimleri için bir ihtiyaç olduğu konusunda ortak bir paydada buluşmuşlardır.

Tüm araştırma sürecini yönlendirmek için ekolojik sistemler teorisi (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) ve olanaklar teorisi (Gibson, 1977) gibi çeşitli teoriler ve çerçeveler kullanılmıştır. Ekolojik sistemler teorisinin, dış ortamdaki oyun ve öğrenme deneyimlerini etkilemek üzere etkileşime giren farklı sistemleri keşfetmek ve anlamak için etkili olduğuna ve bu sistemlerin küçük çocukların öğrenme ve gelişim süreçleri

üzerindeki etkilerine dair bir bakış açısı sağladığına inanılmaktadır (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ayrıca, olanaklar teorisi, araştırmacının okulun açık hava ortamındaki olanakların katılımcılar tarafından nasıl anlaşıldığını ve bu anlayışların bu açık hava ortamındaki uygulamaları nasıl şekillendirdiğini anlamasını sağlama potansiyeli taşımaktadır (Gibson, 1977). Ayrıca, Vygotsky'nin sosyokültürel teorisi (Vygotsky, 1978), öğretmen olarak ebeveynler (PAT) modeli (Parents as Teachers, 2023) ve ikili kapasite geliştirme çerçevesi (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), OPAL ile ilgili perspektifleri ve deneyimleri zenginleştirmek için öğretmenlerin ve katılımcıların rolüne ışık tutarak bu katılımcı eylem araştırması çalışmasını desteklemektedir. Buna ek olarak, plaka temelli eğitim (PBE) (Sobel, 2004) katılımcıları keşfederek öğrenmeye ve yerel bir doğa ortamı olarak düşünülebilecek okul bahçesiyle bağlantı kurmaya yönlendirerek çalışmaya yardımcı olmaktadır.

Çocukların açık hava deneyimlerine ilişkin mevcut literatür, yalnızca öğrenme süreci için değil (örn. Campbell ve Speldewinde, 2019; Hatton vd., 2019; Okur-Berberoğlu, 2021; Miller vd., 2021; Storli ve Sandseter, 2019), aynı zamanda gelişim süreci için de (örn. Brussoni vd., 2021; Loftesnes 2021; Yıldırım ve Akamca, 2017) çeşitli faydalar göstermiştir. İlgili literatürün özetlenmesi yoluyla, ebeveyn tutumlarının çocukların okul ve ev ortamlarındaki açık hava deneyimlerini etkileyebileceği görülmüştür. Yapılan literatür taramasında, ebeveyn tutumunun her iki açık hava deneyiminin şekillenmesinde önemli bir etki olduğu tespit edilmiştir (Mart, 2021; Kandemir, 2020; Sandseter vd., 2020; White, 2014; Powers ve Williams-Ridge, 2019). Bu nedenle literatür taramasında ebeveyn katılımı ile ilgili çalışmalar da incelenmiş ve ebeveynler sürece dahil edildiğinde oyun ve dış mekan deneyimlerinin kalitesinin desteklendiği ortaya konmuştur (örn. Ma vd., 2016; Tuna vd., 2019; Yanık-Özger vd. 2020; White, 2014).

Araştırmacının Ankara Çankaya'da bulunan bir özel okulun okul dışı uygulamalarını incelemek amacıyla yürüttüğü yüksek lisans tezi, OPAL'in önemini kavrayabilmeleri için OPAL'i onlar için daha şeffaf hale getirmek amacıyla ebeveynlerin OPAL'e dahil edilmesi gerektiğini göstermiştir (Kandemir, 2020; Kandemir ve Sevimli-Çelik, 2021). Bu çalışmanın bulgularına ve önerilerine dayanarak, mevcut katılımcı eylem araştırması OPAL'de ebeveyn katılımına ilişkin ihtiyaçları karşılamak üzere planlanmış ve yürütülmüştür. Bu çalışmanın yanı sıra, yukarıda sonuçları vurgulanan

çeşitli çalışmalar OPAL'de ebeveyn katılımının güçlendirilmesi ihtiyacına işaret etmektedir. Bu nedenle mevcut çalışma, OPAL'de ebeveyn katılımına ilişkin ebeveynlerin ve öğretmenlerin bakış açılarını ve deneyimlerini zenginleştirmek üzere kurgulanmıştır. Ayrıca, araştırmacının metodoloji bölümünde açıklanan akademik ve öğretmenlik deneyiminin, araştırmacının bir öğretmen olarak araştırma ortamının bir parçası olan içeriden biri ve bu katılımcı eylem araştırmasını yürüten bir yüksek lisans öğrencisi olan dışarıdan biri rolü aracılığıyla araştırma süreci için verimli olacağına inanılmaktadır.

Yöntem

OPAL'de ebeveyn katılımını zenginleştirmeyi amaçlayan bu nitel çalışma, katılımcı eylem araştırması ile yürütülmüştür. Katılımcı eylem araştırması, uygulanan eylemler aracılığıyla belirli bir düzeyde değişim sağlarken bireyleri güçlendirmek olarak tanımlanabilir (Frankel vd., 2016). McNiff ve Whitehead'in (2006) eylem döngüsü adımları çalışma boyunca araştırmacıya rehberlik etmiş, böylece bu katılımcı eylem araştırmasını yürütmek için gözlemlenme, yansıtma, harekete geçme, değerlendirme ve değiştirme adımları takip edilmiştir.

Kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen bu çalışmanın katılımcıları, çocukları okulda öğrenci olarak kayıtlı olan 12 gönüllü okul öncesi öğretmeni ve 17 gönüllü ebeveynidir. Araştırma ortamı, Ankara Çankaya'da bulunan bir devlet okulunun bahçesidir. Okul bahçesi ön bahçe, yan bahçe ve iki farklı arka bahçe olmak üzere dört alandan oluşmaktadır. Gerekli etik ve resmi izinler alındıktan sonra araştırmacı, 12 öğretmen ve 17 ebeveynin katılımıyla ihtiyaç ve bağlam analizi için veri toplamıştır. Sonraki adımlar olan eylem döngülerinin uygulanması ve genel değerlendirme için bir öğretmen ve beş ebeveyn gönüllü olmuştur.

İhtiyaç ve bağlam analizi için veriler öğretmen ve ebeveynler ile yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, öğretmenlerin OPAL uygulamalarının üç ay boyunca gözlemlenmesi ve altı aylık OPAL temelli planların aylık planlarda analiz edilmesi yoluyla toplanmıştır. İhtiyaç ve bağlam analizi bulgularına dayanarak, üç ay boyunca beş farklı eylem döngüsü uygulanmıştır. Bu süreçte araştırmacı, öğretmen ve ebeveynler ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yaparak ve OPAL etkinliklerine katılan gönüllü ebeveynleri gözlemleyerek veri toplamıştır. Bir sonraki adım olan genel

değerlendirme için veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Bu veri toplama araçlarına ek olarak, araştırmacı ve gönüllü öğretmen günlükleri de süreci tamamlayıcı veriler olarak desteklemektedir.

İhtiyaç ve bağlam analizi için toplanan veriler içerik ve tematik analiz yoluyla çözümlenmiştir. Tematik analiz aynı zamanda eylem döngüsü uygulama adımları ve tüm eylem sürecinin genel değerlendirmesi için de kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın güvenilirliği üçgenleme, uzun süreli katılım, zengin-kalın bir betimleme sağlama, üye kontrolü ve değerlendiriciler arası güvenilirlik ile desteklenmiştir (Creswell, 2007; Miles ve Huberman, 1994; Frankel vd., 2016). Çalışmanın mevcut sınırlamaları tartışma bölümünde ayrıntılı olarak açıklanmıştır.

Bulgular

Ebeveynler dış mekanla ilgili ve ebeveynle ilgili açıklamalar yapmıştır. Dış mekanla ilgili açıklamalar okul bahçesi, risk ve hava durumu ile ilgili açıklamalar olarak sıralanmıştır. Ebeveynler okul bahçesini gelişimi ve öğrenmeyi destekleyen verimli bir alan olarak tanımladı. Öte yandan okul bahçesi, güvenlik açısından tehlike oluşturabilecek kontrolsüz bir alan olarak da tanımlanmaktadır. Ebeveynler tarafından risk; düşme, çarpma, yabancı madde yeme ve okul dışına çıkma gibi güvensiz durumlar olarak tanımlanmıştır. Son tanımlama kötü hava koşullarıyla ilgili olarak yapılmıştır. Ebeveynlere göre kötü hava, don ve fırtına gibi aşırı hava koşulları nedeniyle çocukların fiziksel rahatsızlık yaşadığı hava durumudur. Ebeveyn katılımı ile ilgili tanımlar, katılımın tanımları ve katılımın önemi olarak sıralanmıştır. Ebeveynler, ebeveyn katılımını, ebeveynlerin çocuklarıyla birlikte sınıfta bir öğrenme etkinliği yapmak için okula gelme süreci olarak tanımlamıştır. Ebeveynler ayrıca katılımın önemini çocukların gelişim sürecine ilişkin bilgi alışverişi olarak tanımladı.

Ebeveynler, OPAL ve okulda gerçekleştirilen katılım uygulamaları hakkında ne bildiklerini ve ne düşündüklerini yansıtmışlardır. Ebeveynler OPAL ile ilgili olarak etkinlik türlerini, etkinlik süresini ve etkinlikle ilgili iletişimi vurgulamışlardır. OPAL uygulamaları ebeveynler tarafından serbest oyun, doğa incelemesi, yapılandırılmış oyun ve botanik etkinlikleri olarak sıralanmıştır. Ayrıca, sıklık ve sürenin çoğunlukla hava koşullarına göre değiştiği vurgulanmıştır. OPAL uygulamalarına ilişkin iletişimin okulun web uygulaması üzerinden yapıldığı vurgulanmıştır. Ebeveyn

katılımı uygulamaları açısından, ebeveynler iletişim, ebeveynlik, karar verme ve gönüllülük yoluyla katılım deneyimlediklerini ancak yansıttıkları kadarıyla en çok iletişim ve ebeveynlik deneyimlediklerini belirtmişlerdir. Örneğin, ebeveynlerin çoğu web uygulamaları ve WhatsApp grupları gibi farklı iletişim araçları aracılığıyla çocuklarının gelişimiyle ilgili düzenli bilgi paylaşımını vurgulamıştır.

Ebeveynler ayrıca, öğretmenlerle ve okul müdürüyle yapılan yüz yüze görüşmelerin, çocuklarının okul dışındaki gelişimlerini nasıl destekleyecekleri konusunda tavsiyelerde bulunmak için faydalı olduğunu vurgulamıştır. Ayrıca, ebeveynler çocuklarıyla okul dışında neler yaptıklarını paylaşarak markete gitmek, ev işleri yapmak veya parkta oynamak gibi uygulamaları sıraladılar. Erken çocukluk eğitiminde OPAL hakkındaki fikirleri sorulduğunda, ebeveynler OPAL'in çocukların ilk yıllarındaki gelişim ve öğrenme deneyimleri üzerindeki faydaları hakkındaki anlayışlarını paylaştılar. Bu faydalar bilişsel, fiziksel ve sosyal-duygusal gelişim alanları için sıralandı. Ebeveynlerin çoğu OPAL'in çocukların yaparak öğrenmelerini desteklediğini ve böylece öğrenmeyi daha kalıcı hale getirdiğini vurgulamıştır. Fiziksel gelişim açısından, ebeveynler çoğunlukla OPAL'in güneş ışığı, temiz hava, aktif olma ve motor becerileri destekleme yoluyla çocukların fiziksel refahını nasıl desteklediğine odaklandı. Ayrıca, ebeveynlere göre OPAL özgür, mutlu ve rahat olma hissini destekleyerek çocukların kendilerini daha iyi hissetmelerini sağlıyor. Buna ek olarak, ebeveynlerin belirttiği kadarıyla çocuklar OPAL deneyimleri sayesinde bekleme ve paylaşma gibi sosyal becerileri de öğreniyor.

Ebeveynler OPAL'in faydalarına inanmakla birlikte, OPAL'in bazı engelleri de beraberinde getirebileceğini düşünmektedir. Engellerle ilgili olarak, ebeveynlerin çoğu güvenlik ve hastalıklarla ilgili endişelerini dile getirmiştir. Eğitim programında düzenli ve yeterli OPAL planının yer almaması, yeni mezun bir öğretmen olmak, OPAL politikasının olmaması ve yetersiz sınıf yönetimi ebeveynlere göre OPAL'in önündeki diğer engeller olarak tanımlanmıştır. Ayrıca, artan şehirleşme, çalışma saatlerinin artması, teknolojinin ilerlemesi ve kapalı alanlarda daha fazla zaman geçirmeye alışma gibi sosyo-kültürel değişimler de OPAL'in önündeki engeller olarak vurgulanmıştır. OPAL'in faydaları ve engellerinin yanı sıra, ebeveynler OPAL'in okul ortamında nasıl geliştirilebileceği konusunda da görüş bildirmiştir. Ebeveynler, OPAL uygulamalarının ebeveyn katılımının güçlendirilmesi, OPAL zamanının yeniden

düzenlenmesi ve bir OPAL politikası belirlenmesi yoluyla zenginleştirilebileceğine inanmaktadır. Ebeveyn katılımının güçlendirilmesi açısından, ebeveynlerin açıkladığı kadarıyla beklentileri öğrenmek ve endişeleri en aza indirmek için daha fazla gönüllü faaliyet ve seminerler düzenlenebilir. Ayrıca, ebeveynler OPAL zamanının daha fazla zaman sağlanarak, ortam yeniden düzenlenerek ve hava koşullarına uygun kıyafetler temin edilerek yeniden düzenlenebileceğini vurgulamıştır. Ebeveynlerin son önerisi, hava koşullarına veya endişelere göre değiştirilmeyen net bir politika oluşturarak OPAL politikasının belirlenmesiyle ilgiliydi.

Ebeveynler ayrıca ilk yıllarda ebeveyn katılımı hakkında ne düşündüklerini de açıkladılar. Ebeveynlerin düşüncelerine dayanarak, ebeveyn katılımının çocuklar ve ebeveynler için faydaları gösterilmiştir. Katılım uygulamaları sayesinde ebeveynler öğretmenlerle daha fazla empati kurabilmekte, iletişimi güçlendirmekte, ebeveynlik becerilerini geliştirmekte, çocuklarının gelişimi hakkında bilgi sahibi olmakta ve ebeveynlerin vurguladığı kadarıyla okula daha fazla güvenmektedir. Ebeveynler de katılımın çocuklar için faydalarını dile getirmiştir. Geçiş sürecinde çocuklara yardım eden ebeveynlerin katılımı, evde geçirilen zamanın kalitesini desteklemekte, güven ilişkilerini güçlendirmekte ve ebeveynlerin bakış açısı açısından öğrenme konusuna dikkat çekmektedir. Ayrıca ebeveynler, katılımın çocukları mutlu, gururlu ve motive hissettirdiğini de belirtmiştir. Ebeveynler ayrıca, daha fazla gönüllü faaliyet düzenlemek ve işbirliğini desteklemek gibi ihtiyaçların karşılanması yoluyla ebeveyn katılımının nasıl artırılabilmesine dair anlayışlarını da paylaştı. İhtiyaçların karşılanmasının yanı sıra, bazı ebeveynler çocuklarının öğrenme ve gelişim sürecine aktif olarak dahil olmak için çeşitli arzularını vurgulamışlardır, böylece katılımı artırırken dahil olma, katkıda bulunma ve öğrenme arzusuna odaklanılabilir.

Araştırmacı, ebeveynlerin yanı sıra öğretmenlerin OPAL ve ebeveyn katılımı uygulamalarına ilişkin anlayış ve deneyimlerini keşfetmek için de yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirmiştir. Bu amaçla, halen okulda görev yapan 12 öğretmene açık uçlu sorular yöneltilmiştir. İlk olarak öğretmenlerden OPAL ve ebeveyn katılımı denince akıllarına ne geldiğini anlatmaları istenmiştir. Bazı öğretmenler OPAL'i daha az olduğu için daha değerli olarak tanımlarken, bazı öğretmenler de personel eksikliği nedeniyle OPAL'i sıkıntılı olarak nitelendirmiştir. Ayrıca, öğretmenlere göre OPAL farklı öğrenme çıktılarını desteklemek için değerli bir fırsat olarak tanımlanırken,

sadece serbest oyuna dayalı olarak da oluşturulabilmektedir. OPAL'in tanımlanmasının ardından öğretmenler düşme, vurma, boğulma ve okuldan kaçma gibi örnekler vererek risk tanımlamalarını yansıtmıştır. Açık havanın risklerinin yanı sıra öğretmenler soğuk, rüzgar, yağmur, fırtına ve -5 derecenin altında olma gibi özellikleri vurgulayarak kötü hava koşullarından ne anladıklarını anlattılar.

Okul bahçesinin işlevini tanımlamak, öğretmenlerin yanıtlarına dayalı analizde oluşturulan bir başka koddu. Öğretmenler, okul bahçesini doğayı gözlemlemek için bir alan, birçok etkinliğin yapılabileceği üretken bir alan, açık uçlu materyallerle oynama fırsatı sunan bir oyun alanı ve saklambaç gibi oyunları zenginleştirmek için fırsatlar sunan bir oyun alanı gibi çeşitli işlevler içinde yansıttılar. Ek olarak, öğretmenler okul bahçesinin boyutunu nasıl algıladıklarını yansıttılar. Okul bahçesinin boyutu, bazı öğretmenler tarafından çocukların oynayabileceği ve ebeveyn katılımı etkinlikleri yürütebileceği kadar büyük olarak tanımlanırken, diğerleri çocukların güvenliğini sağlamak için bir bariyer olarak büyük olduğunu belirtti. Buna ek olarak, okul bahçesinin boyutu, çocukları bire bir gözlemlemek ve yapılandırılmış öğrenme ve ebeveyn katılımı etkinlikleri yürütmek için çok küçük olarak tanımlandı. Öğretmenler ayrıca ebeveynlerin erken çocukluk eğitimi sürecine katılımı hakkında ne düşündüklerini de açıkladılar. Öğretmenlerin çoğu katılımı, etkinlikler yürütmek veya çocuklarının sınıfıyla oynamak için okula gelmek olarak tanımladı. Öğretmenler, ebeveynlerin çocuklar hakkında en iyi bilgi kaynağı olması nedeniyle süreçte ebeveyn katılımının olması gerektiğini ancak ebeveynleri süreçle ilgili karar alma süreçlerine çok fazla dahil etmemek gibi katılımın sınırları olması gerektiğini vurguladılar. Öğretmenlere göre ebeveynler öğrenme liderleri, materyal sağlayıcıları, deneyim aktarıcıları, saha uzmanları, bilgi sağlayıcıları ve uygulayıcılar olmak üzere farklı roller üstlenebilirler.

Öğretmenlerin uygulamaları ebeveyn katılımı ve OPAL'in planlama, uygulama ve değerlendirme adımlarıyla ilgili olarak bildirilmiştir. Planlama adımı açısından öğretmenler OPAL planlarını hazırlarken öğrenme çıktıları, hava koşulları, zaman, materyaller, çevre, çocuklar arasındaki farklılıklar, dikkat çekme, çocuk katılımı ve OPAL konusu hakkında yeterli içerik bilgisine sahip olma konularına dikkat ettiklerini vurgulamışlardır. Ayrıca öğretmenler güvenliği sağlama, sorunlu davranışları en aza indirme, dikkat çekme, öğretim kalitesini artırma, zamanı etkili yönetme, enerji

boşaltma, uygun giyim ve hava koşullarının OPAL uygulaması sırasında dikkat ettikleri önemli hususlar olduğunu vurgulamışlardır. Ayrıca öğretmenler OPAL uygulamalarının zamanının ve süresinin hava koşullarına göre değiştiğini belirtmişlerdir.

Bu bağlamda öğretmenler OPAL süresini kötü hava koşullarında 15-20 dk, iyi hava koşullarında ise 45-50 dk olarak belirtmişlerdir. Bunun yanında öğretmenler genellikle okul bahçesinde fen ve doğa aktiviteleri yaptıklarını vurgulamışlardır. Öğretmenlerin çoğu OPAL deneyimlerini değerlendiremediklerini belirtmişlerdir. Öğretmenlerin sadece bir kısmı OPAL değerlendirmesinin çocukları değerlendirmek için açık uçlu sorular ve gözlem kullanımı, öz değerlendirme yapma ve etkinlik değerlendirmesi yoluyla yapıldığını vurgulamışlardır. Ayrıca öğretmenlerin genellikle okulun web uygulaması, WhatsApp grubu ve yüz yüze görüşmeler gibi iletişim araçlarını kullanarak OPAL ile ilgili öz bakım ve hava koşulları hakkında ebeveynlere iletişim kurdukları vurgulanmıştır. Katılım uygulamaları açısından ise öğretmenlerin çocuklarının gelişimi hakkında ebeveynlerle iletişim kurarak ve evde öğrenmeyi desteklemek için ödev vererek katılım uygulamaları yürüttükleri sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Öğretmenler OPAL uygulamalarına benzer şekilde katılım uygulamaları için iletişim araçlarını okulun web uygulaması, WhatsApp grubu ve yüz yüze görüşmeler olarak belirtmişlerdir.

Öğretmenler OPAL'ın bilişsel, fiziksel ve sosyal-duygusal gelişim açısından faydalarını açıkladılar. Öğretmenlere göre OPAL uygulamaları, duyuşsal öğrenme ve oyun tabanlı öğrenme yardımıyla gerçekleşen yaparak öğrenme şansı sağlayarak bilişsel gelişimi destekliyor. Öğretmenlerin bakış açısına göre OPAL uygulamaları sayesinde çocuklar ayrıca öğrenmenin açık hava ortamında da gerçekleştiğinin farkına varıyorlar. Öğretmenlere göre OPAL, öğrenmeye ek olarak merakı, yaratıcılığı, dikkat süresini ve hafızayı kolaylaştırdığını da vurguladı. Öğretmenler ayrıca OPAL'ın çocukların karşılaştırma ve risk alma ile ilgili beceriler geliştirmesini desteklediğini belirttiler. Öğretmenlerin OPAL'ın faydalarını gözlemlediği ikinci gelişim alanı fiziksel gelişim olarak vurgulandı. Bu bağlamda, çocukların motor becerileri ve fiziksel iyilik hali öğretmenlere göre OPAL'ın faydaları arasında sıralandı. Ayrıca öğretmenler, OPAL'ın çocukların güneş ışığından ve temiz havadan faydalanmasının yanı sıra daha fazla hareket etmelerini ve enerjilerini boşaltmalarını sağladığını

vurguladılar. Son olarak, öğretmenler sosyal-duygusal gelişim üzerindeki faydalarına vurgu yaptılar. Öğretmenler OPAL uygulamalarının uygulanması sırasında çocukların daha rahat, mutlu, özgür, daha motive ve sabırlı olduklarını gözlemlediklerini paylaştılar.

Öğretmenler OPAL'ın çocuklara sağladığı yararların yanı sıra engellerine de dikkat çekmişlerdir. Öğretmenlere göre OPAL uygulamaları sosyo-kültürel değişimler, yetişkinler, çocuklar ve okul ile ilgili engeller taşımaktadır. Yetişkinlerle ilgili engeller açısından ise öğretmenler çoğunlukla öğretmen ve ebeveynlerin endişelerini dile getirmişlerdir. Bu endişeler güvenlik, hastalık ve hijyenle ilgili endişeler olarak ileri sürülmüştür. Öğretmenler bu engellere ek olarak çocukların eğitim programındaki planları tamamlamalarıyla ilişkili olarak akademik gelişimleri konusunda da endişe duyduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca bazı öğretmenler OPAL uygulaması konusunda ebeveynlerle ve okul yönetimiyle çatışma yaşama konusunda endişelerini paylaşmış ve ebeveynlerin ve yönetimin OPAL uygulamaları hakkında istedikleri şeyleri yaparak çatışmalardan kaçındıklarını belirtmişlerdir. İkinci engel kategorisinin çocuklarla ilgili olduğu ifade edilmiştir. Öğretmenler OPAL uygulamalarının uygulanması sırasında çocuklardan kaynaklanan engeller olarak düşmeyle ilgili kazaları, hastalanmayı, vücut ısısını anlayamamayı, OPAL deneyimi eksikliğini, mevsime göre giyinmemeyi ve odaklanamamayı vurgulamışlardır. Üçüncüsü, öğretmenler okul ile ilgili engelleri iş yoğunluğu, personel eksikliği, özel okul olması, kalabalık sınıf, yetersiz okul bahçesi, materyallerin yetersizliği ve atölye sistemi olarak vurguladılar. Son olarak, öğretmenler mahalle kültürünün ortadan kalkması, kapalı alana odaklı yaşam, güvenlik endişeleri, çekirdek aile olmak ve COVID-19 gibi sosyokültürel değişikliklere dikkat çekti.

Öğretmenlere göre, OPAL uygulamaları ebeveyn katılımını güçlendiren ve sınıf yönetimini iyileştiren çeşitli uygulamalar yoluyla geliştirilebilir. Ebeveynlerin OPAL uygulamalarına katılımını desteklemek açısından, öğretmenler gönüllü faaliyetlerin okul bahçesinde yapılmasını önermektedir. Ayrıca, öğretmenler ebeveynlerin yalnızca uygulamaya değil, aynı zamanda OPAL uygulamasının planlama ve değerlendirmesinin bazı kısımlarına da dahil olabileceğini belirtmiştir. Ebeveynleri sürece daha fazla dahil etmenin yanı sıra, öğretmenler OPAL'ı geliştirmek istiyorlarsa sınıf yönetimi uygulamalarını geliştirmeleri gerektiğini de vurgulamıştır.

Öğretmenler, dikkat çekmek için tekerlemelerin kullanımını, çocukların ihtiyaçlarını anlama ve zamanı etkili bir şekilde yönetme gibi uygulamalar yoluyla önerilerini örneklendirmiştir.

Öğretmenler ayrıca ebeveynleri öğrenme ve gelişim deneyimlerine dahil etmenin sadece çocuklar için değil aynı zamanda ebeveynler için de nasıl faydalar sağladığını yansıttılar. Ebeveynler için faydalar konusunda öğretmenler, ebeveynlerin katılım uygulamaları aracılığıyla öğretmenlerle daha fazla vurgu yapabildiklerini ve daha fazla iletişim kurabildiklerini, çünkü öğretmenlerin süreçte neler yaptıklarını gözlemlediklerini ve bir parçası olduklarını belirttiler. Benzer şekilde, ebeveynlerin endişeleri en aza indiriliyor çünkü ebeveynler bu uygulamaları gerçek bağlamda deneyimlediklerinde öğretmen uygulamalarını daha iyi anlayabiliyorlar. Dahası, ebeveynler çocuklarıyla kaliteli zaman geçirme ve öğretmenlerin belirttiği kadarıyla kendilerini daha iyi hissetme fırsatlarına sahip oluyorlar. Bu katılım uygulamaları ayrıca ebeveynlerin çocuklarının gelişimsel ilerlemesini anlamalarını da destekliyor çünkü ebeveynler çocuklarını aynı yaş grubundaki diğer kişilerle gözlemleyebiliyor ve karşılaştırabiliyorlar. İkinci olarak, öğretmenler katılım uygulamalarının uygulanmasından çocuklarda gözlemledikleri faydaların ne tür olduğunu yansıttılar. Bu bağlamda öğretmenler, çocukların nasıl mutlu, gururlu ve kendinden emin hissettikleri konusundaki gözlemlerini paylaştılar. Dahası, öğretmenlerin bakış açısına göre katılım uygulaması çocukların daha fazla dikkatini çektiği için daha kalıcı öğrenme sağlıyor. Son faydanın öğretmenler tarafından okula uyum sürecini kolaylaştırması olarak vurgulandığı belirtildi.

Öğretmenler, faydalarının yanı sıra ebeveyn katılımı uygulamalarının engellerini de belirttiler. İlk engel, ebeveynler veya okul müdürüyle çatışma yaşama endişesi, yetersiz sınıf yönetimi, zayıf iletişim, teori ve uygulama arasındaki tutarsızlık, beklentileri karşılayamama endişesi, ebeveynlerin aşırı beklentileri, ebeveynlerin yargılayıcı tutumu, ebeveynlerin iş yükü ve öğrenmenin her yerde gerçekleştiğini anlayamama gibi yetişkinlerle ilgili engeller olarak vurgulandı. Öğretmenler, ebeveyn katılımıyla ilgili bir diğer odak noktası olarak okul ile ilgili engelleri vurguladılar. Bu okul ile ilgili engeller, COVID-19 nedeniyle gönüllülük uygulamamak, etkinlik planlarına ebeveyn katılımının eksikliği, yetersiz öğrenme ortamı ve özel okul olmak olarak sıralandı. Son olarak, öğretmenler ebeveyni paylaşma ve ebeveynleri ev

hatırlatıcıları olarak görme konusunda joule olmama gibi çocukla ilgili engellere odaklandılar.

Bağlamı ve ihtiyaçları anlamak için araştırmacı, farklı yaş gruplarında 20 dakikadan 60 dakikaya kadar değişen 15 OPAL gözlem seansı gerçekleştirdi. Gözlem verileri araştırmacının OPAL zamanı sırasındaki uygulamalar, OPAL materyalleri ve OPAL rolleri olmak üzere üç temaya ulaşmasını sağladı. OPAL zamanı uygulamaları, OPAL zamanından önce, sırasında ve sonrasında uygulanan uygulamalar içerisinde oluşturulmuştur. Öğretmenlerin OPAL zamanından hemen önce kıyafetlere dikkat ettikleri ve sınıf kurallarını hatırlattıkları gözlemlenmiştir. OPAL zamanı sırasında çocukların serbest oyun zamanına sahip oldukları gözlemlenmiştir. Serbest oyun zamanının ardından öğretmenlerin okul bahçesinde doğayı keşfetmeye odaklanan fen ve doğa OPAL etkinlikleri uyguladıkları gözlemlenmiştir. OPAL zamanının sonuna doğru, öğretmenlerin genellikle çocuklarla yürütülen OPAL etkinliğini değerlendirmek için değerlendirmeler uygulamadığı gözlemlenmiştir. Ayrıca, okul bahçesinden içeri girildikten sonra kıyafet değiştirme, tuvalete gitme ve el yıkama rutinleri gözlemlenmiştir. OPAL zamanının ardından, öğretmenlerin çoğunun çocuklar için içeride serbest zaman sağladığı gözlemlenmiştir.

Kullanılan materyaller açısından, OPAL zamanında açık uçlu, doğal materyaller, hikaye kitapları ve yapılandırılmış oyuncakların kullanıldığı gözlemlendi. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin OPAL aktivitelerini yürütmek için ön bahçeyi kullandıkları gözlemlenirken, kum havuzu ve masaların bulunduğu arka bahçenin bir kısmı OPAL gözlem seansları sırasında kullanılmadı. Öğretmen rolleri, OPAL gözlemi yoluyla ulaşılan son temaydı. Gözlemler sırasında araştırmacı, öğretmenlerin yönetici/yönlendirici, oyun lideri, fotoğrafçı ve yardımcı oyuncu olmak üzere farklı roller üstlendiğini gözlemledi. Araştırmacı, OPAL zamanında çoğunlukla yönetici/yönlendirici rolünü, öğretmenlerin oyunun nasıl oynanması gerektiği konusunda talimatlar verdiğini veya çocukların güvenliğini sağladığını gözlemleyerek gözlemledi.

OPAL ile ilgili aylık planların doküman analizi, okul bahçesindeki OPAL faaliyetlerini anlamak için de yapılmıştır. Bu amaçla araştırmacı, Eylül ayından Mart ayına kadar altı aylık dönemi kapsayan aylık planları analiz etmiştir. Analiz, OPAL

planlarının aylık dağılımını, OPAL planlarının faaliyet türlerini, OPAL planlarında kullanılan materyalleri ve OPAL planlarında odaklanılan konuları ortaya koymuştur. OPAL faaliyetlerinin dağılımı açısından, 24-36 aylık çocuk yaş grubunun en fazla OPAL faaliyetine (n=27) sahip olduğu, 36-48 aylık ve 48-60 aylık yaş gruplarının ise altı ay boyunca en az OPAL faaliyet planına (n=22) sahip olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca, OPAL faaliyetlerinin çoğunun Eylül (n=26) ve Ekim (n=22) aylarında yapılmak üzere yazıldığı bulunmuştur. Kasım ayının okul bahçesinde yaş gruplarıyla en az OPAL faaliyetinin (n=3) yapıldığı ay olduğu bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, okul bahçesinde çoğunlukla bilim temelli OPAL etkinliklerinin (n=46) uygulandığı, matematik etkinliklerinin (n=1) ise uygulanmadığı görülmüştür. OPAL planlarında kullanılan materyallere bakıldığında, planlara çoğunlukla kurdele, kağıt, kalem, sepet, top, tabak, bardak, büyüteç, bilgi kartı ve ip gibi diğer materyallerin (n=33) yerleştirildiği görülmüştür. Bu materyalleri takiben incelenen planlarda en çok bitki örtüsü (n=24) kullanılmıştır. Son olarak, doküman analizi OPAL planlarının çoğunlukla okul bahçesinde doğayı incelemeye ilgili bitki örtüsü konusuna (n=25) odaklandığını ortaya koymuştur.

İlk eylem döngüsünden önce, yani ilk ebeveyn katımlı etkinlikten önce, gönüllü ebeveyn, araştırmacı ve öğretmenle bir toplantı yapmak üzere okula davet edilir. Araştırmacı ve öğretmen, ilk gönüllü ebeveyne, çocukların okul bahçesindeki solucanları incelemeye olan ilgilerine dayanarak planlanan kompost etkinliğini teklif eder. Bu toplantıda, öncelikle öğretmen ve araştırmacı etkinliğin amaçlarına odaklanmış, ardından öğrenme sürecinin adımları, yani ebeveynlerin ne yapması gerektiği ve etkinlik materyalleri gönüllü ebeveynle tartışılmıştır. Bu döngünün sonunda, araştırmacı gönüllü ebeveynle okulda OPAL deneyimi hakkında kısa bir görüşme yapmıştır. Ardından araştırmacı, etkinlik hakkında öğretmenle bir görüşme gerçekleştirmiştir. Bu görüşme, öğretmeni ve araştırmacıyı, konunun içselleştirilmesini destekleyen bilgi kartları ve resimli kitaplar gibi daha fazla görsel içeren bir ebeveyn katılım etkinliği planlamaya yöneltmiştir. İkinci olarak, sürecin, bilgilerin (örneğin kompost nasıl yapılır) çocukların kolayca anlayabileceği bir şekilde açıklanmasıyla daha çocuk merkezli olduğu düşünülmüştür.

İlk eylem döngüsü için yapılan yansımalara dayanarak, gönüllü öğretmenle ikinci eylem döngüsü planlandı. Bu döngüde, araştırmacı ve öğretmenle etkinlik planı

hakkında konuşmak üzere başka bir gönüllü ebeveyn okula davet edildi. Bu döngü bir çiçeğin yaşam döngüsüne odaklandı. Gönüllü ebeveynlerin mesleği olan pilates eğitmenliği göz önünde bulundurularak, farklı çiçek bilgi kartları ve çiçek yaşam döngülerini gösteren bilgi kartlarının yanı sıra sürece bahçe yogası da dahil edildi. Bu plan için, ebeveyn öncelikle bilgi kartlarının yardımıyla süreci anlatarak ve tohum, büyüme ve çiçeklenme gibi yaşam döngüsünün adımlarını temsil eden bazı özel toga hareketleri yaparak bir çiçeğin yaşam döngüsünü açıklamaya çalıştı. Döngünün sonunda, araştırmacı ebeveyn ve gönüllü öğretmenle görüşmeler yaptı ve ebeveyn katılım etkinliğinin duyuşal öğrenmeyi içermesi gerektiği yansıtıldı. Bu görüşmenin ardından araştırmacı ve öğretmen tarafından bir ebeveyn bülteni hazırlandı. Bu bültende, erken çocukluk döneminde açık havada zaman geçirmenin faydaları ve ebeveynlerin çocuklarıyla dışarıda neler yapabileceği ele alındı. Ebeveynlerin bu bülteni incelemeleri sonucunda fikirleri alındı ve ebeveynler, OPAL çerçevesinde ebeveynlik konusunda kendilerine daha faydalı olması açısından bu bültenin nasıl geliştirilebileceği konusunda fikirlerini paylaştılar.

Üçüncü eylem döngüsünün duyuşal öğrenmeye odaklanması planlandı. Bu amaçla dokunma ve işitme duyuşalarını vurgulayan bir çamurlu oyun etkinliği planlandı. Etkinlik planlandıktan sonra araştırmacı ve öğretmenle planı görüşmek üzere başka bir gönüllü ebeveyn okula davet edildi. Bu etkinlik planında ebeveyn farklı hayvanları tanıtmaya odaklandı. Bu nedenle sürece farklı hayvan sesleri dahil edildi. Bu hayvan seslerini duyuş tanıdıktan sonra ebeveyn hayvan yaşamıyla ilgili bir hikaye kitabı okudu ve ardından çocuklarla hayvanlarla bütünleştirilmiş çamurlu oyun oynandı. Bu döngünün sonunda yapılan yansıtma süreci, etkinlik sürecinin çocuklara öğrenme adımları sırasında doğrudan açıklama ve yönlendirme yapmak yerine, onların yüksek düzey düşünme becerilerini destekleyebileceğini ortaya koydu. Örneğin, ebeveyn sadece etkinliğin materyallerini gösterebilir ve bu etkinlik için bu materyallerle ne yapabileceğini sorabilir. Ayrıca, bir sonraki etkinlik sürecinde yaratıcılık becerilerine daha fazla odaklanması planlandı.

Dördüncü eylem döngüsü için araştırmacı ve öğretmen çamur boyasına odaklanan ebeveyn katılımlı bir etkinlik planladılar. Etkinlik planlandıktan sonra, araştırmacı ve öğretmenle plan hakkında bir toplantı yapmak üzere başka bir gönüllü ebeveyn okula davet edildi. Toplantı sırasında, ebeveynin akıcı bir şekilde İngilizce konuşabilen iki

dilli olması dikkate alınarak plana hikaye anlatma kısmı da eklendi. Etkinlik, çocuklarla birlikte çamur yapmayı, gıda boyasını çamurla karıştırmayı ve çamurla resim yapmayı seven bir çocukla ilgili bir hikaye dinledikten sonra istedikleri gibi çamur boyasıyla resim yapmayı denemelerini sağlamak için uygulandı. Dördüncü etkinliğin yansıtma kısmı, ebeveynlerin çocuklarla etkileşime girme konusunda da bazı özel bilgilere ihtiyaç duyduklarını ortaya koydu; örneğin, yaş grubuna uygun bir hikayenin nasıl okunacağı, yönlendirici soruların nasıl sorulacağı vb.

Son eylem döngüsü, gönüllü ebeveynlerin çocuklarla etkili bir şekilde nasıl etkileşim kuracaklarına dair bakış açılarını desteklemeye odaklandı. Bu amaçla, etkinlik sırasında ne tür sorular sorulması gerektiği ve nasıl bir destek sağlanması gerektiği gibi çeşitli örnekler tartışıldı. Bu odak çerçevesinde, etkinlik matematikle bütünleştirilmiş bir duyuşal etkinlik olarak planlandı. Bu etkinlikte, gönüllü ebeveyn, yaş grubundaki çocuklarla etkili etkileşim uygulamaları yoluyla sayılar ve basit toplama işlemleri üzerinde çalışmak için su balonları kullandı. Beşinci etkinliği tamamladıktan sonra, araştırmacı ve Güneş Hanım, dördüncü döngüden sonra belirlenen ihtiyaçların beşinci döngünün uygulanmasıyla karşılandığının görüldüğünü tartıştılar. Bu nedenle, araştırmacı ve Güneş Hanım, eylem döngüsü sürecinin uygulanmasını sonlandırmaya karar verdiler.

Bayan Güneş ile yapılan genel değerlendirme, onun anlayışının ve deneyimlerinin eylem süreci boyunca nasıl değiştiğini gösterdi. Bu değişiklikler, deneyimlenen iyileştirmeler, deneyimlenen engeller, uygulama değerlendirmeleri, açıklamalar ve daha fazla iyileştirme için öneriler temaları aracılığıyla gösterildi. Deneyimlenen iyileştirme açısından, Bayan Güneş, daha fazla öğretilbilir anlar sağlayan, oyunculuğu daha fazla destekleyen ve daha iyi sınıf yönetimi sağlayan OPAL faydalarını daha iyi anlayabildiğini belirtti. Bayan Güneş tarafından yansıtılan ikinci odak noktası ebeveyn katılımıyla ilgiliydi. Kendisinin belirttiği kadarıyla, katılımın gerekliliğini daha iyi anlayabildi, katılım eksikliğinin üstesinden geldi, etkileşimi artırdı, iletişimi güçlendirdi, ebeveynlere daha fazla empati kurdu ve rehberlik etti, vb.

Deneyimlenen engellerle ilgili olarak, Bayan Güneş çalışmanın başında ebeveynlere ulaşmakta ve ebeveyn katılımının önemini açıklamakta zorlandığını vurguladı. Ayrıca, Bayan Güneş, ebeveynlerin önceki deneyimlerini öğrenerek, rehberlik etme rolünü

üstlenmeye çalışarak, deneyimsel öğrenmeye yönlendirerek, bütünleşik öğrenmenin anlaşılmasını destekleyerek, ebeveynlerin lider olmalarını destekleyerek ve değerlendirmenin nasıl yapılabileceğini göstererek sürece katılımlarını desteklemeye dikkat ettiğini vurguladı. Ayrıca, Bayan Güneş, genel değerlendirme sürecinde katılımın ve OPAL'ın faydalarıyla ilgili açıklamalarda bulundu. Güneş'e göre, katılım heyecan yaratıyor, dikkat çekiyor ve öğrenme değerlendirmesinin işbirliğini ve anlaşılmasını destekliyor. OPAL faydaları açısından, Bayan Güneş enerjiyi boşaltma, daha rahat olma, gözlem becerilerini destekleme ve sosyal etkileşimler gibi faydalara işaret etti. Son olarak, Bayan Güneş OPAL'a katılımın genişletilmesi ve OPAL'a katılımın kalitesinin artırılmasıyla ilgili önerilerde bulundu. Güneş Hanım, kış mevsiminde katılım, daha fazla katılım etkinliği yürütme ve daha fazla oyun tabanlı öğrenme etkinliği düzenleme yoluyla sürecin daha da zenginleştirilebileceğini belirtti. Katılımı genişletmeye yönelik bu önerilere ek olarak, Güneş Hanım ayrıca OPAL'da katılımın kalitesini artırmak için teknolojiyi daha fazla kullanma, anketler kullanma ve değerlendirmeye daha fazla vurgu yapma konusunda da vurgu yaptı.

Beş gönüllü eylem döngüsü ebeveyni ile yapılan genel değerlendirme, eylem süreci boyunca anlayışlarının ve deneyimlerinin nasıl değiştiğini gösterdi. Bu değişiklikler, deneyimlenen iyileştirmeler, deneyimlenen engeller, uygulama değerlendirmeleri, duygusal durum, açıklamalar ve daha fazla iyileştirme için öneriler temaları aracılığıyla gösterildi. Bu eylem çalışmasının yardımıyla, ebeveynlerin gerçek bağlamda deneyimler kazanarak OPAL'ın faydalarını daha iyi anlayabildikleri sonucuna ulaşıldı. Bu katılım deneyimleri ayrıca ebeveynlerin doğayla daha fazla etkileşime girmelerine, OPAL'a yönelik endişelerini en aza indirmelerine ve öğrenmenin dış ortamda da gerçekleştiğini anlamalarına yardımcı olarak OPAL'ın gerekliliğini daha iyi anlamalarını kolaylaştırdı. İkinci olarak, ebeveynler süreç boyunca katılımla ilgili olarak ne tür değişiklikler yaşadıklarını ifade ettiler. Ebeveynlerin ifade ettiği kadarıyla, öğretmenle daha fazla empati kurabiliyor, okulun potansiyelini ve beklentilerini anlayabiliyor ve fikir alışverişinde bulunarak öğretmenle daha fazla iletişim kurabiliyorlar. Dahası, süreç katılım eksikliğini en aza indirmeye, öğretmenin rehber rolünü vurgulamaya ve öğrenmenin her yerde gerçekleşebileceği anlayışını oluşturmaya yardımcı oldu. Deneyimsel iyileştirmeler açısından ebeveynler, bütünleşik öğrenme, somut öğrenme, değerlendirme, öğrenme çıktıları ve öğrenme sürecinin görselleştirilmesi hakkında da fikir edindiler.

Deneyimlenen engellerle ilgili olarak, bazı ebeveynlerin aktiviteye başlama ve öğretim lideri olarak rollerini anlama konusunda zorluk çektikleri sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca, bazı ebeveynler de çok sayıda çocuk, uygulama dili ve her aktivite adımını derinlemesine yürütmek için yeterli zamana sahip olmama nedeniyle sorun yaşadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ebeveynler, öğretim ve sınıf yönetimi ile ilgili bazı uygulamalara dikkat etmeye çalıştıklarını vurgulamışlardır. Öğretimle ilgili uygulamalar açısından, ebeveynler doğru bilgi sağlama, çocukların öğrendiğinden emin olma, plana göre hareket etme ve çocukları sürece dahil etme gibi yönlerde dikkat çekmişlerdir. Ayrıca, ebeveynler çocuklarla iyi iletişim kurmaya ve dikkati sürdürmeye odaklanmışlardır. Ebeveyn görüşmesi aracılığıyla ulaşılan üçüncü tema, eylem süreci boyunca ebeveynlerin duygusal durumu olmuştur. Ebeveynler, planlama sürecine dahil olduklarını ve hazır olduklarını vurguladılar. Buna ek olarak, ebeveynler planlama sürecinden keyif aldıkları, fikirlerini paylaştıkları ve özgürce soru sordukları için öğretmenle etkili bir şekilde işbirliği yapabildiklerini hissettiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Ebeveynler, etkinlikleri uygularken duygularını çocuk gibi hissetmenin yanı sıra mutlu, rahat, heyecanlı ve kendinden emin olarak tanımlamışlardır.

Ebeveynlerle genel değerlendirme için görüşmeler yaparken, ebeveynler ayrıca ebeveyn katılımının faydalarıyla ilgili bazı açıklamalarda bulunur, OPAL'a yönelik engelleri açıklar ve OPAL'ın faydalarını açıklar. Ebeveyn katılımının faydaları açısından, ebeveynler katılım etkinliklerinin dikkat çekerek ve ilgiyi artırarak öğrenmeyi nasıl kalıcı hale getirdiğine odaklandı. Dahası, bu etkinlikler ebeveynlerin bakış açısından çocukların kendilerini güvende, mutlu ve heyecanlı hissetmelerini de sağlıyor. Buna ek olarak, ebeveyn katılımı etkinlikleri ebeveynlere göre okul dışında öğrenmeyi ve evde geçirilen zamanın kalitesini de destekliyor. Ebeveynler ayrıca, belirttikleri kadarıyla çocuklarının sosyal etkileşimlerini de gözlemleyebilirler.

OPAL'ın faydaları açısından, ebeveynler OPAL'ın çocukların enerjilerini boşaltmalarına yardımcı olurken onları daha özgür ve rahat hissettirdiğini vurguladılar. Ek olarak, OPAL ayrıca çocukların sürece daha fazla katılmasını ve ebeveynler açısından süreçten daha fazla keyif almasını sağlayarak öğrenmenin daha kalıcı olmasını kolaylaştırır. OPAL aracılığıyla çocuklar ayrıca ebeveynlerin vurguladığı kadarıyla bilişsel, sosyal ve motor alanlarla ilgili beceriler geliştirirken

doğayı da öğrenirler. Son olarak, ebeveynler OPAL'a ebeveyn katılımını genişletme ve OPAL etkinliklerine ebeveyn katılımının kalitesini artırma odaklı bazı önerilerde bulundular. OPAL'a ebeveyn katılımını genişletme açısından, ebeveynler katılım uygulamalarının düzenli olarak uygulanması gerektiğini öneriyorlar. Dahası, ebeveynler birden fazla ebeveynlik etkinliğine katılma ve büyük grup (tüm sınıf) etkinlikleri ve saha gezileri veya kış sezonunda düzenlenen etkinlikler gibi farklı katılım etkinliklerine katılma isteklerini de paylaştılar. Ebeveynlerin OPAL etkinliklerine katılımının kalitesinin artırılmasına ilişkin olarak ebeveynler; değerlendirmede rol model olma, değerlendirmeyi değiştirme, küçük grup etkinlikleri yapma, daha uzun ısınmalar sağlama, düşünmek için zaman verme, içeriği derinleştirme, zorlayıcı etkinlikler sunma ve etkinlik akışını hatırlatma önerilerini de paylaştılar.

Tartışma

Bu katılımcı eylem araştırması çalışması, OPAL'e ebeveyn katılımını zenginleştirmeye odaklanmıştır; bu nedenle, ebeveynlerin OPAL ile ilgili deneyimlerini ve bakış açılarını zenginleştirmek için farklı ebeveyn-öğretmen toplantıları ve gönüllü ebeveyn katılımlı OPAL etkinlikleri uygulanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın ihtiyaç ve bağlam analizi, ebeveynlerin OPAL'e dahil edilmesine ihtiyaç olduğunu ve bu ihtiyacın gönüllü katılımlı OPAL etkinlikleri ve ebeveyn-öğretmen toplantıları yoluyla karşılanabileceğini göstermiştir. Böylece, gönüllü öğretmen ve araştırmacı ilk eylem döngüsünü planlamıştır. Her döngü OPAL'in planlanması, OPAL planını tartışmak için ebeveynlerle toplantı yapılması, planın uygulanması ve planın değerlendirilmesi adımlarını izlemiştir. Tüm eylem döngüleri tamamlandıktan sonra araştırmacı beş gönüllü ebeveyn ve bir gönüllü öğretmenle genel değerlendirme yapmıştır.

Bulgular, katılımcıların OPAL ve ebeveyn katılımının gelişim ve öğrenme üzerindeki faydalarına inandıklarını ve bu faydaları farklı gelişimsel becerileri vurgulayarak örneklendirdiklerini göstermiştir. Bu bulguya paralel olarak, OPAL'in faydaları çeşitli çalışmalarda iyi olma hali, aktif olma, motor beceriler, sosyal-duygusal beceriler, öz-düzenleme ve doğa sevgisi olarak vurgulanmıştır (ör. Fjørtoft, 2004; Sando, 2019; Sando ve Sandseter, 2022; Johnstone vd, 2022) OPAL faydalarının yanı sıra, ebeveyn

katılımının faydaları da farklı arařtırmalarda kalıcı öğrenme, artan mutluluk, okula gelmek için daha motive olma, başkalarıyla sosyalleşme ve daha güçlü iletişim olarak örneklendirilmiştir (örn. Tezel-Şahin vd., 2024; Kutlu-Abu&Kayar, 2020).

Ayrıca, katılımcılar mevcut çalışmada ebeveyn katılımını okulda etkinlik yapmak olarak tanımlamıştır. Bu bulgunun aksine Güzelyurt ve diğerleri (2019) tarafından yapılan çalışmada ebeveyn katılımı iletişim olarak tanımlanmıştır. Öğretmenlerin endişeleri ve eğitim programının yoğunluğu nedeniyle düzenli OPAL zamanı uygulamadıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Faydalarına inanılmasına rağmen OPAL, kaygılar ve yetersiz ortam nedeniyle kısıtlanmaktadır (Mart, 2021; Kandemir & Sevimli-Çelik, 2021; Cevher-Kalburan, 2014; Küçükkurt, 2021; Tunçeli & Şenöz, 2022; Yalçın&Tantekin-Erden, 2021) Ayrıca, mevcut çalışma OPAL'e katılımın sadece iletişim düzeyinde gerçekleştiğine işaret etmektedir. Kutlu-Abu ve Kayar'a (2020) göre öğretmenler; endişeler, yetersiz işbirliği ve OPAL hakkında yeterli bilgi verilmemesi nedeniyle kapalı ebeveyn katılımı yapmayı tercih etmektedir. Bu eylem çalışmasında en çok iletişim ve ebeveyn katılımının uygulanacağı belirtilmiştir. Benzer şekilde, Ogelman (2014) tarafından yürütölen çalışmada da öğretmenlere göre bireysel toplantılar en kolay ve en yaygın ebeveyn katılımı uygulamasıdır.

Çalışmanın genel değerlendirmesi, katılımcıların süreç sonrasında dış mekanı aynı zamanda bir öğrenme ortamı olarak gördüklerini ortaya koymuştur. Bu farkındalığa duyulan ihtiyaç, Kandemir ve Sevimli-Çelik (2021) tarafından yürütölen nitel çalışmadan elde edilen bir bulgu olarak belirtilmiştir. Ebeveynler OPAL'in faydalarını daha iyi anlama konusunda bakış açılarında bir değişiklik olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Katılım, konuya yönelik ilgi ve motivasyonu desteklerken ebeveynler için konuya yönelik olumlu bir tutum yaratmaktadır (Ata-Aktürk ve Demircan, 2024) Ebeveyn katılımı eksikliği en aza indirilmiştir. Ebeveynler öğretim lideri olma konusunda kendilerine daha fazla güvenmiş ve kendilerini daha fazla dahil edilmiş hissetmişlerdir. Okul bahçesi ortamının yeniden tasarlanmasında ebeveynlerin dahil edilmesi, açık havada öğrenmenin önemini ve gelişim üzerindeki faydalarını daha iyi anlamalarını sağlamıştır (Bohling vd., 2013; Gessiou, 2022)

Bu katılımcı eylem araştırması çalışması, okul müdürünün dahil edilmesi, devlet okulu olması, OPAL etkinliklerinin kötü olmayan koşullarda yapılması ve eğitim dilinin

İngilizce olması gibi bazı sınırlılıklar taşımaktadır. Bulgulara dayanarak, hizmet içi eğitimin güçlendirilmesi, hizmet öncesi eğitim programlarında açık hava eğitiminin zorunlu hale getirilmesi ve OPAL etkinliklerine iç mekan etkinlikleri kadar değer veren eğitim programlarının geliştirilmesi gibi bazı çıkarımlarda bulunulabilir.

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