

OBSERVATION AS AN ASSESSMENT TOOL IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY OF TEACHER VIEWS
AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

OBSERVATION AS AN ASSESSMENT TOOL IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY OF TEACHER VIEWS AND PRACTICES

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The aim of this study is to determine the early childhood teachers' views about observation as one of the informal assessment methods in young children's education. The study was conducted with six early childhood teachers who worked at a private kindergarten in Ankara. In this study, phenomenological case study was used. In order to examine the views of early childhood teachers on observation, most appropriate data source in qualitative study, one-to-one interview was conducted with participants. Additionally, three teachers among the participants were observed in their classrooms to determine how they applied observation in their classroom. According to the responses of early childhood teachers, assessment in early childhood education is a process-based issue and teachers mostly prefer observation because they believe that observation is the basis of the whole assessment progress. During observations, teachers pay attention to the children's needs and interests and their problematic behaviors. There is a consensus on teachers' views that the main contribution of observation is to children. Furthermore observation data contribute teachers to do self-assessment. Finally, the main obstacles faced during observation

were defined as class-size and documentation in a systematic way. In order to deal with these obstacles, teachers offered grouping of children in classroom during observation. Moreover, there might be more teacher- training provided by experts about assessment to enhance teachers' knowledge about young children's assessment.

Keywords: Observation, informal assessment, views of early childhood teachers, observation challenges, phenomenological study

ÖZ

OKUL ÖNCESİ EĞİTİMDE BİR DEĞERLENDİRME ARACI OLARAK GÖZLEM: ÖĞRETMENLERİN GÖRÜŞLERİ VE UYGULAMALARI ÜZERİNE BİR FENOMENOLOJİK DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

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Yüksek Lisans, Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Bölümü

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Bu çalışmada, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin alternatif değerlendirme yöntemlerinden biri olan gözlem ile ilgili görüşlerini belirlemek amaçlanmıştır. Bu çalışma Ankara'da bulunan özel bir anaokulunda görev yapan altı okul öncesi öğretmeni ile yürütülmüştür. Çalışmada nitel çalışma desenlerinden, fenomenolojik durum çalışması tercih edilirken; okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin gözlem ile ilgili görüşlerini belirlemek için, veri aracı olarak bire bir görüşme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca öğretmenlerin sınıflarında gözlem tekniğini nasıl uyguladıklarını belirlemek için, katılımcılardan üç öğretmen, araştırmacı tarafından gözlemlenmiştir. Öğretmenlerle yapılan bire bir görüşmeler çalışmanın asıl verisini oluşturmaktadır. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin yanıtlarına göre, okul öncesi eğitimde süreç odaklı değerlendirme uygulanmalıdır. Değerlendirmenin temelini gözlemin oluşturduğunu düşündükleri için, okul öncesi öğretmenleri genellikle gözlem tekniğini tercih ettiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Öğretmenler, sınıf gözlemlerinde çocukların ilgi ve isteklerinin yanı sıra öğrencilerin sorunlu davranışlarına önem vermektedirler. Çalışma sonucunda çıkan fikir birliğine göre, gözlemin en büyük katkısı çocuklara olurken, gözlem

verileri öğretmenlerin öz değerlendirme yapmalarına da yardımcı olmaktadır. Son olarak, gözlem sırasında karşılaşılan asıl sıkıntılar, sınıf mevcudu ve sistematik dokümantasyon olarak belirtilmiştir. Bu sıkıntılarla baş etmek için öğretmenler, öğrenciler içerisinde gruplama uygulamasını önermişlerdir. Ayrıca okul öncesi eğitim değerlendirmesi konusunda uzman kişiler tarafından verilecek olan öğretmen seminerlerinin de yardımcı olacağını düşünmektedirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gözlem, alternatif değerlendirme, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin görüşleri, gözlem sıkıntıları, fenomenolojik çalışma

To my parent and friends...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECE	Early Childhood Education
MoNE	The Ministry of National Education
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
PCGC	Psychological Counseling and Guidance Center
P	Participant

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a complicated subject in education. Stiggins & Chappuis, (2012) created a metaphor that states assessment as a global positioning system (GPS) to understand the importance and necessity of assessment in education. Assessment serves as an orienteering and tracking system for students' learning success and their education. In a GPS, people enter their current location and a destination. Then, the information gets wired into it and satellites help people keep located; so the best route is determined by the system. Similarly, assessment for learning is thought of as a GPS for student learning. While teachers are satellites, in effect, they are loading the system with the students' current location. Moreover, Stiggins and Chappuis (2012) added that based on the objectives and indicators of education, the best destination for students is determined, and through the whole process, success is detected in students' education as final destination.

In educational settings, the role of assessment has gained importance over the years. Assessment is a crucial concern of educational studies since assessment processes are considered to have an impact on children's learning. The role of assessment in education and lack of information about this aspect of education field is emphasized in the study of Broadfoot (1998). According to this study, assessment is the most critical issue, and is not like the other aspects of education. Although the role of assessment has begun to be stressed in studies, according to the Bowman, Donovan, and Burns (2000), "Assessment... is in a state of flux... There are a number of promising new approaches to assessment, among them variations on the clinical interview and performance assessment, but the field must be described as emergent. Much more research and development are need..." (p12). Moreover, Meisels, and Atkins-Burnett (2000) stressed specifically the issue of assessment in early childhood education as "Early childhood assessment is a field in transition. Dominated from its inception by psychometric models and measurement strategies used with older children and adults, it is only now beginning to forge a methodology

that is unique to very young children.” (p.231). Therefore, there is an increase in the support for further research in early childhood education assessment.

While Dunphy (2010) emphasized that assessment has growing reputation among educators in all levels of education systems; new analyses and studies are supported, particularly in early childhood education (and care). According to the studies conducted by Bowman, Donovan, and Burns (2000), and Shepard, Kagan, and Wurtz (1998), teaching and assessment in early years is considered to have an important place as in other levels of education systems.

Although the role of assessment in education is stressed through the studies; in general, assessment as a term is currently considered as a product or a result in daily life. Assessment is generally defined as tests, results, conclusions, reports, etc. Besides social daily life, in education there are many assessment methods applied throughout different levels in schools. Most students take these applications in the form of achievement tests, IQ tests, tests for admission to a college or university, and tests determining students' grade for each reporting period through their education. Assessment, however, is more than the testing that is familiar to people. While Goodwin and Goodwin (1987) defined assessment as “The process of determining, through observation or testing, an individual's traits or behaviors, a program characteristics, or the properties of some other entity, and then assigning a number, rating or score to that determination” (p. 523), Farr (1991) said that it is not a sorting process, and it should basically be thought of as a guide instead of a type of judgment; so “assessment must serve students.” (p.95). As the number of studies based on this aspect of education has increased, there have been changes in the views of researchers about assessment and its definition. In their study, Chen and McNamee (2007) defined assessment as the process of listening, observing, and gathering evidence for learning progress of children in a classroom environment. While the assessment aspect of education is stressed in all levels of students, Horton and Bowman (2002) mentioned that the concern about the pre-primary assessment is an ongoing process. They believe that understanding the current state of the field is crucial, and the way assessment practices are carried out will improve the learning and development of young children. Specifically, assessment of young children is different from the assessment of older students. Wortham (2005) stated that not only

children who do not write or read, but the young developing child presents different challenges that influence the choice of assessment strategy or assessment tools. There has to be a match between the chosen strategy for assessment and the level of mental, social and physical development of children at each stage. Moreover, there is a rapid developmental change in young children, which requires assessing whether the development is progressing normally or not. In order to meet this need, different assessment methods and strategies are used in early childhood education. There are different and definite alternatives for assessment applications and methods in educational settings for young learners.

In literature, two main headings are defined for the assessment in early childhood education. The first one is the formal assessment in early childhood education. This kind of assessment refers mostly to the standardized tests in which a child's performance in different developmental domains is translated into a score and that score is compared with either the performance of other children or with specific criteria or objectives. Instruments that are used in formal assessment are mostly focused on reliability and validity (Appl, 2000; Puckett & Black, 2000). Spinelli (2008) noted that formal assessment procedures generally rely on recognition responses, test items and mechanical scoring which were not suitable for young children's assessment in terms of children's developmental characteristics. Moreover, there is another claim why formal assessment should not be preferred in young children's assessment procedure. Trying to standardize the learning process at an early age is inappropriate because it causes much academic pressure at younger ages (Hyson, 2003). Hanes (2009) stated clearly that "because young children are so diverse in their abilities and needs, assessment at the preschool level is particularly challenging" (p. 39). Also different studies support that it is inappropriate to employ "a scattering of tests as a measure of success" because of children's varied abilities. (Epstein, Schweinhart, DeBruin-Parecki, & Robin, 2004; Horton & Bowman, 2002; Wagner, 2003). Therefore, another type of assessment is suggested for young children education rather than standardized assessment.

Literature supports the benefits of informal assessment procedures not only for young children but also upper grades (Fore, Burke, & Martin, 2006; Shinn, Collins, & Gallagher, 1998). Informal assessment mostly refers to instruments that

are non-standardized. It does not give a translation from a child's performance to a score and any comparison between a child's performance and other children or criteria. This kind of assessment is based mostly on observation, interviews, and often involves normal classroom experiences (Appl, 2000; Puckett & Black, 2000; Wortham, 2005). In early childhood education, young children benefit from the feedback resulting from informal assessment. Considering their education process, they are encouraged to produce knowledge via experience rather than reproduce knowledge. Neisworth and Bagnato (2004) believed that ongoing classroom assessment is more suitable as an accurate and appropriate method of data collection and evaluation. Assessment of young children is also a challenging issue, and children's competencies are situation-dependent; therefore, their responses to the constraints of standardized testing are not good. Spinelli (2008) emphasized that "With the increasingly diverse population of learners in our schools today, it is important that educators employ alternates to traditional assessment models" (p. 5). Therefore, the preference of early childhood teachers and adults working in this field is to choose informal assessment rather than standardized testing in young child assessment procedures.

In young children's assessment process, early childhood teachers applied different informal assessment tools to support children's learning and development. Observation, checklists, anecdotal records, running records, portfolios, rubrics, teacher-designed strategies, and performance-based strategies are defined as informal assessment tools in early childhood education (Guddemi & Case, 2004; Wortham, 2005). Although different strategies are applied to assess children's learning, observation has a role as the base of informal assessment because most of the critical information about children's development can be gathered by observing children's behaviors. According to Neisworth and Bagnato (2004), besides documentation, observation is determined as the heart of informal assessment. In young children's education in the past, the analysis of the first sign of assessment was made based on observation. At the beginning of the 20th century, for instance, observation was used to assess human beings' behaviors. Dunphy (2010) emphasized the tradition of child observation in early childhood education with these words "Many of the pioneers in the field (e.g. Froebel, Piaget, Vygotsky and Isaacs) strongly promoted the process of

watching, listening and reflecting on children's action and words" (p.41). In order to make learning visible, a student's/child's learning should be assessed with the help of observational evidence of the learning. Much critical information about children can be gathered via close observation in classroom; therefore, in this study focuses on the role of observation specifically.

Moreover, teachers are the best observers during the application of observation, one of the informal assessment methods in classroom. Dunphy (2010) expressed his views as "Educators who have close personal relationships with children are the people best placed to make observations of their learning" (p. 48). Teachers gather clues about children's learning and their education through observation. Therefore, teachers' views and applications related with observation have come into prominence. Determination of teachers' views and practices about assessment of young children has important roles in both young children's development and early childhood program. Therefore, in this study, early childhood teachers' views on one of the informal assessment methods, observation, are examined. This study defines the views of early childhood teachers about benefits of observation, the challenges confronted during observation and how teachers address the challenges. Moreover, the connection between views and actions of early childhood teachers about observation are determined through this study.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

In recent years, education of young children has gained importance and researchers have carried out studies on development and learning of young children. Moreover, obviously, assessment of young children attracts more attention. Based on young children's developmental capabilities, in early childhood education, teachers mostly prefer informal assessment tools rather than standardized tests to complete developmentally appropriate education. One of the important informal assessment tools applied in young children's education is declared as observation and Dunphy (2010) represented teachers as the best observers in education because of the close relationship between children and teachers in classroom. During the day, teachers have chances to see the differences in children's behaviors in classroom environment. At that point, views of teachers are critical and gain more importance because they can catch children's rapid and ongoing development. This issue

becomes the subject of different studies in which the relation and connection between the views of teachers and education of children were emphasized from different perspectives (Brassard & Boehm, 2007; Flowers, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Browder & Spooner, 2005; Horton & Bowman, 2002; Schappe, 2005). Brassard and Boehm (2007) believed that teachers' beliefs and opinions have made a significant contribution to children's development. The relation between teachers' views and students' development has been the subject of studies; however, in literature the studies based on teachers' views concerning assessment of children are limited. In one of the studies Hanes (2009) expressed that teachers' beliefs about assessment may contribute to children's development either positively or negatively. While studies focusing on teachers' views about assessment have been conducted abroad, especially since 2005, some studies have been carried out on assessment in Turkey as well. In these studies, the subjects were determined as higher grade students, instead of young children. (Erdiller & McMullen, 2002; Gelbal & Kelecioğlu, 2007; Yıldırım & Semerci 2006). Nevertheless, the number of studies that targeted teachers' views on early childhood education has been limited

The general aim of this study is to determine the views of early childhood teachers about observation in Turkey. The views of teachers are critical because teachers have the main role during classroom observation. In detail, the study has tried to find out why teachers prefer observing, what they think about role of observation in young children's assessment, what kind of challenges are confronted during observation and how they deal with such challenges during observation through teachers' responses. Moreover, via observing teachers in their classroom, their actions about observing were analyzed and the connection between views and actions of early childhood teachers was emphasized. Determining teachers' views once again stresses in- service early childhood teachers' awareness of assessment in early childhood education. This could help define the general perspectives of Turkish early childhood teachers on assessment of young children.

1.2. Significance of the Study

It can be said that assessment is one of the most important fields of education. Assessment of young children is different from that of older people. Different methods and strategies are applied in young children's education in order to have

correct and appropriate assessment data. These data provide details and rich information about children and their development. Moreover, early childhood teachers understand the learning of individual child or group of children through assessment. The base of informal assessment is accepted as observation in classroom environment, which reflects young children's learning and development most appropriately.

In order to reach a conclusion whether there is an appropriate program with suitable activities for young children or not, assessment process should be included in the whole education process. Therefore, observation allows for the assessment of not only children's education but also the whole education program. As stated in Dunphy's study (2010), teachers are the best observers in classroom because of their close relationship with children and the best observation data can be gathered through teachers' observation. Therefore, their points of view on observation increase in importance. This study could determine what Turkish early childhood teachers think about assessment of young children, especially about observation in general. The number of studies aiming at the determination of teachers' views about assessment of young children is limited in Turkey. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature in terms of views of early childhood teachers about observation in early childhood education in the Turkish context. Moreover, through the definition of possible observation challenges confronted in classroom and the ways to address challenges, the responses will be such a guide for other in-service early childhood teachers. Therefore, this study can contribute to the development of well-qualified early childhood teachers in observation and better assessment practices in ECE program, as well.

Moreover, there is a separate assessment part in early childhood education program for 5 and 6-year-olds in Turkey. In this part explains teachers the aim of young children assessment and the application of assessment tools. It also includes some questions which serve as a guide to do daily assessment. The results of this study try to specify possible challenges in observation and the ways of dealing with these challenges. These problems and solutions may be represented as a guide for in-service teachers who assess children in their classroom.

1.3. Research Questions

Through this study, the aim is to reach a conclusion about the views of early childhood teachers on observation as one of the informal assessment tools in early childhood education. In order to conclude the views of early childhood teachers about observation, the following questions guided the study;

- 1) What are the views of early childhood teachers about the role of observation in early childhood education assessment?
- 2) What are the views of early childhood teachers on the benefits of observation for children, early childhood teacher and early childhood education program?
- 3) What are the views of early childhood teachers on challenges that they face during observations and how do they deal with these challenges confronted during observations?

1.4. Definitions of Terms

Assessment: The process of listening, observing, and gathering evidence about learning the progress of children in the classroom environment (Chen, McNamee, 2007).

Alternative assessments: “A range of instruments and procedures, including teacher observations documented in anecdotal records or by using checklists, portfolios of children’s work, and interviews.” (Wagner, 2003, p.4)

Informal assessment: Non- standardized instruments. “A child’s performance is not usually translated into a score compared with other children or specific criteria. It is usually based on observations and interviews, and often involves normal classroom experiences” (Brown & Rolfe, 2005, p. 194)

Formal assessment: Standardized tests. A child performs in different developmental domains and this performance is translated into a score, and via this translation the performance is compared with others’, whether there are similarities or differences on characteristics or objectives. The tools for formal assessment use the determination of reliability and validity (Brown & Rolfe, 2005).

Assessment tools: The resources used by teachers to get information about children. Observation records, anecdotal records, checklists and standardized tests, portfolios and development reports are the most common and practical tools used in

early childhood education (The Ministry of National Education Early Childhood Education Curriculum for 60- 72 months, 2006, p.92).

Observation: “Watching what others do and listening to what they say” (Smidt, 2005, p.1).

Early childhood teachers: The adults with the primary responsibility for a group of children age 5 to 6, and adults who completed a university degree in the Department of Early Childhood Education or the Department of Child Development.

Early childhood education (ECE): “Educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8 (NAEYC, 2009). The age range of children in early childhood education is 5 to 6 for this study.

View: The consideration of something, an attitude, opinion or idea/ belief that is influenced by people’s perception, and judgment (Pajares, 1992). In this study, participants express their views, actually their experiences and opinions, about observation as one of the informal assessment tools in early childhood education.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the literature relevant to this study, pertaining to the views of early childhood teachers on one of the informal assessment methods, observation, is provided in this chapter. The importance of assessment in early childhood education is listed as the first topic of this chapter. The informal assessment methods are given and explained before observation, one of the informal assessment methods, is identified in detail. The following part presents general information about the assessment of early childhood education in Turkey and the applied program of Ministry of National Education. In the final part of this chapter, studies conducted on the views of teachers about assessment are examined.

2.1. The Importance of Assessment in Early Childhood Education

The interest in studying young children to understand their development and growth dates back to initial recognition of childhood as a separate period in cycle. Some studies and programs were prepared by people who had an important role in young children's education. An educational program specifically for children developed by Johann Pestalozzi in 1774, the book *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* by John Locke, in 1699, Rousseau's book *Emile* (1911/ 1762) and also Frederick Froebel's *Education of A Man* (1896) were evidences which reflect that needs of children attracted people's attention in the 18th and 19th centuries (cited in Wortham, 2012). After the 19th century, the study of children was accelerated via observation and in the 20th century, the study and measurement of children evolved, and the development of standardized tests and new educational programs occurred.

The interest in studying young children has increased and these studies have been conducted to understand the development and growth of children. Weber (1984) stated between the 1890s and the 1950s, some studies were conducted with children in academic settings throughout the United States. The ongoing child study

movement originated the strategies for observing and measuring development, so through the child study movement, people were taught to use observation and other strategies to assess children (cited in Wortham, 2012). While scientists used observation to understand human behaviors, around 1900, standardized testing began as the first sign of assessment in education. In order to sort, select and make decisions about both children and adults, objective tests were designed (Gardner 1961; as cited in Wortham, 2005). Different scales and tests were designed to evaluate achievement in different abilities of children, and by 1918 more than 100 standardized tests were designed in order to measure school measurement (Wortham 2005).

There is a negative image in people's mind when assessment procedure is considered. It also has a negative impact in education, and at an early childhood level, it is troublesome. Assessment is viewed as inappropriate in its attempt to standardize the learning process for this complex age and in giving too much academic pressure to very young children (Hyson, 2003). In order to minimize the negative effects of assessment progress in young children's education, many teachers of young children have changed their routine in assessment from traditional strategies for knowledge and facts to assess children's learning. They try to do assessment *for* their children and their learning. Assessment is something that people, especially teachers, do *with* and *for* the child, rather than people/teachers do *to* the child (Wiggins, 1993). Therefore, the importance of assessment to be *with* and *for* children has been the top topic in the field of early childhood education. Broadfoot (1998) believed that there are many alternative ways to do assessment in schools, and assessment is the most critical issue rather than other aspects of education. In the report of the National Education Goals Panel (*Principles and Recommendations for Early Childhood Education Assessment*), Shepard, Kagan and Wurtz (1998) explained that assessment and learning are defined as the supplementary parts of education in these words "Assessing and teaching are inseparable processes" (p.9).

The principles of assessment in education can be listed to enhance the importance of assessment. The first principle is that multiple sources of information should be used for assessment in education. Greenspan and Meisels (1996) suggested that although people choose the best strategy to assess, it will be insufficient when a

single application for assessment is preferred. A variety in the use of measures of learning of young children provides a big range on the view of children's accomplishments (Greenspan & Meisels, 1996; Wiggins, 1993). While multiple sources of information assessment are used, the assessment process should be beneficial for children and should improve their learning. Moreover, both children and parents are required to involve in the assessment process of young children. The parents' views and knowledge about the child could be essential for a true understanding of developmental characteristics of children. Another principle of assessment in education is that it should be fair for all children. There should not be any bias or inappropriateness in the application of assessment in terms of children's backgrounds. There might be cultural differences or individual differences (children who need special education, children with single parent etc.), therefore, while applying assessment tools, these differences should be taken into consideration one by one and analyzed separately. Moreover, these differences should not result in misinterpretation about children's development. Finally, assessment education should be authentic, that is, it must be child-centered, meaningful for children's own experiences, and developmentally and age appropriate. When the principles of the assessment in education are taken into consideration during application, the quality of assessment will be increased and will be more suitable for children's learning.

While the overall principles of assessment in education were indicated, principles specifically for early childhood education assessment were developed and determined as well by the National Early Childhood Assessment Resource Group. In the US National Education Goals Panel, Shepard et al. (1998) listed these principles as (p.5-6):

- Assessment should bring about benefits for children,
- Assessment should be tailored to a specific purpose and should be reliable, valid, and fair for that purpose,
- Assessment policies should be designed recognizing that reliability and validity of assessment increase with children's age,
- Assessment should be age appropriate in both content and the method of data collection,
- Assessment should be linguistically appropriate, recognizing that to some extent all assessments are measures of language,
- Parents should be a valued source of assessment information, as well as an audience for assessment results.

Based on these principles, the importance of assessment in young children's education is emphasized one more time. In the study supported by the United States National Research Council, *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers*, the last 30 years of child development research stressed that "2-to-5-year-old children are more capable learners than had been expected, and that their acquisition of linguistic, mathematical, and other skills relevant to school readiness is influenced (and can be improved) by their educational and developmental experiences during those years" (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2000; p.25-8). Based on the data collected by the assessment tools, children's prior knowledge, development of concepts and ways of interacting with and understanding the world could be revealed during this period. To this end, teachers should choose an appropriate pedagogical approach that is supplemented with appropriate assessment measures to support children's further learning and development. Not only children, but also other stakeholders of education (teachers, parents, administrators... etc) and education programs are affected from this procedure. Accordingly, assessment is defined as "a more significant mean of measuring accountability for individual students, their teachers, entire early childhood programs, school districts and states" (Horton & Bowman, 2002, p. 3-4).

After a teacher discovers and gains information on what children know and understand, assessment process should be designed based on what children make, write, draw, and do as well. This would enable to gather the most appropriate information about children and their education easily.

2.2. Informal Assessment in Early Childhood Education

In all grades of education, assessment is thought of as a cornerstone in enhancing teaching and learning, and there is a variety of assessment and measurement styles. Brown, Bull, and Pendlebury (1997) indicated that "If you want to change student learning then change the method of assessment" (p. 7). In education, there are more challenges for the assessment of young children than people generally realize. Bowman, Donovan and Burns (2000) stressed that "the first five years of life are a time of incredible growth and learning, but the course of development is uneven and sporadic. Consequently, assessment results -in particular,

standardized test scores that reflect a given point in time- can easily misrepresent children’s learning” (p.260). Therefore, the choice of an appropriate assessment measure is crucial and critical in young children’s education.

Generally, two main types of assessment are mentioned in early childhood education during the education process, and early childhood teachers approach assessment in different ways. The objective and systematic assessment of children’s learning is preferred to support these children’s development (Flottman, Stewart, & Tayler, 2010). Standardized testing, formal assessment in other words, and informal-alternative assessment have been used in the assessment of this age group of children’s education. Hanes (2009) mentioned that while an appropriate way in assessment of children is evaluation in terms of their strengths and weaknesses, formal assessment should be kept at a minimum at early ages because of the developmental nature of preschool and the primary grades.

Flottman, Stewart and Tayler (2010) added further that assessment should be done on the progress of children’s learning and development, especially on what children are ready to learn and how early childhood teachers can support this progress. At that point, spontaneity of assessment is critical, and the basic distinction between formal and informal assessment is this spontaneity (Oosterhof, 1999). If a child is ready to learn, the appropriate time to assess the child’s learning is at that moment, meaning that informal assessment should be done at the spur of the moment. Moreover, in regards to the application and the recording of the assessment procedure, teachers change their choices from one in which learning and assessment are apart from each other (figure 2.1) to one in which assessment is placed inside learning (figure 2.2) (Carr, 2001, p. 157).

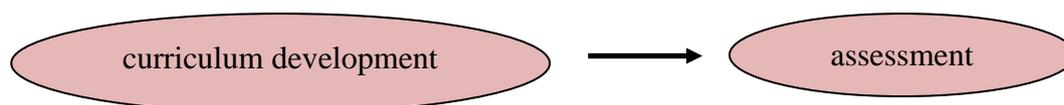


Figure 2.1 *Assessment happens after an episode of learning and teaching*

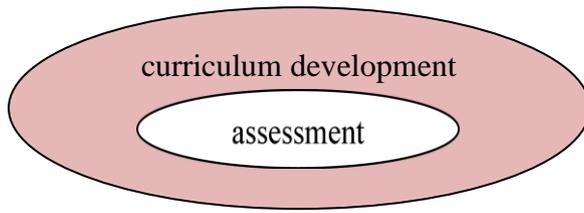


Figure 2.2 *Assessment is integral to the enhancement of learning*

While assessment is done at the end of learning and teaching, reflected in figure 2.1 with formal assessment procedure, in informal assessment procedure of young children, teachers prefer to integrate assessment into the curriculum development. Through this assessment procedure, not only the end result of learning, but also the whole process of children's learning is detected by teachers (figure 2.2). In early childhood education, the aim is to detect the whole process rather than the determination of the end product of learning.

An appropriate type of informal assessment should be preferred in order to make assessment meaningful for children and teachers as well. These types are chosen based on the characteristics of the environment, the aim of assessment, characteristics of the behaviors, etc. Gullo (2005) insisted that children should be observed by using different tools and approaches, and also different contexts. When multiple methods are chosen to get reliable and appropriate information about learning and development of young children, assessment becomes more effective (NAEYC, 2009).

Informal assessment instruments are listed as observation, checklists, anecdotal records, running records, portfolios, rubrics, teacher-designed strategies, and performance-based strategies (Guddemi & Case, 2004; Wortham, 2005). Systematic and appropriate instruments and assessment approaches should be chosen for young children's learning and development. The basic characteristics of informal instrument, observation and its recordings will be explained in the following part of chapter II in detail.

Checklists can be thought of as an outline of development or curriculum. The objectives of checklists are evaluated with observation, learning activities and also with specific tasks in terms of conditions and children's personal characteristics

(Wortham, 2005). Checklists are chosen in early childhood education settings because of such characteristics as the ease to use, flexibility, and frequency in recording. Checklists are reported as the most commonly used assessment instrument in study results (Brown & Rolfe, 2005). Moreover, they provide opportunities for teachers to detect whether children master an objective. Although the advantages of checklists enhance the high usage rate, there are limitations in application of checklists as well. Wortham (2005) remarked while teachers have recordings on checklists, they might spend less time with children. Moreover, some teachers conclude that checklists do not serve as valid measures of development and learning of children. Also, the reliability and objectivity of teachers during recording of checklists cannot be ensured. Lastly, through the data on checklists, teachers may not recognize whether children perform adequately or not. Generally, checklists are preferred because of the ease of use and flexibility in the usage of them, although they would not improve children's learning and development. They play a role as a light for children's development for teachers.

Rating Scale is another informal assessment tool that is similar to the checklist. In rating scale, there is a rate to determine at which level a behavior is represented. With this scale, early childhood teachers have more qualitative data to make interpretations on children's development. The completion of these scales is quick and easy, and there are minimum requirements of teacher training in completion of the scales. Moreover, teachers can develop and use these scales without any effort (Wortham, 2005). In a general perspective, disadvantages of these scales are listed as the subjectivity and bias of the rater; and insufficiency in determination of the cause of behavior. Although they result in bias and the data gathered through this scale are very subjective, they provide beneficial information about the children's learning process, step by step.

Rubrics are qualitative assessment instruments. They are related to performance assessments. They include a list of criteria for scoring, and provide guidelines for the quality of children's performance. They are flexible and adaptable, that is, they are open to revision based on the aim of assessment. While rubrics enhance assessment of children, some limitations have been determined in their usage. For one thing, specification of the criteria is difficult for teachers. Wortham

(2012) remarked that “a common mistake in designing and using rubrics is to inappropriately focus on the quantity of characteristics found, rather than the indicators of quality work” (p.180).

Teacher-designed strategies mean that teachers design their own assessment applications for the class. Objectives and aims are determined in terms of needs and characteristics of children in the class. They are developed by teachers, and this kind of assessment can be done whenever needed. These strategies provide flexibility; however, training and ability of teachers on designing assessment are the weaknesses of these applications. Also, developing appropriate and useful classroom tests for young children is time-consuming.

Performance-based strategies are used to measure ongoing processes in which children participate. Performance activities are considered as the familiar and natural outcomes of the daily routine. Moreover, these strategies are suitable to detect whether children’s needs have been met with such programs. Wortham (2005) indicated that interviews, projects and portfolio are examples of the performance-based strategies. Through interviewing, what children understand about concepts is the main issue of teachers. While the understanding of children is detected, also their thinking process can be determined based on children’s responses to the questions when teachers ask more questions. For the interviews conducted with young children it is important that the interview should be short and teachers should pause and let children think about the issue. In projects, children work individually or as a group, and the time for the project is longer than the time for a routine classroom activity. As performance-based strategies, the whole process and also possible products related with the subject of the project can be assessed. Another important type of these strategies is the portfolio. In the 1990s, it was defined as the most popular method of authentic assessment (Wortham, 2005). A portfolio is such a collection in which children’s performance information is stored. After the whole collection process, based on all the data, an interpretation can be made about children’s learning (Guddemi & Case, 2004).

Observation is the most direct method in order to get detailed information about young children’s learning and development. Basically all other methods are based on observation. Most of the recordings are taken based on the data gathered

through basic observation, and teachers mostly use this method in their classroom. It provides many advantages in educational settings of young children. In the following part of this chapter, observation and its types, and the role of observation in young children's education will be discussed in detail.

Children in that age group are dynamic and the nature of their learning is also dynamic and changeable. They can behave in different ways, in different contexts on different days. Therefore, the assessment of them should be an ongoing process in order to catch such changes. In order to focus on the correct and suitable information depending on the aim of learning, the choice of an appropriate assessment strategy or instrument gains importance. Teachers should set an aim and organize the whole process, and then assessment can be done. Consequently, Horton and Bowman (2002) strongly noticed that "there must first be a 'clear prioritization of assessment purposes' before decisions can be made regarding which instruments and methods are best to use." (p.12). Appropriate instruments for a suitable approach to informal assessment in young children's education result in rich and productive improvement in children's learning.

2.3. Observation in Early Childhood Education

In educational settings, teachers make many important decisions that affect the lives of children. Observation serves as the basis of most of the child-care and educational decisions, both informal and formal. Based on the experiences, teachers learn to observe and to document children's skills, their knowledge, and accomplishments (participation in classroom activities and routines, interaction with peers, and works with educational materials). Observation is used as the best tool to enhance the understanding of teachers about how children are learning. Smidth (2005) defined observation as "taking careful note of everything said or done by a child or children over a defined period of time in a particular setting or context" (p.18). By recording everything seen and heard, some questions can be answered by the observers, especially teachers; such as "what is this child paying attention to or interested in?", "what experience does the child have of this?", "what does the child already know about this?", and "what does the child feel?" The aim of giving responses to these questions is not finding the right answers; however, via

responding to these questions, teachers have the best possibility of knowing more about the child while they are observing the child.

After teachers direct these questions to themselves during the observation, they get much information about a child or children. Moreover, in order to record children's learning, early childhood teachers often use observation as an assessment technique (Flottman, Stewart & Tayler, 2010). How and why would these recordings and information be used in the educational setting? Gronlund and James (2005) defined two main ways to use gathered information from child observation. The first one of these ways is observing to assess children, while the second one is observing to plan a curriculum.

Observing to assess children is a way to gather information about children's capability. Children's strengths, weaknesses, personality traits, interests and needs are determined through observation. Teachers' observations may be either spontaneous or planned in their classroom. In some conditions, teachers take in information as it happens and add it to internal thinking about each child. This spontaneous observation happens immediately and abruptly. However, when there is no record or document related with the observation based on children's progress, bias and prejudice can occur and have an effect on decisions about children. Such observation is not recommended as the only assessment procedure, and informal observation becomes vulnerable when it joins with planned/documented observation. The aims of this type of observation are listed as to truly get to know each child and to be ready to figure out the best ways to meet the needs of him or her. Moreover, via this observation, teachers are sure that no child is missed; none in the area of development is neglected.

Observing to plan a curriculum is the other way to use the gathered information from child observation. This kind of observation is conducted to organize the activities or procedures in educational settings based on children's needs. The baseline of planning a curriculum is the identification of a child/children's present performance and level, and then through the observation done in the classroom, teachers decide whether materials, activities, or interactions with others should be changed to support children to move to a higher level. In order

to enrich curriculum and to be more sufficient in young children's education, observation provides beneficial feedback to teachers.

While teachers are doing observation in classroom both for assessment and curriculum planning purposes, they learn more about children (Gronlund & James, 2005). Children's developmental capabilities in all areas; social, emotional, physical and cognitive, are learned through even short observation. It also provides possibilities to see children's personalities in action and to identify ways for each child functions in the world. Moreover, through observation, teachers learn how children cope with difficult situations. Children develop strategies to cope with the ins and outs of difficult times throughout the day and these strategies are determined by teachers to get into the children's world. With the help of observation strategies, teachers easily have insight into children's behavior, whether positive or negative. Using observation is not only for detecting negative behaviors and their reasons, but also for learning children's deep interests and passions. Children spend most of their time in a day in classroom with their classmates and teachers. Therefore, in this time, teachers have the chance to observe what areas of the classroom they spend time, what materials they choose to play with and especially to gain insight into children's strengths and interests. Lastly, teachers learn about children's expression of their cultural backgrounds, especially their relations with their family, during daily observation. This observation datum is a clue to reach children's family and also children themselves.

Although observation allows people to concentrate on specific behaviors, it can also cause difficulties and limitations (Mindes, 2011; Wortham, 2005). Details are missed during observation and people can choose the wrong focus, and this causes a big difference in the quality of the data gathered. There can be a tendency to over-interpret behavior, and observers have to make inferences from global behavioral description when observation is done in a group of children and when there is communication and interaction with each other. Another important limitation of observation is observer bias. The interpretation of the observer can be affected from their preconceived notions about how children behave or observe. When the incident observed is taken out of context, it can be misleading. There should not be failure on recording the beginning and ending behavior to understand the behavior in

the context. Finally, because of inaccurate recordings, there can be limited observed data and it can result in difficulties during the interpretation of these observation data about children's education.

In early childhood education settings, although it has some limitations, observation is recommended by professionals as the most appropriate way to know and understand young children. The reason for this is explained by the fact that as young aged children could not demonstrate knowledge and understanding by performing structured tasks or formal assessment because of their limited language ability (Irwin & Bushnell, 1980; Wortham, 2005). As they cannot reflect their ideas or opinions on paper, preschool populations who generally speak are not subjected to formal assessment (Horton & Bowman, 2002). For this reason, the teacher should focus on conversations with children and observation of children during the daily activities. There are different types of observations, and they are helpful for teachers in the process of assessment of young children's education. Teachers choose to employ different types of observation in their classroom depending on their aims and the limitations of each type. Smidth (2005) emphasized that during "*close observation*", observers record everything that they see or hear in detail. In the "*participant observation*", observers become part of the setting or activity where the observation takes place. Lastly, observers choose a particular child or a particular activity or a particular time of day on which to focus observation in the "*targeted observation*". To reach the target aim, the type of observation is chosen and the assessment process begins. After the aim of the observation is detected, the environments, materials or other aspects are organized, and teachers observe children and the whole process.

Last but not least, documentation during observation is another important issue in the assessment process of young children. Early childhood education settings are flexible, fast and everything happens in a split second. Therefore, the observation process has to be dynamic. This brings about the role of documentation and its importance in. Smidth (2005) represented a cyclical nature of observation, where documentation of observation data provides a starting point. Then assessment on what is seen or heard provides a chance to interpret where the learner is and how to help this learner to take them one step further in their learning. In this respect,

teachers must have discussions by themselves or with other teachers, children or other adults. After the discussion, a consensus is made about children and their learning, and then a planning procedure begins. The application of the plans is observed and then the documentation procedure follows the observation and the cycle goes like that. The cycle that occurs at the end of this process is pointed out in figure 2.3; observation – documentation – assessment – discussion – planning.

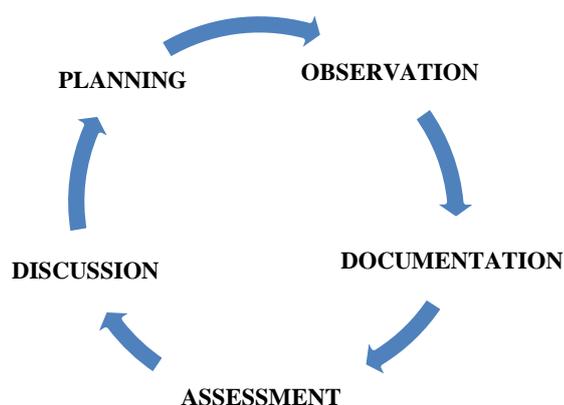


Figure 2.3 *The cyclical nature of observation (From observation to planning)*

This figure conveys that during the assessment of young children via observation, teachers have to pay attention to documentation and discussion of the data in order to foster children’s needs and interest in the most proper way.

In the documentation process of the cycle, there are many ways to record and document observations varying from brief notes to extensive running records. Mindes (2011) explained the three most common methods for recording observations as: anecdotal notes, running records, and logs or notebooks. In *anecdotal notes*, brief and accurate notes are taken about a significant event or critical incident in a particular child’s routine. Based on the anecdotal notes, the issues (description-physical appearance, moods, communication style-; attendance and arrival; relationship to teachers and children; relationships to materials; relationships to routines; approach to tasks) can be answered at the end of the year (Mindes, 2011). During recording anecdotal notes, teachers should look at one child or situation, write down exactly what a child is doing, observe children at different times and

different settings, and be sure to schedule observations. It takes a fair amount of time and effort, however; these records provide rich information about different moments from children's developmental processes. In addition to anecdotal notes, running records are another type of recording of observation in early childhood education settings. *Running records* are narrative notes made of routine functioning of an individual child or a small group of children. They include "everything that occurred over a period of time – that is, all behavior observed" (Wortham, 2005, p. 98). As the third common method to record observation, *log or notebooks* are records that accumulated throughout the year for each child. They are brief and filled with one's own notes, abbreviations and sketches. These logs are impressions or memories on what children are doing rather than live observation notes. They are used as additional notes for the data gathered from 'live' observation because the memories and impressions are open to misinterpretation.

Observations, done as part of the daily routine, provide a fuller, richer picture of development of each child to teachers. The assessment of children's learning can be easily done based on these observations. Moreover, there are useful and sufficient clues to plan the curriculum of these children via observation of children. When the limitations and difficulties of observation are taken into account, more suitable results can be gathered. Teachers can assess their children's learning in the best way through observation.

2.4. The Early Childhood Assessment in Turkey, Ministry of National Education, the Early Childhood Education Program (2013)

The institution of authority on educational policies and practices in Turkey is The Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The curriculum and examination procedures for all grades are determined by the MoNE. In Turkey, although, primary and elementary school education are compulsory, preschool education is still not compulsory nationwide. The first early childhood education program was prepared in 1994 in Turkey, and then the preschool education program for children aged from 36 to 72 months was put into practice in 2002. These programs were based primarily on behavioristic approach. The gap between the programs applied in early childhood education and primary education in terms of objectives and indicators and

approaches caused important outcomes, therefore, based on the feedback of researchers, teachers analyzed the program in practice and decided to make some changes on it (Gelişli & Yazıcı, 2012). According to the results of this analysis, the program was revised and updated in 2006 by a commission consisting of international experts, academicians from different universities, early childhood teachers and authorities of early childhood education head office. Based on the results of international and national studies and feedback of applied practices in the field, a pilot study was conducted as a part of program development in 2012. As a result of the piloting, some small changes (addition and adaptation of program about special education, and ‘goals and objectives’ are used as ‘objectives and indicators’) and additions (detailed information about parent involvement, focus on assessment progress) were made on the MoNE Early Childhood Education Program in 2013. Although the early childhood education program was updated, the main features of it are retained the same as program applied in 2006. These main features/ characteristics of this updated program applied in Turkey are listed as (MoNE, 2013):

-It is child-centered: Teachers let children plan, do, organize, examine, search and argue as much as possible. Children should be free to choose what to play and which materials to be used in activities.

-It is flexible: This program is adapted in terms of changes in children, family and physical environment. It can be adapted depending on individual differences. Teachers prepare their plan and apply and finally assess it in this education program.

-It is spiral: The objectives and indicators have been determined and in terms of the needs of children, these objectives and indicators have been examined in detail again and again through the education process. Preschool children need to repeat for best learning; therefore spiral program has been preferred.

-It is an eclectic program: Based on different early childhood education programs from different countries, a child-centered program which can meet national needs has been prepared.

-It has equilibrium: Objectives and indicators have been determined for each developmental area of children and there should be equilibrium between these objectives for each area. Moreover, places for activities (outdoor-indoor), type of

activities (Turkish, mathematics, play... etc), work sample (individual –group activity) and time should balance in this program.

-It's based on play: Children learn best during play. They learn about themselves, the world around them; they express themselves and get critical thinking ability while they are playing.

-It's based on learning by discovery: Active involvement of children is critical. The important point is to transfer information to different and new situations. This program supports children to ask, to search, to discover and to learn by play.

-Creativity is essential: The base of the program is creativity. Both teachers and children's creativity are enhanced in each activity in education.

-It is open to use daily experience and close environment opportunity: Daily experiences provide opportunities to enrich and to ease the education for children. Teachers have an important role to know and observe close environment experiences of children.

-It is not theme-based: Objectives and indicators are not determined based on themes; however, the process is organized with the help of some basic concepts/subjects. The aim is not to teach the subject to children, but is to reach the targeted objectives and indicators with the help of such concepts/subjects.

-It has learning centers: Learning centers are crucial for children's learning. Children can have active roles in small groups and focus attention on different learning centers in classrooms.

-Cultural and universal values are taken into consideration.

-Parent education and parent involvement are crucial: In order to build a bridge between home and school, "Integrated Family Support Education Guide with MoNE Early Childhood Education Program" - Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Programı ile Bütünleştirilmiş Aile Destek Eğitim Rehberi (OBADER) is prepared.

-It has multidimensional assessment: In early childhood education, process is more important than product. Therefore, it should be the process to be assessed and teacher, child and program assessments should be done together in the assessment process.

-It has adaptation for special education: In order to provide equal chance for each child, there has been an adaptation section in the program. Teachers ask to prepare adaptation for children who need special education in their classroom.

-Guidance and counseling is important: In order to support children's development, there should be collaboration between teachers and guidance and counselling services. This collaboration enhances parent education as well.

The main features of the updated early childhood education program are defined. There is a process education for young children and each objective has to follow the others in each developmental area through the application of this program. Therefore, there has to be a continuum between each other. The early childhood education program emphasizes that without completion of prior learning; success is not very possible in the following learning. Individual differences and each developmental area of each child have to be taken into consideration in the assessment process of an appropriate early childhood education program. The program and both products and process of education have to be planned properly, and there have to be close assessment procedures for all education processes in early childhood education. Therefore, assessment is thought of as one of the main aspects of early childhood education.

In the updated program, assessment of young children is included as a separate chapter under three subheadings. Under the first heading; "*the acknowledgment and assessment of children*", the importance of the acknowledgement of children is stressed one more time. It is defined as a process of reaching a meaningful and reliable decision about children. Teachers have an idea about children before and after learning their levels. Moreover, through children's assessment, teachers get clues about how and why children are behaving like that in such conditions. As documentation material, the development observation list is prepared and children's learning is assessed individually. During this process, anecdotal records and development checklists were also suggested in the previous program (MoNE, 2006). In the updated program, the development observation report is represented to the teachers as the assessment tool. According to the data in the development observation report, teachers make analyses to assess children's development and they can also provide educational suggestion to the parents of

children about their education and development. Additionally, in this updated program, portfolio is used as one of the tools for children's assessment. In this portfolio, different kinds of materials (activities chosen by children, letter from parents, development observation lists...) are included and children tell their parents what they do throughout the semester in classroom on a "portfolio day".

The assessment of the program is listed as the second subheading and it includes all parts of the program. The main aim is to determine the consistency between parts, the conditions between plans and the actions, and lastly, new requirements during the application. Teachers assess all of the activities and applications at the end of each day, and through this assessment, the monthly assessment is done to reach a complete picture about the applied program. Through the assessment of each day activity, teachers are provided with different alternatives such as small presentations by children, activity sheet/ memory boards, drawings of children, conversation on photos taken during activity, and also exhibitions. While different alternatives are determined to complete the assessment of activity, the updated program provides some clues and questions for teachers as a guide. Teachers can benefit from these questions during the assessment of activities which are represented as; *descriptive questions* (What did you see? Where did you go?, What kind of materials have been used?...etc), *affective questions* (What is your favorite food?, Which movement is the most difficult one for you?, Do you like acting as..., and What did you feel?...etc), *questions based on objectives* (Which object is the heaviest one?, Can you find an object which is square?...etc) and lastly *questions on association with daily life* (Do we smell everything, why?, etc).

The last heading in the assessment chapter of the updated early childhood program is *the self- assessment of the teacher*. The results obtained from the program and children's assessment show that teachers should do self-assessment. Self-assessment of teachers helps them to be motivated, to enhance their creativity, to be reflective teacher and to enhance their development by noticing and reducing their own weaknesses.

Each early childhood education program applied in Turkey stressed the importance of the assessment procedure and its necessity in young children's education. Rather than the product, the assessment is declared as the process that

provides feedback for children's education. Accordingly, step by step analysis (children, program and teacher) is preferred in the assessment of young children.

2.5. Current Studies on Teachers' Views on Assessment

Over the past decades, the importance of young children's education has attracted more attention, and the number of the studies on children's education and especially assessment of their education has increased. The results of studies have revealed that the overall value of assessment in education is stressed, and assessment has begun to be applied by early childhood teachers in educational settings. However, there is a lack of information concerning teachers' views on the assessment of young children. Studies have concluded that the views of teachers have played an important role in early childhood education (Brassard & Boehm, 2007, Schappe, 2005). In the preschool classroom, there is a significant and positive correlation between student performance and teachers' perspective. Moreover, teachers have positive views on informal assessment, and they express many advantages of it. In addition to their positive attitude towards this measurement in young children's education, teachers' beliefs and views influence and contribute to children's development. Brassard and Boehm (2007) stressed that "teachers' beliefs make a significant contribution to children's development" (p.30). Although different studies have been conducted on the issue, research stressing teachers' views about education and assessment is limited, both worldwide and in Turkey.

In this part of this chapter, some examples are presented for the studies conducted on the views of teachers and experts related with assessment. Although not all of them have been conducted with early childhood teachers, they have provided general perspectives on the assessment of early childhood education via responses of experts, practitioners and teachers who have worked in preschool or kindergarten settings. In the literature, the views of teachers about preference of informal assessment to formal assessment in young children's education are stressed, and characteristics of informal assessment are explained in detail (Horton & Bowman, 2001; Johnson & Beauchamp, 1987; Pretti-Frontczak, Kowalski & Douglas Brown, 2002).

One of the two major investigations into the use of assessment instruments by early childhood practitioners having been identified in literature over last decades was the study conducted by Johnson and Beauchamp (1987) in the United States. This study tried to answer the questions of which child assessment instruments were being used, why they were chosen and what factors were considered important in their choice. Based on the responses, early childhood teachers preferred at least one assessment instrument and the average number of tools used was about three. There was a tendency in choosing an instrument that was already in place in the program. The most important characteristics of the instruments were listed as the ease of use and scope of the instrument. Teachers' opinions on assessment instruments were defined as; these instruments should be developmentally based, assess several areas, represent the children's needs and strengths, be adapted to program planning and, finally, be interpretable.

While the study was conducted about assessment instruments that were used in the assessment procedure of young children nearly three decades ago, a newer study that focused on the assessment that was implemented by early childhood practitioners was conducted by Pretti-Frontczak, Kowalski and Douglas Brown (2002). The main aim of the researchers was to determine which child assessment and curriculum practices were used in the preschool context. The study also analyzed the relationship between the use of assessment and curricula, the level of education, the program type and the years of experience. In this study, the respondents believed that a minimum of three child development assessment instruments were used, while one third of them stated that at least one standardized assessment, compared with informal assessment, was used. Moreover, there were differences noted between early childhood teachers' level of education and the number of assessment instruments used. Participants with a higher level of education listed the use of more assessment instruments.

While the first two studies were conducted with early childhood teachers, another survey study was conducted by Horton and Bowman in 2001 to determine the current state of experts' opinion and public practice with regard to the assessment of prekindergarten children. The first survey of this study, addressed to a select group of national leaders in the early childhood field. The aim was to determine the most

important component of a child assessment system. The general view of an appropriate assessment system had been determined by the experts. After the survey was conducted with 25 selected national leaders, there was a consensus that the assessment system had to be linked with the applied curriculum in early childhood education settings. The respondents of the survey agreed that informal methods should be used to assess young children. However, some experts' opinions supported the usage of formal assessment instruments to screen children for disabilities and developmental delays, to conduct diagnostic evaluations. Moreover, according to the experts, the standardized tests scores served as program tools rather than individual children's assessment. As for the informal assessment method, on the other hand, experts argued that portfolios, parent evaluations, teacher anecdotal records, and teacher checklists were cited as useful resources. As the characteristics of these tools, their culturally and linguistically appropriateness was emphasized. Lastly, teachers' training and the supervision had been emphasized as the part of the assessment system of young children's education. In the second step of this study, Horton and Bowman (2002) conducted a second survey to represent the child assessment practices in prekindergarten programs. The key findings of the survey were basically on the growing use of developmentally appropriate informal assessment techniques and the increased number of structured state-mandated assessment systems in this method. In practices, the mandate recommended or commonly used informal assessment had been preferred as overall child assessment and program evaluation systems. On the other hand, based on the responses, in practices, there was not a link between the curriculum and assessment. In summary, via these two studies, researchers concluded that if the instruments had not been linked to the curriculum, complemented by other appropriate tools, supported by teacher training, program evaluation and parent communication, they could not be useful. Therefore, assessment has to be thought of as a comprehensive system that is integrated in the larger program.

In the study of Horton and Bowman (2002), the instruments used during the informal assessment of young children's education are defined by teachers, and according to experts, the link between assessment and curriculum is essential, while teacher training and parent communication are determined as parts of the assessment

system as a whole. Moreover, in order to foster the outcomes of the studies of Johnson and Beauchamp (1987) and Pretti-Frontczak et al (2002), Brown and Rolfe (2005) conducted a study to determine which child development assessment instruments are currently used by Australian early childhood teachers working in general preschool programs. The first aim was stated as to determine whether Australian early childhood teachers were using formal and/or informal child development assessment instruments in their programs, while the second aim was to establish whether the potential value of developmental assessment was recognized by future early childhood teachers (students). One of the results of this study showed that most of the early childhood teachers used informal child development assessment rather than formal assessment, while students' choices were using both informal and formal assessment instruments. Time constraints, lack of resources, lack of knowledge of available assessment instruments and negative attitudes toward formal assessment were reasons why early childhood teachers did not use any formal assessment. Checklists were preferred by all respondents of the study as informal assessment instruments. According to the responses of early childhood teachers, they preferred observation while doing informal assessment. They also indicated more than one type of observation; anecdotal, running records and event sampling. One interesting result of the study was that none of the early childhood teachers indicated the use of inventories, portfolios or home visits as assessment measures of young children's education. However, student respondents emphasized the use of checklists, rating scales, inventories and also observation as the parts of informal assessment. The most important factors in using specific instruments were stated as 'the ease of use' and 'accuracy of the instrument', while 'knowledge of the instrument', 'confidence with the instrument', and 'availability of the instrument' received no ratings by the early childhood teachers. Finally, the respondents listed 'identifying children with potential problems' and 'providing a good overall picture of children's development' as the most important factors of using assessment in general.

These studies provide a general view that informal assessment is chosen as assessment measures in early childhood education. The instruments used and reasons why teachers chose such kinds of instruments are varied. Moreover, the role of

assessment in education is stressed one more time. In addition to the experts' views on the assessment tools used in early childhood education settings, Hanes (2009) conducted a survey study with early childhood practitioners with the aim to determine how early childhood practitioners view and understand assessment and their perceptions about assessment measures being used in their school. One of the research questions of this study was to determine whether preschool educators found the assessment measurement used in their schools purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and inclusive. The results concluded that practitioners thought they used developmentally appropriate, inclusive and purposeful assessment. The purpose of assessment was stated as mostly to monitor progress (92 % of the participants), with readiness, achievement, early intervention, improvement in teacher practice and evaluation of overall programs declared as other purposes. Based on the responses of participants, they had positive perceptions of assessment and the majority of them chose self-prepared assessments rather than standardized tests in their classrooms. Moreover, the response of participants on the type of assessment applied in their classroom was centered on observation, with nearly 97 % of participants. While checklists and rating scales were the follower of observation, standardized tests were chosen by one-fifth of the participants. The teachers' perceptions on training about assessment had been positive, and most of the respondents agree on the fact that these trainings provide a foundation for understanding and using assessment in the classroom has become an important part of their professional growth, and would be used for appropriately assessing their students.

More specifically, Flowers, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Browder and Spooner (2005) determined the thoughts of teachers from five different countries about alternative assessment approaches in their study. A total of 983 teachers from five states were the participants. In three of these five states, a portfolio approach is used as their alternative assessment, while a performance- based assessment and a checklist approach are employed as alternative assessment techniques in the other two states. Based on the outcomes of this study, most of the teachers reported that the alternative assessments have an impact in a positive way. However, there are some disagreements between teachers about items assessing the educational benefits of alternative assessments. Moreover, teachers' opinions on the positive impact of

alternative assessment between testing approaches (checklist, portfolio and performance-based) varied. Finally, the main limitation of alternative assessment was reported by teachers as the increase in paperwork and demands on their time.

2.5.1. Studies on Teachers' Views on Assessment in Turkey

The number of examples for studies that represent the role and importance of assessment procedure in education has recently increased both worldwide and in Turkey. The studies conducted in Turkey included participants from different grades and their assessment procedures. These studies have helped specifying teachers' views about assessment procedure in education and their needs (Gelbal & Kelecioğlu, 2007; Yıldırım & Semerci, 2006). According to the results of the study conducted by Aydın (2005), most of the teachers do not have exact information related to informal assessment and they could not apply it in their classroom. The competence of teachers from different grades in regards to the application of assessment was found inadequate (Çakan, 2004; Pilten, 2001). In addition to studies focusing on the views of teachers from different grades about assessment procedure in education, especially after the 21st century, researchers have conducted studies about the assessment of young children's education in Turkey. Some studies stress the assessment of the 5- and 6- year-old children's basic academic abilities and 3- and 6- year-old children's gross and fine motor development abilities (Mağden & Şahin, 2002; Mağden, et. al., 2004). Moreover, a study related with teachers' views and perceptions on children's assessment was conducted by Erdiller and McMullen (2003). The aim of this study was to realize Turkish early childhood teachers' beliefs about developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education. The results showed that Turkish teachers' beliefs were closer to the main points of developmentally appropriate practices. Besides these studies, specific studies were conducted about assessment tools, such as; portfolio applied in the classroom, and home visits in Turkey (Eren, 2007; Yıldız, 2012). While specific applications and the effects of these applications in the assessment of young children were analyzed, one study aimed to stress the views of early childhood teachers on the early childhood education programs in application (Şıvgın, 2005). According to the results of this study, teachers believed that existing forms for assessment are inadequate, and that there have to be additional methods in young children's assessment. The results of

another study determined the applied assessment tools and analyzed the reasons of tool preference by teachers in early childhood education (Sezer, 2010). Moreover, a study was conducted to investigate in-service early childhood teachers' and pre-service teachers' perceptions and behaviors about evaluation aspects of the 2006 early childhood education program in Turkey (Gül, 2009). Another study examined early childhood teachers' self-reported beliefs and practices in relation to classroom assessment (Baldu, 2010). Based on the responses of in-service teachers, there was a correlation between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. Moreover, the level of education of teachers, years of experience in their professions and the number of teaching staff in the classroom have been found to be the factors that resulted in a relation with teachers' self-reported beliefs and classroom practices. In the study of Koçak (2005), general views of early childhood teachers were that they have sufficient information about the application of assessment methods, and they mostly used observation.

Considering the studies conducted in Turkey, there is an increase in the amount of research that has focused on teachers' views about assessment of young children. Some of these studies referred the relation between whole informal assessment tools and teachers' views while others stressed teachers' background and its relation with their views about assessment. In this study, the aim is to detect the early childhood teachers' views on observation as one of the informal assessment methods. The analysis on the views of early childhood education was done in order to enhance the awareness of in-service early childhood teachers and also early childhood education experts about assessment of young children's education. General views of early childhood teachers on observation were determined by noticing the benefits of observation, the challenges confronted during classroom observation and also the ways of addressing challenges through the interviews.

2.6. Summary

In the educational setting, assessment is a broad and complex issue and through studies, it is in a progress especially in early childhood education. The procedure of assessment is thought of as challenging and difficult at early ages, because of young children's limited attention spans and their characteristics as being

unreliable test-takers in formal assessment. Therefore, the assessment procedure applied to children at early ages is informal assessment which mostly focuses on observation.

The role of the teacher has a major importance on young children's learning and assessment. They act as a moderator and organizer of the assessment procedure of young children. In this respect, teachers' views on assessment gain more importance, and both children's assessment and their learning are affected by their views. Although there have been studies on teachers' views on the procedure of assessment of young children, research on early childhood teachers' views about assessment and the context of the research is limited and different. Therefore, further investigation of early childhood teachers' views on assessment, specifically informal assessment, is merited.

As the result of application of this study, it is aimed to fill the gap related with views of teachers about observation as an assessment tool in Turkish context. There were limited number of study in which early childhood teachers were represented as participants and also the studies whose aim is the assessment in education did not represent the early childhood education assessment. Moreover, most of the studies were conducted as quantitative study, while in this study not only teachers' views but also their practices related with observation were taken into attention through qualitative study. Therefore, this study is also beneficial to fill such gap in Turkish literature.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the method of inquiry in detail. The chapter begins with the research design and the information about participants and settings of the study are represented. Then the data collection tools and data collection procedure are detailly presented. Finally, the data analysis procedure is explained. The study is conducted as a qualitative study, therefore, the issues related to the quality of the research (the role of researcher, nature of data and trustworthiness) are addressed at the end of this chapter.

3.1. Research Design

In this study, the phenomenological case study was preferred as the research design. Merriam (1998) stated that the most appropriate method in order to frame any study might be a case study because in case studies, multiple qualitative studies might be examined appropriately. Moreover, an object, program, person, organization or phenomenon might be examined through a case study (Merriam, 1998). In this study, the phenomenon examined as the early childhood teachers' views on observation as one of the assessment tool in young children's education. Peterson (1997) believed that the phenomenon becomes a part of people and people's actions and behaviors are affected from this phenomenon in many ways.

Understanding of a phenomenon by people who have actually experienced it might be defined as the important findings derived from phenomenology and phenomenology describes the adjustments of one to lived experiences. Creswell (2003) summarized that in phenomenological research, the identification of 'essence' of human experiences that concern a phenomenon is done by the researcher and this phenomenon is described by the participants of a study. In this study, when the phenomenological approach applied to the early childhood teachers who worked at a

private kindergarten, it allowed the researcher to understand “lived experiences” of early childhood teachers about observation from their perspective (Moustakas, 1994).

3.2. Participants and Settings of the Study

3.2.1. Participants

The study was conducted in a private kindergarten in Ankara where 46 early childhood teachers are working. The researcher also worked as an early childhood teacher at this kindergarten for three years. Availability to the knowledgeable teachers about young children’s education and their assessment is very high in this kindergarten. Therefore, this kindergarten was chosen as the setting of this study and convenience sampling was used in this study. Moreover the relationship between researcher and other early childhood teachers at this kindergarten is positive and smart. It impacts the study in terms of the depth and width interview data and also more comfortable observation sessions.

Six early childhood teachers were chosen as the participants of the study among 46 teachers in the kindergarten. The participants of this study were selected among the teachers who volunteered to participate in the study based on accessibility and their free time. As the definition by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), a convenience sample is a group of individuals who are available for the study. Therefore, as the result of convenience sampling, six early childhood teachers among 46 teacher were willing to give their views about observation as one of the assessment tools during interviews. And also they volunteered to be observed in their classrooms.

The early childhood teachers in this study were all women. All participants are young teachers because their age range is 21- 30. Just age of one of them is between 31- 40. All teachers graduated from the undergraduate program of Early Childhood Education from different universities. Three of the participants have maintained their graduate education at different programs in different universities. Besides participants’ levels of education, there is a table that represents teaching experiences of the participants in this field. Three of the participants had less than 5 years of field experience while the other half of them had between 6 and 10 years of experience in this field (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 *Teaching Experience*

	Number of teachers
<1 to 5 years	3
6 to 10 years	3
11 to 15 years	-
16 to 20 years	-
20 + years	-

Three of the participants have been working at the kindergarten as their first workplace, while the other half of the early childhood teachers had worked in different kindergartens. All participants have worked with another early childhood teacher in the classroom. Moreover, participants said that their class size was roughly 20 students/ children. Besides demographic information, participants responded to questions about courses and training. All of the participants took courses related with early childhood education assessment in their undergraduate program. Lastly, three teachers participated in the in-service training and seminars about assessment and evaluation of young children.

In this study, six early childhood teachers were interviewed and also three of them were randomly selected to do naturalistic observation in their classrooms (see table 3.2).

Table 3.2 *Participants interviewed and/or observed*

	Participants
Interview session	P1, P2 P3, P4, P5, P6
Observation session	P2, P3,P5

P1 earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. She is working with five-year-olds. She has been working for nine years in this kindergarten. Different from other participants, her age is between 31- 40. She took different assessment courses in her undergraduate education; however she added that these courses contain theoretical information. Moreover, P1 participated different seminars and in-service training related with assessment of young children.

P2 graduated from early childhood education department of a university. She has continued her graduate education. She works with 20 6-year-old children in her classroom. This kindergarten is her first workplace. She has taught both 5- and 6-year-olds. She applied different assessment tools in her classrooms. Although she took different courses related with assessment in her undergraduate education, she has not participated in any seminars or in-service training related with assessment in young children's education.

P3 also graduated from the same department of a university and she has continued her graduate education in educational sciences department. She is working with 5-year-olds and there are 19 children in her classroom. While she had experiences at different work places, she has worked in this kindergarten for 3 years with different age groups. She works with a partner and she applies different informal assessment tools in her classroom to assess young children's education. Although she took courses about assessment in young children's education, she has not participated in any training or seminars related with early childhood education assessment.

P4 earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood education of a university. She has maintained her graduate education in same department. She has worked as an early childhood teacher for seven years in different kindergartens. She works with 19 6-year-old children in her classroom while there is another early childhood teacher in her class. She took courses, in which observation methods are represented, during her undergraduate education. She attended a seminar in which evaluation and assessment in early childhood education was presented.

P5 graduated from both child development and early childhood education department of a university. She works with 6-year-old children and there are 20 children in her classrooms. She did not have any work experience before. She has worked for four years at this kindergarten with both 5 and 6 year-olds. During her undergraduate education, she took courses on application of assessment tools and theoretical background about these tools. However, she has not attended any in-service training or seminars related with assessment progress in early childhood education.

Lastly P6 graduated from early childhood education department of a university. She worked at both private and public kindergartens for eight years. While she works with a partner, there are 20 children who are 5 years old, in her classroom. She took different assessment courses during her undergraduate education. Furthermore, she attended seminars related with evaluation and assessment in education.

3.2.2. Setting of the Study

The study was conducted in a private kindergarten in Ankara. Especially, this kindergarten is a part of a big private school in which students from preschool to high school are educated. This college is continually developing school with 6000 students and 700 teachers- employees. The students attending this college come from high socio-economic status families. Most of the students have international vision because of their families' background. The standards of families both economically and also educationally are above the Turkey's average. While the school offers scholarships in secondary and high school level, families have to pay high tuition for their children who are attending at kindergarten.

Children whose ages are from 4 to 6 are attending this kindergarten. The school is a big kindergarten and it consists of 23 classrooms; 2 classrooms for 4 year-olds, 10 classrooms for 5-year-olds while 11 of them are for 6-year-olds. There are two ateliers, a big drama hall, a sport hall, a computer room, and a big dining hall. Moreover, there are four more rooms for administrators, and psychologists and a counseling center. Children take branch courses in different ateliers. While there is big area inside the school, there are four play gardens for children outside the building. In these gardens, children can play with the large- motor activity equipment and they can also play freely without any equipment.

The second part of the study was the observation of three early childhood teachers. These observations were done in their own classrooms. In these classrooms, child- size, wooden materials are preferred as chairs, tables and cupboards. There is a variety in toy choice; according to child age different toys are provided to the children in their classrooms. For instance simple puzzle with fewer pieces for 4-year-olds while logical card boards for children at 6 years old. Technological devices are

also available. In these classrooms, approximately 20 children and two teachers control and apply daily activities in classrooms. The arrangement of classroom may be changed according to activity types. The daily routine begins with free play time, then two different activities are given one after another (activities may change according to branch courses). At the end of these activities, there is specific time for lunch time. In the afternoon, the students are given two separate activity sessions and snack time. At the end of the day, there is another free play time for children and also there is a session for assessment of daily activities and routines with children and teachers. The timeline varies by age group at this kindergarten.

3.3. Data Collection Tools and Procedure

In this part of the study, the data collection tools which are interview and observation were represented. Moreover, the data collection procedure during one-to-one interviewing and also classroom observation were explained in detail.

3.3.1. Interview

The study was carried out in a qualitative research design and interviewing was preferred as the main data collection tool. Interviewing is described as the most important technique for data collection to be used by qualitative researchers (Fetterman, 1989). Moreover, Patton (1990) emphasized that the purpose of interviewing is to note what people's views are, and he indicated that through observation the researcher cannot notice the feelings, thoughts of people and how they organize the world; therefore, questions related with those have to be answered by these people during interviewing.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used in this study. The same protocol was used for all participants. The instrument was developed by the researcher after reviewing the related literature and previous studies about young children's assessment and views of teachers on assessment. All interviews were conducted in Turkish and audiotaped upon permission. Before conducting the instrument, the necessary ethical permissions were gathered from the Research Center for Applied Ethics of Middle East Technical University and also from school administration. Then the first version of the interview protocol was reviewed by two

experts who study in the field of early childhood education. The necessary adaptation and elimination were made according to their comments and recommendation.

In order to explain unclear items, to change the sequence of the questions and to eliminate the questions that were not responded, pilot studies were conducted (Oppenheim, 1992). In this study, the application of the pilot study was done with two early childhood teachers working in the field, their interviews were audio-taped and transcribed into written documents. Some changes were done upon the transcriptions of the pilot study and recommendations of the experts on data analysis of the pilot study. The sequence of two questions were changed, three questions were omitted while one of them was asked as a follow-up question during the interviews. For this study, the final interview protocol contained 12 main questions. Follow-up questions were asked to explore the emerging issues during the interview. The interview protocol is given in the Appendix III.

When the final version of the interview protocol was ready to conduct, the data collection procedure began. All participants were visited and the teachers were informed about the study and asked whether they would like to participate. It was stated that participation was voluntary and the results of the study would not be shared with any other teachers or administrators.

All participants to be interviewed were chosen among the volunteered early childhood teachers. The participants chose where and when to be interviewed. Then, each interview was conducted in one-on-one settings. At the beginning of the interview, the purpose of the study was explained briefly, and the consent form (Appendix I) which indicated that they took part in the study voluntarily and they could quit the study at any time, was requested to be signed by participants. Participants were asked to fill the demographic information sheet (Appendix II) in order to obtain general information about the early childhood teachers' education and their background.

Moreover, before conducting interviews, participants were asked whether they permitted audio recording. All participants accepted audio recording during the interview. Also they were reminded that there were no exact answers of the questions and they were able to express their views how they want. The researcher was conducted interviews and interviews were completed in nearly 25 minutes.

Moreover, the distribution of the interview questions according to the research questions can be seen in table 3.3.

Table 3.3 *Distribution of interview questions*

Research Question	Interview Questions
#1 Assessment and role of observation	1,2,3,4,5
#2 Benefits of observation to children, teachers, ECE program	6,7,8,9
#3 Challenges and Ways to deal with challenges	10,11,12

3.3.2. Observation

During interviewing, the views of early childhood teachers about observation in young children’s education were tried to be determined. In order to foster the views of participants on observation, their actions in daily routine were desired to be observed. While teachers have different thoughts about assessment and observation in their minds, through observing these teachers, researcher may indicate whether their practices represented their views as well. Marshall and Rossman (2006) explained that naturalistic observation is beneficial to gather information about normal every day process in the classrooms and the interactions. In addition to interviews, by doing naturalistic observation in classroom, researchers may have chances to see how early childhood teachers apply observation in their classroom as an informal assessment tool.

There was a time between interviews and observation sessions. After interviewing sessions were completed, based on the responses of the participants and related literature, a guide was prepared for the observation session. When the preparation of the observation sheet as a guide was completed, three early childhood teachers were randomly selected to do naturalistic observation in their classroom. Then observation schedule was prepared based on the free time of early childhood teachers. P2, P3 and P5 were observed by researchers based on the observation sheet. This sheet was prepared in accordance with the related literature about observation in early childhood education and also interview responses of participants. The

observation sheet was reviewed by two experts in the field of early childhood education and the final version of the sheet was used during observation of early childhood teachers in their classroom (appendix IV).

Three early childhood teachers were observed in their classrooms. There were not any adaptations or changes in their daily routine. These naturalistic observations were conducted in teachers' suitable times, and the schedule of observation sessions is given in table 3.4.

Table 3.4 *Schedule of classroom observation*

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1st session (Morning)	P2	P5	P3	X	Last
2nd session (Noon)	P3	P2	P5	X	meeting
3rd session(Afternoon)	P5	P3	P2	X	P2, P3, P5

The researcher observed teachers in three sessions as; 1st session in the morning, 2nd session at noon and lastly 3rd session in the afternoon. On the first day of observations, the observation session was started with the observation of P2 in her classroom. Reseacher observed P2 during free-play time and English course. Her second observation was conducted on Tuesday at noon during lunch time, and the researcher observed P2 on Wednesday in the afternoon through an activity (branch course) and free play time. Each observation session lasted approximately 1.5- 2 hours.

A similar schedule was applied for P3 and P5. P3 was observed on Monday through second session at drama course, her second observation was done on Tuesday as 3rd session during outdoor play time. Lastly, P3 was observed on Wednesday as 1st session. While children were playing freely, teachers checked out children' bags and then teachers organize their classroom for the activities during the day. Each observation session lasted approximately 1.5 hours and totally P3 was observed for approximately 5 hours.

The final observation sessions were conducted for P5 and she was firstly observed on Monday as 3rd session during cutting & pasting activity controlled by P5

and her partner. Then researcher conducted observation session on Tuesday in the morning during free-play time and it followed by school readiness activity. Lastly, P5 observed on Wednesday through 2nd session while music activity was applied with children. The researcher finished P5's observation session nearly in 6 hours in total.

Each session last nearly 1.5- 2 hours. For each participant, the researcher made observations for nearly 5.5 and 6 hours in total. The researcher tried to make the observations in different time periods of a day in order to support the variety of data. During each observation session, the researcher noted what she saw and heard onto the observation sheet. These sessions were audio-recorded upon permission. At the end of each day, the researcher's notes were organized and edited. Also, audio-recordings were transcribed and these transcribed notes were examined by a research assistant from the department of early childhood education to reduce the researcher bias. Researcher's own notes and reviewed notes were compared, and then the final analyses of observation data were conducted. As the final step of observation, there was a last meeting with three early childhood teachers to make interpretations of their interview responses and observation sessions. This introspective meeting was made one- by- one and also responses and interpretation of teachers were audio-taped. These meetings lasted nearly 10-15 minutes. The responses of teachers during interviews and their practices during naturalistic observation in classrooms served as a guide through the last meeting with participants.

Although the responses of early childhood teachers were tried to be enhanced with observation, all research questions were not desired to be supported with observation data. The research questions of this study and the data sources used for investigation of these questions are seen in table 3.5.

Table 3.5 *Research questions and data sources*

Research Questions	Data Sources
1. What are the views of early childhood teachers on early childhood education assessment and what is the role of observation in early childhood education assessment process?	Interview Observation
2. What are the views of early childhood teachers on the benefits of observation for children, early childhood teacher and early childhood education program?	Interview
3. What are the views of early childhood teachers on challenges that early childhood teachers faced during observation and how do early childhood teachers deal with these challenges confronted during observation?	Interview Observation

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The data was transcribed and coded by the researcher to gather information about the early childhood teachers' views on observation as an informal assessment tool. The interview transcripts were prepared so that the coder would not see the names of the participants, and the researcher transcribed each interview before other interviews were conducted. The reason for this was to determine whether changes or additions were needed for other interviews.

Data analysis was thought as reporting the interviews and documents, and classifying phenomenon into discrete units. The objective was to meaningfully describe the views of early childhood teachers on observation as an informal assessment method. Lichtman (2006) suggested a technique to analyze the raw data to make meaningful concepts, described as the three C's of analysis: from Coding to Categorizing to Concepts. This analysis was explained into six steps; Step 1- initial coding, Step 2- revisiting initial coding, Step 3- initial list of categories, Step 4- modifying the initial list, Step 5- revisiting categories, Step 6- from categories to concepts, and through the data analysis procedure, these steps were followed to reach meaningful categories in this study. Through the steps defined by Lichtman, firstly each participant was named as P1 (Participant1)... P6. Following this, each response of participants for one question was taken and brought together. For each question, each participant's responses were collected together. After this collection, the

researcher read them again and again, and then the main and common responses were determined and these phrases were coded. Then, initial lists of categories were defined for each question making modifications and revisions. Through the analysis procedure, the responses were checked again and changes were made where necessary. Eventually, final categories and concepts were defined for the responses of early childhood teachers about their observation.

During this data analysis procedure, there was a second coder to reduce the bias and enhance the validity of categories. Tinsley and Weiss (2000) emphasized that inter-coder agreement is the term that is represented the consistency required in content analysis and they believed that such kind of agreement is required in analysis because "the extent to which the different judges tend to assign exactly the same rating to each object" (p.98). The second coder was an expert from the department of Early Childhood Education, who had knowledge about the whole process of this study. The transcribed notes were analyzed by the second coder. Based on the feedback of the second coder, some changes and additions were made on codes and categories. When there was not a consensus on the category of a question, the responses of participants were read again and codes were interpreted one by one. For the first research question, one code about assessment in early childhood education was omitted because the researcher and the second-coder could not reach a decision. Also, two codes of other research questions were upon the brainstorming on the responses of participants. After coding progress of participants' responses was completed, the final form of categories and concepts was developed. There were twenty-six different categories for different research questions while four categories were omitted because of not having consensus between coders. Inter-coder reliability of this study was assessed as 86.66%.

As the second step of this study, three early childhood teachers were observed in their classrooms to see how they apply observation in their daily routines. Three participants were observed through 3 days. At the end of each day, the researcher read her own notes and compared them with the participants' responses in interviews. Also each audio-taped observation was transcribed and these transcribed notes were given to the research assistant from the department of early childhood teachers in order to enhance reliability and validity. At the end of three days, all

notes gathered from naturalistic observation were combined. Then the researcher and the research assistant read the notes and determined the connection of actions and responses of early childhood teachers about observation.

As the final step of the study, the researcher made a last meeting as in the form of an introspective meeting. Three meetings were organized with three early childhood teachers one- by- one. The summary of teacher's responses and actions were presented to teacher. Then their own interpretation about their own views and actions was obtained. They explained why they behaved in such conditions, whether they were aware of their actions or not. These meetings were audio- taped and at the end of each meeting, the researcher made connections between teachers' previous responses and last introspective thought based on the codes of this study.

3.5. Quality of Research

3.5.1. The Role of Researcher

The data of this study was gathered from early childhood teachers working at a private kindergarten in Ankara. The early childhood teachers working at this private kindergarten were my colleagues for three years. I myself worked at this kindergarten as an early childhood teacher. These early childhood teachers were more motivated to provide me with longer and detailed responses about their experiences in their classrooms. Their willingness to help me in my study was very positive and high.

During all interviews, I tried to comfort all the participants by stating there was no one correct answer and I focused solely on their intimate views about observation. The participants were interviewed where they felt comfortable in terms of place and timing; therefore, they were let to choose the place in their school and the time to interview. During the interviews, when the answers of participants were unclear, I tried to express what I understood from the participants' responses to them. If there was incoherence between the responses, I wanted them to correct my interpretation. Generally, before I moved to the next question, I summarized their responses with short sentences in order not to miss any information. In addition to the interview session, I was the observer of this study. I joined their classes without

interrupting any activities. Before observing participants, the classroom teacher and I decided where I should sit and observe the teacher and the class.

During interviews, some of the responses of participants related with the application of observation were negative; however, they did not hesitate to respond in such a way because of the confidence between us and the privacy of the study. Moreover, some participants perceived the interviews as an opportunity to anonymously express issues related to assessment in the early childhood education in Turkey.

Besides the conductor of this study, I was an early childhood teacher in the kindergarten. Being an insider of this field provided me with clues for specification of the study and the interview questions. Moreover, I gathered clues from the early childhood teachers working in both private and public schools because of speaking the same language in education with them. This insider knowledge has been a motivating issue for me and a good supporter to reach valid conclusions.

3.5.2. Nature of Data

In this study, through one-to-one interviews with participants, their general views on observation were determined. They might express their feelings, emotions and real feelings on observation. However, the participants might also give expected responses about observation; therefore, naturalistic observations were done in their classrooms in order to determine their real actions and views. According to Thompson (1992), there might be inconsistency between the beliefs/ views and the practices of the teachers because of a single data source. Therefore in this study, multiple data sources were used being interviews and classroom observations.

While the responses of participants were transcribing, there were some eliminations in nonverbal data. For instance clues gathered through mimics of participants could not be recorded through the transcribed notes. In order to handle these eliminations, classroom observations were made in participants' classrooms. These observations might help catch important clues and also give a chance to see the teachers' real actions about observation.

3.5.3. Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, reliability as a term is used in a limited way to check the consistency of patterns among others, and reliability has a minor role in qualitative inquiry (Cresswell, 2003). However, the strength point of qualitative research is the validity of it. In a study, if the researcher makes meaningful, appropriate, correct and useful interpretations from the gathered data, it is a valid study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Especially according to the Mishler (2000), in qualitative studies the term trustworthiness is used in stead of discovering truth by measuring reliability and validity.

After conducting the interviews with participants, their responses were written through audio recording. These written documents were sent to participants through e-mail for them to check and determine whether they felt that they were accurate. By taking the final descriptions and findings back to the participants, the member-checking was used to meet the criteria for the study's trustworthiness. Moreover, in the last meetings held as introspective meetings with three of the participants, these teachers had chances to interpret their own responses and actions as well. This also aimed to meet the member- checking criteria.

Another internal validity threat is data collector bias in qualitative research. To reduce this threat Creswell (2003) suggested two strategies. One of them is the standardization of all procedure, which meant the requirements of data collector training, while the other one is that the data collector has a lack of information. In this study, the second strategy was not applied since the data collector was the researcher; however, the researcher had training from courses at undergraduate and graduate education about interviewing to reduce the data collector bias threat. In the analysis of the interview data, one expert in the department of Early Childhood Education had the role as the second view of the researcher or as the second coder. Moreover, during observation sessions, another expert from the department of ECE reviewed the audio-taped observation session. At the end of the observations, the data obtained were compared with this expert to prevent subjectivity during observation. Therefore, observer- bias threat was mostly reduced.

In addition to this threat, the settings for the application could cause some differences in the study results, and it is known mostly as the location threat (Frankel & Wallen, 2006). In order not to face such causes, the participants were asked to schedule their appropriate time and each interview took place in the schools. Moreover, observations were mostly done in teachers' own classrooms. Besides setting, the subject characteristics could be thought of as another threat. By filling demographic sheets, possible differences were noticed and during the interview, the researcher detected whether these differences resulted in big changes.

3.6. Limitations

This part of the study includes the limitations of this study.

The first limitation of the study is the limited number of participants, by the nature of the qualitative research. Therefore, the findings of the data are limited with the responses of six early childhood teachers working at a private kindergarten. Moreover, this study was conducted in only one city in Turkey, Ankara, because of its accessibility to the researcher. Therefore, participants do not represent the whole country.

In addition to the responses of six early childhood teachers related with observation, three teachers were randomly selected among all participants. These three teachers were observed to determine how they put their views about observation into actions. Therefore, the findings gathered through observation of teachers were limited with three teachers.

Additionally, early childhood teachers in this study are those working with 5- and 6- year-old children and all of them are female. Therefore, there could not be any interpretation on the responses of participants about whether the gender of teachers and working group cause changes in the views of teachers about observation or not.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented. Early childhood teachers' views about observation were determined through interview questions. Then three of the teachers were observed while applying observation in their classroom. Lastly, through a last meeting with these three participants, their final remarks were determined. By following these steps, all responses of participants were represented to reply the research questions of the study. Firstly, the views of early childhood teachers on early childhood education assessment and the role of observation in early childhood education assessment process were detected. Then, the second research question of the study determined early childhood teachers' views about the benefits of observation for children, early childhood teacher and early childhood education program. The final research question was asked to examine the early childhood teachers' views on challenges they face during observation and the ways to deal with these challenges.

4.1. Views and Actions of Early Childhood Teachers on the Early Childhood Education Assessment and the Role of Observation in this Assessment Process

As the first step of this study, early childhood teachers were asked to define assessment in early childhood education. All of the participants stressed the importance of assessment in young children's education in their words.

All participants explained that assessment was a process of the whole education of children. Participants used the words "feedback", "process", "system", and "different methods focusing pre and post" while they were defining the early childhood education assessment as a process-based assessment. P2 made her definition as "Based on children's developmental areas, in order to follow developments of children... It is a system to detect the whole process." Moreover P3 was defining early childhood education assessment as a feedback of development

and stressed that “Assessment is this kind of feedback. I think it is children’s developmental feedback in each developmental area.”

Teachers believed that children’s development was in progress; therefore, their education has to be in progress. In order to enhance the quality of this progress there should be an assessment process in ECE. The role of assessment in young children’s education was stressed one more time with the response of P4 as “Assessment is the backbone of early childhood education.”

4.1.1. Views of Early Childhood Teachers on the Role of Observation in Early Childhood Education Assessment

Through the first interview question, participants expressed their views about assessment in early childhood education. Along with the interview questions, some prompt questions were also asked to the participants. When the responses of the participants to these prompt questions related with assessment were noted, the results showed that all of the participants prefer informal assessment methods in their classroom. In the literature and also in MoNE program (2013) in Turkey, different informal assessment methods are applied in young children’s education process, too. One of these informal tools, observation, was mostly preferred by early childhood teachers in their classrooms. In table 4.1 the responses of participants about the role of observation in ECE assessment were categorized as “base of whole assessment” and “a rich resource to know children”.

Table 4.1 *Role of observation in early childhood education assessment*

	n
Base of whole assessment	4
Rich resource to know children	4

More than half of the participants said that all assessment procedure began with observation. P3 stressed that “Observation comes first... actually the key point of everything is observation” while P2 shared her idea related with the role of observation in assessment of young children as; “The most important step of children’s assessment is observation. I think 95% of teachers’ opinions about children are formed with observation.” Teachers insisted that without observation,

they might not apply assessment tools related with children’s development. Therefore, the base of young children’s assessment was thought as observation.

In the first category, observation was defined as “the base of whole assessment”. Meanwhile other four participants of the study emphasized observation as a “rich resource to know children”. “I think in assessment, the most important role is played by observation, because it provides teachers to understand children’s behaviors and to meet the needs of children” was the response of P1, who added that data related with children’s development and education is mostly gathered through observation.

When this question was directed to participants, all of them responded in the same way with a smile and confident face. All participants clearly said that observation was a prerequisite for young children’s assessment. The response of P5 summarized the role of observation in ECE assessment as:

We can get rich and correct clues about children’s development and also their life. The role of children in their families, role of these people and many things are learned through observation. Actually, it’s as if a movie is played and you watch this film. Then you can easily understand what the aim of this film is, what the roles are, etc, throughout this film.

While the role of observation in ECE assessment was expressing, participants were also asked to explain their opinions about why they prefer observation in their classroom. Their responses were put under three categories seen in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 *Early childhood teachers prefer observation because it*

	n
Helps teacher to know child better in process	6
Is compulsory	3
Is practical	3

All teachers agreed on the idea that observation was preferred because it helps early childhood teachers to know the child better in process. P4 said that “Through this process, there should be systematic observations. These observations

will reflect the characteristics of children to teachers. There will be very crucial clues. I can detect how children are learning and which level they can reach”

In addition to the first reason of early childhood teachers’ preference on observation, three teachers began their sentences as, the tools used in ECE assessment and observation were compulsory in the program (MoNE, 2013). Therefore, they explained that they had to use observation forms (anecdotal records, event sampling, and play-observation record). P3 expressed her views as “We have used forms that are defined in the MoNE program – observation forms. Actually, administrators select and revise some of them. Then the forms are distributed to us.” Moreover, P2 emphasized her views about compulsory tool preference about observation as “There is an education program. Based on this program, administrators decide which tool should be used and they determine the application of this tool.”

Although participants indicated that observation and its forms are compulsory in young children’s education program, they also insisted that it was very practical and easy to use/apply in ECE assessment. Therefore, the third category for the reason for tool preference was determined as “observation is practical.” P1 explained her views about practical characteristics of this tool as “It was very practical, I use it to build a bridge between previous and present observation easily...” The application of observation was defined as easy and teachers gathered easy and fast feedback when they observe during the assessment procedure of young children.

After the participants determined their rationale about preferring observation in ECE assessment, they were also asked to share their ideas about the issues they take into consideration during their observation in classroom. The responses of participants showed that the role of observation was very critical because children’s developmental characteristics and also their needs were basically noticed through observation. The responses of participants were categorized as seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 *Issues those teachers taken into consideration during observation*

	n
Children's needs and interests	3
Children's developmental characteristics	3
Background of problems	2
Other	2
# of observation	
Observation environment	

The first category was determined as children's needs and interests and half of the participants (n= 3) insisted that without noticing children's needs and interests, observation will not be concluded with rich information. For instance, P1 defined her view as; "To determine a child's need, I make observations when a child expresses herself in a natural way. While they are playing in their natural environment, I observe them and based on the child's words and movements, I can understand the child's interest at that moment."

In addition to the children's needs and interests, their developmental characteristics were also defined as another important issue that early childhood teachers took into consideration during classroom observation. Half of the participants (n=3) believed that developmental characteristics of children based on each developmental area were the focus of observation. For each developmental area such as social & emotional, language, development; different objectives were determined as the target of the observation by teachers. P6 shared her view about the issue taken into consideration during observation as "Basically, I tried to observe whether children behaved in accordance with the objectives that are stressed in the program and their developmental characteristics in different areas." Additionally P3 expressed her view as:

Actually, target points are based on activities. If I observe the children in a physical education class, I concentrate on physical development of the children. Also if there is an English class, the focus becomes language development of the children... During the activity in our class, I pay attention mostly to social-emotional and cognitive development of the children. Basically, my target points show differences based on activities.

In addition to the children's needs & interests and their developmental characteristics, early childhood teachers focus their attention to the background of children's problematic behaviors during observation. P1 said that "for instance there is an introvert child, and firstly I tried to understand the reason of this condition. I observed this child, and then actually the observation data were supported with the data from interaction and communication with the child." Early childhood teachers believed that in order to solve a problem appropriately, possible causes of such problems should be found.

In this study, participants explained that they made classroom observation by focusing on children's needs, their developmental characteristics and also the background of the problems. They expressed that after the classroom observations were completed, they did analysis of these observation data in order to reach appropriate assessment in young children. At that point, participants indicated that observation data analyses were completed through one-dimensional and also through multi-dimensional analyses. This analysis process was important in order to emphasize the role of observation in early childhood education assessment because without data analysis, there should not be any interpretation related with the assessment of children's development. All participants explained that they firstly prefer one-dimensional analysis which includes their own interpretations on observation data. In addition to this, they conducted multi-dimensional analyses in which different people (administrators, colleagues, psychologists and parent) did brain storming related with the observation data.

As one-dimensional analysis, there were interpretations of teachers individually. They interpreted the observation data with the previous data gathered through previous observation. In addition to the one-dimensional analysis, teachers agreed that more than one person's interpretation would provide more appropriate information about an issue. Therefore, as multi-dimensional analysis, teachers interpreted the observation data with psychologists, other teachers (colleagues)/administrators, and also with parents. The response of P2 clearly summarized the multi-dimensional analysis as:

I think focusing on observation data and making an interpretation about children and also taking notes about this observation is very important. Then

sharing this interpretation with the psychologist at psychological counseling and guidance center (PCGC) is also important. Besides psychologists, I share my ideas with my partner. After we share our ideas and views with each other, we convey our thoughts to psychologists at the school. Then we reach a consensus and plan a meeting with parents, if needed. At the end, we put a plan into action that supports children's development.

To sum up, participants believed that assessment is a critical subject in young children's education and there should be mostly process-based assessment. In this process-based assessment, observation had a very critical and important role since early childhood teachers believed that observation was the basis of the whole assessment and it provided a rich resource about children and their characteristic to teachers. Additionally, participants stressed that based on children's interests & needs, their developmental characteristics and also backgrounds of the problems; teachers carry out their observation in their classrooms. In order to get suitable and appropriate clues from observation data, early childhood teachers did both one-dimensional and multi-dimensional analyses. Not only early childhood teachers but also colleagues, administrators, psychologist and parents shared their views and participated in the observation data analysis process.

4.1.2. Actions of Early Childhood Teachers related with Observation in Their Classroom

In this study, three early childhood teachers were randomly selected from all participants and they were observed in their classroom in order to determine how they apply "observation" in their classroom. There were nine observation sessions in total for three participants. The aim of the observation of early childhood teachers is to determine the connection between teachers' views and real actions about observation in their classroom. At the end of observation sessions, there were last meetings with these three teachers to interpret their actions.

In the first part of the study, early childhood teachers were expected to express their views about the role of observation in ECE assessment. In table 4.4, teachers' responses on interviews and their actions in their classrooms were represented. In the second column of the table, the categories organized based on six teachers' responses were represented. Also, which participants implied which

category was presented with abbreviations (ex: P5, P6). In the third column, during researcher observation, which teacher put their views into the actions was represented. In most conditions, the researcher observed that teachers put their views into the action related with young children's observation as assessment. Although teachers mention some issues during interviews, their actions did not represent their views or vice versa.

Table 4.4 Views and actions of early childhood teachers about role of observation

	Interview (Views)	Observation (Actions)
Role of observation in ECE assessment	<i>a-Base of whole assessment</i> P1,P2,P3,P4	
	<i>b-Rich resource</i> P1,P4,P5,P6	
Reason of teachers on preference of observation	<i>a-Help teacher to know children</i> P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6	
	<i>b-Compulsory</i> P2,P3,P5	<i>b-Compulsory</i> P2, P5
	<i>c-Practical</i> P1, P2,P6	<i>c-Practical</i> P2
Points taken into consideration during observation	<i>a-Child's needs & interest</i> P1,P2,P5	<i>a-Child's needs & interests</i>
	<i>b-Developmental characteristics</i> P3,P4,P6	P2, P3, P5 <i>b-Developmental characteristics</i>
	<i>c-Background of problem</i> P1,P5	P5 <i>c-Background of problem</i>
	<i>d-Other (# of observation, observation environment)</i> P3,P6	P2, P3
Observation data analysis	<i>a-One- dimensional</i> P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6	
	<i>b-Multidimensional</i> P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6	<i>-Multi-dimensional</i> P2, P3, P5

Participant 2

The first observation was done with participant 2. She has worked with 20 children who are 6-year-olds. She was the teacher of the same class in the previous year when children were 5 years old. During P2's observation, she mostly reflected her thoughts on her actions. For instance, based on her observation in a branch course (English), she observed her classroom. While the English teacher was rehearsing for the end of semester show, she experienced a problematic event with A (a boy). After the problem of A was tried to be handled, P2 wrote something on a sheet. At the last meeting with P2, she explained that she wrote the anecdote about A (a boy in her class) and added that "I filled the observation sheet because this behavior of A was a bit different in terms of his routine behaviors and I need to share this anecdote with my partner. Moreover, we have to complete observation sheet for each child". She believed that observation is a very practical tool to assess children, but also they had to fill it because it is compulsory in ECE program; therefore, the researcher easily detected this view of P2 in her actions in classroom.

During her observation, although she did not mention 'the background of the problem' as a point taken into consideration during observations, she exactly stressed this point during her last meeting. For instance, during the first session of P2's observation, the teacher took T's (a boy) notebook which is used for communication of parents and teachers about child. She took a note on a paper and posted it on the computer. Then in the second session of P2's observation, she did close observation with T. He (T) ignored playing with his friends who bring their toys from their home. T did not bring any toys from his home; therefore, he sat on his chair with an unhappy face. The teacher sat next to him and talked to him. Then teachers let him pick up and play a board game in the class. At the meeting the researcher asked P2 why she made close observation and what was written on his notebook and she explained that:

T's parents wrote that 'we will take a trip this night and T does not want us to go; therefore, T will be sleepy and bad-tempered during the day'. Therefore, we made a close observation with him. During play time, he became the 'bad actor' of the class and actually he needed more interest and close relationship.

Therefore, I talked with my partner and we let him play with the class toys although children are not allowed to play with the class toys during 'toy day' when they bring their own toys from their home. Moreover, we talked with T to calm down.

In this observation process, she actually focused on the child's need and also on the background of the problem. Moreover, she preferred talking and interpreting the case with her partner. Not only with her partner, but also she analyzed the observation data based on the communication with her colleagues. In another scene from P2's observation session, during a branch course, children were working for the end of semester show and these practices lasted for a week. The teacher of this course wanted the lead to speak loudly. After a while she made changes on the leading role and A (lead of show) cried. P2 called him and talked with him to make detailed explanation. During the last meeting with P2, she added that:

We observed A for three days; however, he was very excited and could not control his excitement. Moreover, A told me 'Teacher, I want this role. I experience the same thing again. I forget when I am excited' and I try to make clear explanation related with people's excitement...etc. We (teacher of branch course and P2) communicate with other teachers and casted him as the giraffe in the show.

To sum up, P2 mostly preferred observation in her classroom as stated in her response in her interview "This tool is easy to use and practical. In process we easily get feedback..." At the last meeting, she made a point of adding the importance of the background of a problem and behavior of children as the point taken into consideration during observation.

Participant 3

The second participant of the researcher's observation was participant 3. She is 5-year-old's teacher and the class-size is 19. The analysis of P3's observation showed that there were differences between the views of P3 reflected during interviewing and her actions in her classroom. While she did not mention children's needs & interests and the background of problems as the points considered during observation, she added these points during the last meeting with her. Moreover,

although she stressed the importance of developmental characteristics of children in her interview, during P3's observation session, the researcher could not observe any action of P3 related with this issue.

Through observation sessions, the researcher realized that all participants of this study preferred to do multidimensional analysis on the observation data. In this case of P3's observation session, P3 had a conversation with the child's parents based on the child's problem. For instance, in the first session (morning) of P3's observation, K (a girl who began to wear glasses) entered the class and said good morning to her teachers. They said good morning and they asked K why she was not wearing her glasses. She said she left her glasses at home. After all class-mates of K came to school, free-play time began. At that point, teachers controlled K's school bag and they realized that her glasses were in her bag. They called K and asked her why she did not say it. K insisted that 'my mom says that I do not need to wear it all day long...' Then one of the teachers went to make a call with K's mother. During the last meeting with P3, she explained this case in her words as:

We preferred to communicate with her mother because we wanted to understand whether there was any problem that K experienced last night. Also we explained what we experienced in class. We observed that she did not like wearing glasses and she lies because of it. Therefore, we talked with K and we planned an activity about glasses and eyes in order to help K to feel more comfortable with her glasses.

As P3's responses in interview show, observation became very helpful for the teacher to know each child and his/her characteristics. As seen in the previous case, P3 interpreted her observation data with the help of parents. Moreover, by focusing on the background of K's problem, teacher made her observation and tried to find solutions to the problems in a practical way.

Participant 5

The last observation session was conducted with participant 5. She worked with 6-year-olds. She had a very active role in classrooms and there was great parallelism between her views and actions about observation. She said that

“...Actually, observation is as if a movie is played and you watch this film...” and she actively observed her classroom through all sessions. She tried to apply project-based approach in her classroom and so there was a consistency between the activities applied in classroom through the days. During her interviews, she expressed that in early childhood education, process-based assessment should be applied. She maintained her observation for three days and at the end of whole activity, she combined her notes about children’s activities.

Teachers focused their attention on children’s needs & interests, their developmental characteristics and also the background of problems during classroom observation. While P5 was observing children’s activities in class, especially, she focused on children’s individual needs and interests. For instance, in her classroom, there is a “toy day” when children can bring different toys from their home to their classroom. A child brought a board game and during free play time, he insisted to do solitary play. At that point P5 selected three different children who did not bring a toy from their home. The teacher and other children asked the child (with board game) to play with him. At the end of the observation session, there was a last meeting and P5 explained why she behaved like that. She said that;

I chose these children because in daily routine, they do not prefer to play together. And M (child who bring board game) is an introvert and he is not a playmate of the other three children. When they were trying to play together, they began to communicate. After a while, M tried to manage the distribution of tasks because he was the owner of the game. I believe that when a teacher knows each child’s needs, she can easily manage the class. The teacher can meet the needs of children after a short observation of a child’s behavior.

Additionally, the importance of the analysis of observation data was stressed during interviewing with teachers. And P5 preferred to share information gathered through observation with the other people. For instance, there was a group activity (preparation of a poster about fish) in which children were cutting, pasting and coloring their fishes on a big paper. During activity, children shared, and combined their works with each other. At that point, the teacher talked with children and helped those who needed support individually. During activity, she took photos and wrote

something on a paper. Related with this observation session, the researcher asked P5 why she took photos and what she wrote on paper. P5 explained:

D (a boy in class) cannot complete his work in a specific time, especially in group work. He needed extra time. Therefore, we (P5 and her partner) are observing his development with the supervision of psychologists. In this activity, he was disposed to cut and color his ‘fish’. I wrote this event on this paper and I will share it with our psychologist.

In general, according to the observation of P5, there was a consistency between her views and actions about observation. And she was aware of the role of observation in the assessment of young children in her classroom.

4.2. Views of Early Childhood Teachers on the Benefits/ Contributions of Observation (Data) to Children, Early Childhood Teacher and Early Childhood Education Program

As the second research question, participants were asked to explain their views about the benefits of observation made in their classrooms. First of all, participants had a consensus about the different benefits of observation in young children’s education. Their responses about benefits of observation were grouped under three categories seen in table 4.5.

Table 4.5 *Views of early childhood teachers on the benefits of observation*

	n
Knowing children/ individual recognition	6
Supporting parent communication with concrete information	2
Defining underlying reason for the behavior	2

Almost all participants agreed that individual recognition was enhanced by observing. Teachers had chances to get detailed information about each child. Besides, teachers believed that observation and also the data gathered through observing built a bridge between home and school. Two participants said that they used the observation data. During meetings with parents, teachers referred these data to enhance the communication with concrete information.

Lastly, two participants specifically emphasized that reasons underlying behaviors or problems could be defined through observation. P2 emphasized two benefits of observation (individual recognition & defining underlying reason of behavior) in her response as “I think observation is beneficial to know children. Observation is helpful for me to realize children, their families, their lives and their developmental levels...”and “...Actually, it is helpful to know children and to understand the source of behaviors...”

4.2.1. Views of Early Childhood Teachers on the Benefits/ Contributions of Observation (Data) to Children

After the participants shared their views about the general benefits of observation in young children’s assessment, they were asked to express their views about the contribution of observation to children, specifically, those that were noted by early childhood teachers. All participants agreed that observation data mostly contribute to young children during their education. These contributions were put under two categories seen in table 4.6.

Table 4.6 *The early childhood teachers’ views on the benefits/contributions of observation to children*

	n
Meeting the needs	4
Being base of future education/ success	4

More than half of early childhood teachers (n=4) believed that by observing, children’s needs could be met better because teachers could know each child individually. Teachers benefit from observation to determine the current needs, strengths and weaknesses of children in their education. The view of P2 on the contribution of observation to child was like as follows;

I think the most important contribution is noticing children’s learning. In order to follow children’s development, to notice and then meet their needs, observation is crucial. Children do not have full ability to reflect themselves in words; therefore they reflect their ideas through their behaviors. At that moment, the role of teacher is to observe them.

The first category for the contribution of observation to children was defined as meeting the needs; additionally participants thought that observation served as the base of future education or success of children. Four of the participants agreed that the data gathered from observation would serve as a model for the future education of children. Teachers of children in the following years will have prescience based on such observation data. P3 summarized her view on such contribution of observation to children as “Education is a process. After kindergarten, children begin primary school. Notes about young children’s development taken by preschool teachers may shed light on the development for following years.”

4.2.2. Views of Early Childhood Teachers on the Benefits/ Contributions of Observation (Data) to Early Childhood Teacher

In this part of the study, early childhood teachers were asked to express their views about the contribution of observation to themselves. Based on their responses, four different contribution categories were defined as seen in table 4.7.

Table 4.7 *Views of early childhood teachers on the benefits/ contributions of observation to teachers*

	n
Self - assessment	
Better knowledge about each child	3
Self- development via gaining experiences	4

Early childhood teachers expressed that they observed children and their behaviors all day long. Based on different observation in various environments teachers caught various clues about children’s development, and their own development as well. Moreover, they had a chance to do their self- assessment with the help of these data. All participants believed that observation was helpful for them to do self-assessment. Teachers shared different opinions about their self- assessment based on their observation. For instance, three participants said that teachers had a chance to know each child’s characteristics in detail. Also, they assessed themselves whether they could do child recognition appropriately. The response of P2 about this contribution of observation to teachers was that “The more a teacher has experience, the more this teacher is good at knowing children and internalizing children’s

developmental levels.” Moreover, P6 explained her view as “Observation enhances my awareness and it helps me to know my students. The range of my points of view is developed and changed. I know children’s developmental characteristics better. I can understand how a child behaves in such conditions, etc.”

According to the responses of early childhood teachers, they believed that observation contributed to self-development for teachers. They gained different experiences and it resulted in self-development for teachers. P1 expressed her view as:

Observation enhances teachers’ teaching experiences. For instance, during the semester if I am faced with a problem, I develop ways of dealing with this problem... Every passing year, I improve myself and a situation that seemed difficult ten years ago became easy and I handle this problem. At that point, observation and teacher training supported this condition.

While P1 put her view about self- development of teachers into the words, P4 also stressed this contribution of observation to teachers as:

Teachers shape their behaviors based on observation of children. Actually children differentiate us, and we are changed. For instance, children are good at role-playing; therefore, you prefer more role-playing activities. You do more research related to it and you train yourself. It results in teachers’ own development.

4.2.3. Views of Early Childhood Teachers on the Benefits/ Contributions of Observation (Data) to Early Childhood Education Program

In addition to the contributions of observation to children and teacher, in this part, participants were asked to share their opinions about how early childhood program benefited from the observation data. Based on the responses of participants two categories were ensued (as seen in table 4.8).

Table 4.8 *Views of early childhood teachers on the benefits/ contributions of observation to program*

	n
Building bridges between applied plan & following year’s plan	4
Defining shortcomings of program	2

There was a consensus about the contribution of observation to early childhood education program. More than half of the participants agreed that according to the observation data, teachers built a bridge between the applied plan and the following year's plan. Applied plans were criticized at the end of each month by teachers and they offered their feedback based on their observation. At the end of the whole semester, teachers made changes (additions or eliminations) on their applied plans and finalized their program for the following year. P6 said that; "Yes, I believe there are contributions to program. Maybe for the following years, maybe it provides advantages for children who will come to school in the following years." Additionally, another participant said that the connection between the applied and the following year's plan enhanced the efficacy of program and expressed her view as:

I could update my program. I assess the program based on each theme and I note performance of children and also efficiency of activities. Then based on these sources, I make changes for the future plans. I connect past and future. I believe that with the connection between programs, we have a chance to enhance the efficiency. (P4)

While building bridges between applied plans and following year's plans were enhanced with the observation data, another benefit of observation to the program was stated as the identification of shortcomings in the program. P2 shared her opinion about this benefit as:

We prepare programs according to children's ability. If I notice that the applied program is not suitable for children, I do some elimination in it. On the contrary, if these groups of children are faster and their capabilities are high, I do additional activities in the program." while P1 said; "assessment of the program provides advantages to teachers not to carry weaknesses over the following year..."

Although participants presented their responses about the contribution of observation to the program, one participant believed that there were not any contributions to the early childhood education program. She expressed her views as "Although there is a flexibility principle in early childhood education program, we might not do exact changes on program. The application of activities might be varied

however; the general program could not be easily changed according to feedback of individual teachers.”(P5)

In summary, in this part of the results, early childhood teachers were asked to define the possible contributions of observation to children, teachers and also ECE programs. They explained different contributions of observation applied in their classrooms. They insisted on the importance of assessment, especially observation in young children’s education, moreover, they agreed that through observation they gained deep information related with children, which is the base of ECE.

4.3. Views and Actions of Early Childhood Teachers on the Challenges confronted during Observation and Ways to Deal with these Challenges

4.3.1. Views of Early Childhood Teachers on the Challenges Confronted during Observation

In this part, the responses of early childhood teachers to the third research question of this study were gathered together. The obstacles/problems that teachers faced during classroom observation were defined under four categories seen in table 4.9. Although all participants explained different kinds of problems that they faced, one of these teachers stressed she did not face a specific problem in the classroom environment. She could manage the classroom during observation and P4 added that “Actually, we do not have many problems during observation. Firstly it requires focusing on... Maybe during observation we miss something, but I do not face problems, I observe!”

Table 4.9 *Challenges that early childhood teachers faced during observation*

	n
Interruption of naturalistic observation	3
Class-size	3
Teacher- oriented problems	2
Subjectivity	
2 authorities in class	
Documentation	2

Based on three participants’ responses, the first obstacle was determined as the interruption into the environment in which teachers do naturalistic observation.

These interruptions caused by visits of parents, and administrators to the classrooms, call for teachers. Because of these interruptions, teachers did not maintain naturalistic observation in their classroom and different clues about children and their development might be missed. For instance, P1 expressed her view related with interruptions, “During activity and observation, someone outside of the class calls me, or parents want to talk to me, or administrators call me. It is a big problem, you cannot focus on observation.”

While interruption of naturalistic observation environment was defined as one of the important problems that teachers faced during observation, class- size was pointed out as another challenge in classroom. Half of the participants agreed that the classes were too large; they could not manage the observation for the whole group. During activities, teachers might miss one or two children and could not catch their snapshots while observing the rest of the class. There were clear sentences focusing on class- size problems and P6 expressed her views about class-size as:

Although there are two teachers in the classroom, the class-size is big. For example, during recording of the play-observation form; because of class-size, even when they are playing in groups, when we get close to their play, they behave in a different way. Therefore it is a problem. I wish there were a place in which we could observe children individually.

In addition to the previously defined two challenges, teacher-related problems were determined as the third category of the problems that early childhood teachers faced during their classroom observations. Two of the participants referred that some problems might be caused because of teachers during observation. One of these problems was defined as subjectivity of teacher which caused problems during analysis of the observation data. One of the participants stressed that objectivity in observation was crucial in order to prevent prejudice about children’s development; and she added that “I believe that the problem is the subjectivity of teacher. You interpret the data based on the previous data, you make connection between previous and now. However, I think teacher should look at the issue from different point of view; s/he should try to be objective during analysis of observation data.” (P2). Besides subjectivity of teachers noted as a problem, being two authorities in

classrooms was thought as another problem during observation. While in general, most of the early childhood teachers desired to have more than one teacher in classroom because of the large class-size, P5 had a different point of view related with two authorities in a class. Although partnership provided many advantages for teachers, there were some negative effects during classroom observation. P5 who agreed on partnership's negative effects clarified her views as; "If two teachers are active in the classroom during observation and an important conversation is going on, the children's attention can be interrupted by the other teacher's instruction, and the observation was mired down."

Documentation was stressed as the final category for challenges faced during observation by participants. Teachers said that while they were observing children, they could not overcome documentation problem. They believed that observation was suitable and appropriate for young children's assessment; however, recordings of actions resulted in some problems during observation. One of these teachers, P2 said that "I think either class size or time, they are not the problems. I am faced with a problem about documentation of observation data in a systematic way..." Moreover, P3 stressed a different point of view about documentation as "I think the documents for the observation of teachers are not enough, there should be additions for such documents. Moreover there should be standardization for these documents in young children education."

To sum up, the participants were asked to define possible problems that they faced during classroom observation. They noticed four different general categories as; interruption of natural environment, class- size, teacher- related problems and lastly documentation. They believed that observation was the base of the assessment of young children; however, they could not ignore such problems in the assessment process. In the following part of this chapter, teachers shared their views about some possible ways to deal with these challenges faced during classroom observation.

4.3.2. Views of Early Childhood Teachers on the Ways to Deal with Challenges during Observation

Early childhood teachers were asked to determine the challenges that they faced during observation. After the determination of the possible problems, the following part of this study represented the possible ways of dealing with such

challenges in their classrooms. Participants defined different ways to address challenges and they were categorized under four topics as seen in table 4.10.

Table 4.10 *Addressing challenges that early childhood teachers faced during observation by*

	n
Enhancing teacher experiences & training	3
Grouping	2
Note taking	3
Supporting classroom environment for naturalistic observation	3

As the first category of addressing the challenges, three participants agreed that through more experiences and more training about assessment they could handle the problems caused during observation in classroom. One of the participants explained her view clearly about gaining more experiences as; “I can handle the situation with the help of my experience; my previous experiences let me find alternative solutions during observation... etc.” (P1). In addition to experience, another teacher stressed the training given by other people. She believed that if there were more training for teachers about young children’s assessment, they could solve the problems during observation more easily. P2 said that “I wish there were teacher trainings about assessment tools to all early childhood teachers.” P3 insisted on the necessity of having trainings from experts about young children’s assessments and said that “There are not experts who specialized in young children’s assessment. I believe that people should be educated in this field. And so, new teacher candidates and also pre-service teachers will have trainings about assessment of young children. I believe that more training makes fewer problems in education.”

While teachers explained that they could address the challenges via more experience and training about observation, other two participants of this study focused on the solution to the class-size problems. They agreed that grouping in classroom in terms of characteristics of activities, needs of child... etc. could serve as a good solution to class- size problem. The response of P5 was as follows “The classroom is split into groups, and then I pass from table to table while children in different groups maintain their activity, and I try to observe children during this

process.” At that point with the help of rotation through different group of children, teachers might reduce the problem arising from class-size.

Additionally, participants mentioned note taking as another way of dealing with challenges. Through interviews with participants, there was a consensus that teachers always observe their children and their behavior whenever and wherever they could. Therefore, there would be much information to be recalled about children’s education and assessment. Although different methods and tools were offered to teachers, they chose the easier one; note taking/ short note. P1 conveyed her opinion as; “Actually, after observation, I try to note what is in my mind. Then it provides me a chance to make comparisons between before and after.” While P3 determined the note taking as one of the ways of dealing with observation challenges as; “I prefer to write it down on a paper, to take small notes, and then I transfer these notes to the forms at the computer.”

Lastly, early childhood teachers stressed that via supporting naturalistic observation environment, they might handle the challenges faced during observation. Participants expressed that if they could preserve the classroom environment for naturalistic observation, they would have chances to get detailed and enriched information about children. Three participants noticed that in such an environment, children could express themselves easily and naturally. Response of P4 was “If you want to observe, you should choose free time... Children express themselves in the most natural way... In a structured environment, they could not express themselves. In a more natural environment, there is more natural and rich observation.”

To sum up, although early childhood teachers mentioned different challenges that they confronted, they tried to address these challenges with their different alternatives that were categorized as enhancing teacher experiences and training, grouping, note taking, supporting classroom environment for naturalistic observation.

4.3.3. Actions of Early Childhood Teachers about the Challenges and the Ways of Addressing Challenges

Through interviews conducted with six early childhood teachers, they expressed their views about challenges that they experienced during classroom observation. After possible challenges were determined, teachers were asked to

explain how they handled these problems in their classroom. Four categories for challenges and other four categories for addressing ways to challenges were determined based on the responses of participants.

In this part of the study, the researcher conducted observation sessions with three teachers and had a last meeting with them. The aim of these observation sessions was to make a connection between teachers’ views and actions about the challenges faced during observation. Two different tables were organized to represent the teachers’ views and actions about these issues. In table 4.11, the possible challenges during young children’s observation in classroom were presented and the third column of this table pointed whether the participant experienced defined challenges during the researcher’s observation. Additionally, the ways of dealing used by participants were shown in table 4.12.

Table 4.11 Views and actions of teachers about challenges

	Interview (Views)	Observation (Actions)
Challenges facing during classroom observation	<i>a-Interruption of observation environment</i> P1,P4,P5	<i>a-Interruption of observation environment</i> P3
	<i>b-Class-size</i> P1,P5,P6	<i>b-Class-size</i> P2, P5
	<i>c-Teacher- oriented</i> P2,P5	-
	<i>d-Documentation</i> P2,P3	<i>d-Documentation</i> P2

During the researcher’s observation, it was noted that, participants mostly experienced two problems; documentation and interruption of observation. Participants added at the last meeting that they could not do systematic documentation of their observation. In order to handle the documentation problem, they mostly did note taking for important clues and information about children during all day. Moreover, they preferred sharing events or actions with other teachers.

Table 4.12 Views and actions of teachers how they deal with challenges

	Interview (Views)	Observation (Actions)
Ways to deal with challenges	<i>a-Enhancing teacher experience & training</i> P1,P3,P5	-
	<i>b-Grouping</i> P5,P6	<i>b-Grouping</i> P2,P5
	<i>c-Note-taking</i> P1,P2,P3	<i>c-Note-taking</i> P2,P5
	<i>d-Supporting nature of observation environment</i> P4,P5,P6	<i>d-Supporting nature of observation environment</i> P2, P3,P5

Participant 2

According to the responses of P2, ‘documentation in a systematic way’ was deined as a challenge during classroom observation. Also, she thought that subjectivity of teachers might result in some difficulties. When the researcher combined the data of observation of P2 in three sessions, it was realized that she tried to handle the documentation problem by taking notes on paper or by sharing events with other teachers. For instance, during lunch time, two teachers and all children had their lunch. At that point, a boy asked a question to P2 and she answered him. Then P2 came and sit near her partner and explained the event to her partner and wrote something on napkins. At the last meeting, P2 made explanations related with lunch time observation as “C (boy) asked me a question and we had a short conversation between us. The response of C was very interesting and elegant. I shared this conversation with my partner and also not to forget I write it down on a napkin.”

In addition to the solution of note- taking to the documentation problem, P2 applied grouping in her classroom. Although she did not mention class-size as a problem in her interview, she organized her classroom into three groups for English course. When the reason of this preparation was asked P2, she gave such an answer:

In the English course, there was a cutting & pasting activity. There were two children who had problems about handling the scissors. In order to do close observation and to help if they need, I grouped the children. Moreover, I realized that, E (who is one of these two boys) became more eager for cutting when he did not have interaction with many class-mates during activity.

Participant 3

P3 actually mentioned documentation in her interview as a problem during observation. However, during the researcher's observation sessions, she could handle this problem by observing her class in free time when she had enough time to observe and fill the observation sheet.

The researcher realized that there were interruptions into observations. For instance, during an activity applied by a branch teacher, P3 was observing when she was called by a parent. Therefore, she had to leave the class to make a call with parent at the administrator's room. At last meeting, she interpreted this event as "I could not find any solution to such challenge because you cannot ignore the call. However, when I leave the class, I miss many clues about children. If possible, I try to push it an hour and try to complete my observation, but..." Additionally, P3 preferred doing observation in leisure time or free play time as the two other participants (P2, P5). For instance, during outdoor time, she maintained her naturalistic observation without any interaction with children. She explained at the last meeting that:

I believe that free time and leisure time are the best time to observe children because they reflect themselves in the most naturalistic way. Moreover, the world of 5-year-olds is play, and I let them play as possible. Observation done during play time presents many detailed information to children. Also, challenges might be handled in this environment.

Participant 5

P5 mentioned first three challenges in her interviews. Especially, different from other participants she emphasized the negative effects of the presence of two teachers in classroom. However, she did not experience such challenge during the

researcher's observation. However, she faced the problem that resulted from large class- size. During activity for school readiness, she and her partner applied a paper-based activity. Each child followed the direction of P5 and tried to model what their teacher was doing. However, she could not manage the class and could not observe what each child did simultaneously. Therefore, she grouped children into 4 groups; two groups for P5 and other two for her partner. She explained her views as "We worked with 20 children, therefore in some conditions we could not manage all of them at the same time. We (P5 and her partner) believed that fewer children mean more individual attention. Therefore, I grouped children and tried to handle. I think I succeeded (she smiles)"

Different from the other participants, she stated that she had a notebook in which actions and anecdotes of each child were recorded separately. During the first day of P5's observation, she wrote something in her notebook when the music teacher performed his activity with children. When all observation sessions were completed, the researcher asked P5 what she wrote in her notebook and why and she replied as:

In order not to forget and not to face with documentation problems, I benefited from my notes in my notebooks. I write what I observe, and also child's cues during activity in an informal way. Therefore, there were not any limitations or risk to make mistakes. Moreover, I can carry this notebook wherever I can, so I can note whatever I see and hear.

To sum up, in this study the views of early childhood teachers about observation were determined. The role of observation, the benefits of observation and the challenges faced during observation and ways of dealing with these challenges were defined by six early childhood teachers. Moreover, three early childhood teachers were observed in order to make a connection between teachers' views and actions about observation. All teachers believed that observation was the base of the whole assessment process in ECE and there were different benefits for children. Although teachers experienced some challenges, they can handle most of these challenges. Finally, the actions of teachers showed that teachers mostly reflected what they think about ECE observation.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter of the study discusses the inferences from the data and the actual conclusions of the researcher from the participants' actions and responses. Then the educational implications and possible recommendations for future studies related with this subject are presented.

5.1. Discussion

5.1.1. Role of Observation in Early Childhood Education Assessment

a) Since classroom observations are very practical, early childhood teachers observe children regularly as a part of process- based assessment of early childhood education

Participants were asked to define early childhood education assessment and there was a consensus that process-based assessment is used in young children's education. It might be because of the dynamic characteristics of this age group of children. Their development is in progress and it is possible to notice quick changes in children's behaviors, so both their education and assessment have to be in progress. Parallel with this, in the literature, result-based assessment, especially standardized testing, is considered as not very appropriate for assessment of young aged children because of children's developmental characteristics (Horton & Bowman, 2002; NAEYC, 2003). Moreover, Shepard and colleagues (1998) emphasized that "...it suggests that learning can be assessed only over time and in context" (p. 249) and instead of stressing the end product, there should be a continuity in assessment of children's education. In order to assess these continuities in ECE, participants of the current study emphasized the importance of informal assessment tools. Trepanier-Street, McNair and Donegan (2001) stated that lower-grade teachers (kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade teachers) mostly prefer informal tools instead of standardized testing. 88.4 % of the participants of their study used

observational notes and those outcomes had similarities with the current study's outcomes.

As one of the informal assessment tools, observation was preferred by the participants because they believe that observation is the base of the whole assessment and it is beneficial. As in the statement of Smidth (2005), in order to have effective teaching and learning, observation is a vital tool in education. This issue was also stressed in the results of the study of Trepanier-Street, McNair and Donegan (2001) and one of the factors that affect teachers' decision making about preferred and used assessment approach was explained as "usefulness in planning for individual children". By observing, teachers could obtain detailed information and clues about individual child and this can be defined as the base-line of early childhood education (knowing children).

Moreover, practical characteristics of observation were also implied by the participants as reasons why it is used in classroom. It might be because of that during observation, teachers did not exert more effort to fulfill any strict document, or did not follow up any strict steps to reach a final datum about a child's development. Moreover, observation did not require to be made in a specific place/ environment. Therefore, teachers were allowed to make observations whenever and wherever they needed. In the literature, one of these reasons in tool preference is categorized as "physical reasons" in different studies (Brown & Rolfe, 2005; Johnson & Beauchamp, 1987; Sezer, 2010; Trepanier-Street, McNair, & Donegan, 2001). In these studies, the used tools were defined by teachers as easy to use and also easy to find.

b) Early childhood teachers make classroom observation based on children's interests & needs, developmental characteristics and the background of a problem.

According to the responses of participants, observation was mostly preferred in classes of 5-and 6- year-olds as it is practical. It is stated that observation is always used in classrooms; however, the targets of it vary by children's needs & interests, developmental characteristics and the background of problematic behavior of children. Most of the participants believed that without knowing each child's interest and needs, people might not catch the snapshots of children. As Smidt (2005) said,

each child comes to teachers and classes with a unique history rich in experience, and she believed that unless teachers spent time getting to know each child, teachers have no access to get detailed information about children. In order to support the information about each child, teachers might make more observation. Moreover, through different observations in terms of time, place or events, teachers are able to see the whole child. As parallel with the outcomes of the study, early childhood teachers cannot necessarily draw general conclusions from one observation, however children should be observed on more than one occasion to reach a judgment about their progress or difficulties in learning (Rencken, 1994; Renck Jalongo et al., 2004). Moreover, the background of the problematic behavior of children might be seen through observation made overtime in different places. If teachers can make multiple observations, there will be a rich resource about children's development and also about reasons on problematic situations.

c) Multi-dimensional analysis of observation data is used by early childhood teachers in ECE.

After teachers of young children complete appropriate observation, these observation data are needed to be analyzed in order to integrate these results to the education of children. In the current study, early childhood teachers agreed that rather than their own interpretation, multi- dimensional analysis was more appropriate to assess children's development and education. It might be because of the subjectivity risks in observation. They believed that without getting ideas of administrators, psychologists, colleagues and absolutely parents, they would miss important clues about the children's development. In order to have data from observation, teachers should consider the parents' views, comments of administrators and colleagues. While Renck Jalongo et al. (2004) clarified that the interpretation of observational evidence could be supported through discussion with colleagues, Horton and Bowman (2001 and 2002) stressed the complementation of assessment procedure with teacher training and also parent communication. Also, Jones (2002) emphasized the importance of interaction of teacher with parents one more time and said that "It's critical that teachers and parents work together because each sees the child from a different vantage point. Children may behave differently in different

contexts, but all of what we see has to come together to give us a complete picture” (as cited in ECT Interviews, 2002). In order not to miss any evidence, such team work should be placed in early childhood settings. Additionally, in another qualitative study, teachers indicated that their teaching practices were supported by colleagues and based on this interaction; they could have better organization for a more professional environment and the quality of teaching could be increased (Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham & Oppong, 2007). Therefore, the connection between colleagues, administrators and parents should be maintained in order to gain deeper information about children’s education and assessment as well.

To sum up, as the first question of this study, early childhood teachers defined that process- based assessment should be used in order to support young children’s development appropriately. Because of these children’s developmental characteristics, informal assessment tools and especially observation is used in the assessment progress. While observing young children, teachers focus on children’s individual interests & needs, developmental characteristics and also the background of their behavior. Moreover, they believe that through multi- dimensional analysis with colleagues, parents and administrators, they will not miss any detail about each child and so teachers support children’s development in most appropriate way.

5.1.2. Benefits of Observation for Children, Early Childhood Teacher and Early Childhood Education Program

a) The main contribution of observation for children is meeting their needs and supporting their future success.

The responses of early childhood teachers were not surprising and there was a consensus that the main contribution of observation data is to children. Based on appropriate and suitable observation, teachers might gather detailed information and catch snapshots about children’s development. Therefore, teachers know each child and his/ her characteristics. Activities are arranged based on this individualistic information and each child’s learning is enhanced through individualistic programs. Similar with this result, Trepanier-Street, McNair and Donegan (2001) believed that information about children’s learning can guide teachers’ planning of experience that best fits children’s instructional needs as well.

Moreover, according to the data gathered from close observation in classroom, teachers have chances to get clues about children's future success as well. The notes of teachers like anecdotes may provide clues about children's development in different developmental areas. The written anecdotes offer an insight into children's future developmental characteristics. According to Herman (1992), good assessment is built on theories of learning and it assesses the skills children will need for future success. Additionally, the benefits of observation data to children's future learning were also emphasized in the book *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers* (2000) as "assessment has an important role to play in revealing a child's prior knowledge development of concepts, and ways of interacting with and understanding the world so that teachers can choose a pedagogical approach and curricular materials that will support the child's further learning and development" (p. 259). Through close observation, not only children's prior knowledge but also their future success might be foreseen by early childhood teachers.

b) In addition to contributing to children, observation contributes to teachers in their self- assessment when ECE program is changed or updated based on the observation data.

Participants agreed that teachers have a chance to do self- assessment based on observation data. This might be due to the fact that by observing different events and different children during the day, teachers gained more experience. In literature, Albert Bandura (1977) stressed the importance of observational learning in his 'social learning theory'. This theory might be summarized through Bandura's words as "Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action." One of the important elements of his theory is the attention and in this study it is supported as when teachers pay more attention to do appropriate observation in their classroom, they might have learn more information related with not only about their children but also about themselves. Moreover, Bandura (1986) explained clearly in his *Social Foundations of Thought and Action* book as "People not only gain understanding through reflection, they evaluate and alter their own thinking." Observation in

classroom serves as reflection for teachers, therefore they have chances to evaluate their practices and in accordance with it, there might be changes in their views and thinking as well. Additionally, possible reactions of children in different conditions, possible reasons of observed behaviors and diversity in attitudes of both children and teachers in different situations could be noted when teachers observe them appropriately. Moreover, teachers interpreted both their own behaviors and children's behaviors based on the outcomes of previous actions in classroom. Therefore, observation data contributed to early childhood teachers about their self-assessment. Also, teachers might make changes on the applied program according to the feedback of their observation. With the help of program characteristics (flexible and spiral program) teachers might provide variety in activities, which improves their creativity as well. As a result of this application, teachers gain more experience and they have a chance to do self-assessment on these experiences after interpreting their classroom observation.

Lastly, according to the responses of participants of the current study, ECE program might be organized or updated based on the observation data. There was a consensus that after an appropriate observation is completed, possible and required changes, additions or eliminations might be applied in early childhood education programs. Early childhood education program is flexible and child-centered, which makes it open to reasonable and developmentally appropriate changes. Renck Jalongo et al. (2002) believed that observation provided essential feedback and evidence for practitioners' input. Therefore, the feedback obtained from teacher observation will be beneficial for the changes planned for the ECE program. It is obvious that with an age and developmentally appropriate program applied for the 5- and 6-year-olds, application of the activities both individual or in groups will be easy or make good sense for children's development.

5.1.3. Challenges that Early Childhood Teachers Faced During Observation

a) Class- size, interruption of naturalistic observation and documentation were the main challenges that early childhood teachers faced during the classroom observation.

In early childhood education, teachers believed that observation is a practical assessment tool and they benefit from the data gathered through observation. However, still some limitations and problems are defined by teachers during classroom observations. In this respect, specifying problems is important because without knowing the limitations, an application could not be as fully attractive as it can be. Likewise, when problems and limitations are ignored, information gathered through observation could be misleading about children and their education. Moreover, according to experiences of teachers and differences of environment, there might be changes in the type of challenges defined by early childhood teachers. Therefore, based on the similarities and parallelism between responses of participants; class- size, documentation and interruption of observation in classroom were defined as challenges in the current study.

During classroom observation, teachers emphasized that when there are more children in the classroom, a focusing problem comes out as the teacher cannot pay attention for each child individually. In the literature, one of the basic environmental problems is noted as class- size problems. Because of the high number of children in class, the teacher could not focus on an individual child or behavior one-by-one. As a result of this condition, crucial information about children and critical points of activities could be missed. A similar result was seen in the study of Gelbal and Kelecioğlu (2007), where big class-size and lack of time were defined as the problems in the application of assessment tools; moreover, child-teacher ratio was also noted as a problematic situation. In this condition, if child- teacher ratio is high, one teacher could not pay enough attention to each child and each behavior of different children. In the current study, although class-size was defined as a challenge during observation, early childhood teacher worked with a partner, making the child- teacher ratio decrease in their classrooms. In many situations, the presence

of two authorities in a classroom helps teachers to observe children during activities and they might handle the problematic situations caused by high class-size.

In addition to the class-size problem, teachers believed that systematic documentation during observation might result in problems. Not only high number of children in classroom but also workloads of daily routine are the reasons why teachers could not document observation data systematically. In fact, observing an event or a child's behavior is a dynamic process and might occur at any time during a day. On that condition, it may not be possible to write down the scenes and that might result in forgetting some details. Therefore, documentation was as difficult as it was important. Noting the details about a condition and taking time to prepare documents about related observation were difficult for an early childhood teacher in a daily routine. Moreover, in order to fill appropriately each of the assessment tools, teachers might spend more time on each of them. According to the results of the study by Flowers, Ahlgrim-DeLzell, Browder and Spooner (2005), observation and other informal assessment tools demand more time by early childhood teachers and moreover it increases paperwork. Therefore, teachers think that it is important to complete the documentation of observation data; however, they need more time and energy to fill them in an appropriate way. On the other hand, the reason of representing documentation as a challenge during observation might be the understanding of teachers related to the observation. For instance during observation of free-play time, teacher might take notes and at the end of activity they might fill out them. The example of observation form represented in the MoNE program is prepared by taking his situation into consideration. Therefore, teachers might fill the forms afterwards.

When documentation cannot be done systematically, it might result in forgetting and getting weak information about each child. Moreover, if documentation of observation data is not completed in appropriate time, subjectivity of teachers might arise because of weak information and forgetting details. Also teachers may tend to be subjective and have observer bias when interpreting the observation data. This problem was also noted by the participants of the current study as teacher-based problems (subjectivity). In the literature, researchers also stress such limitation of observation as; observation, which is a commonly used form

of assessment in preschool, is subject to inconsistencies in terms of content and procedure (Schappe, 2005) and to subjectivity (Neuman & Roskos, 1993). Moreover, observation and also other alternative assessments are criticized for being too subjective (Silverstein, Brownlee, Legutki & MacMillan, 1983). In order to handle such challenge, teachers might use different informal assessment tools in their classroom observation. In addition to the systematic or anecdotal observation forms teachers might prepare checklist in terms of children's needs and interests. This preparation might be helpful for teachers to have more time because filling checklist is very easy and quick. Moreover, using different assessment tools provide chances to teachers not to miss details about children. For instance, teachers might support information that represented in checklists through doing repetitive classroom observation in different times. In this study, teachers concluded that they tried to use different assessment tools (observations forms, checklists, portfolios) to make assessment of young children's development and education.

Early childhood teachers defined class-size and documentation as the challenges they faced during classroom observation. Moreover, they complained about the interruption of their observation. These interruptions were noted by the participants of the current study as; calls from parents, calling from administrators, time for another course, and dinner time. However, sometimes these interruptions might not be restrained. Teachers implied that if possible, they postponed the call or rearranged the schedule because they believe that most important clues about children's development might be found during naturalistic observation done while children are playing in a different environment. Such inference was also emphasized in different studies; they concluded that the naturalistic observation might be supported with the observation done in different environments. The outcomes of these studies can be summarized as although observation in natural settings during performing daily routines and playing freely is the most suitable for young children, assistants in early childhood education settings are needed to observe children in various contexts. (Cazden, 2001; Hills, 1993; Pellegrini, 2001; Schweinhart, 1993). Although in some situations it might not be possible, teachers tried to handle the interruptions of classroom observation in their classroom. As noted in the books of Wortham (2005) and Mindes (2011), details might be missed during observation and

teachers may choose the wrong focus about children to observe if naturalistic classroom observation is interrupted.

5.1.4. Addressing Challenges Teachers faced during Observation

a) Early childhood teachers believed that they might be able to deal with challenges by enhancing teacher training provided by specialized experts

During classroom observation, early childhood teachers faced with some difficulties because of big class-size, limited time, and interruption. Despite such challenges, they still prefer observing young children in the classroom because of its appropriateness for assessment of this age group. Therefore, early childhood teachers try to cope with such difficulties and they use different applications to address these challenges in assessing young children.

Firstly, there is a consensus about teachers' training and improving their ability about assessment in young children's education. Through these trainings, teachers learn how to develop their ability for better and qualified observation. They might learn different point of views when they have trainings from different experts. Moreover, training provides teachers with an opportunity to update their knowledge about young children's education and their assessment because the rising generation is different from the previous one and their learning styles show differences, too. Although the claim is not specifically related with training of teachers about observation, NAEYC (2003) indicated that staff that is knowledgeable about assessment must be in the field and these teachers also should be well-trained about assessing children and their development. Moreover, Quilter and Cher (1998) agreed on the importance of trained staff in-field and according to them, many teachers "admit their shortcomings in using classroom assessments in an optimal fashion. That is, many teachers admit that their training in testing and measurement is somewhat deficient" (p.6). Therefore, in order to deal with problems occurred during classroom observation, early childhood teachers should be well-trained, which will make them well-experienced in assessment applications and observation as well.

It could be concluded that early childhood teachers believe they can handle possible problems occurring during observation, through training on assessment of

young children. However, there is another problem about people who provide training for teachers. The number of specialized experts in early childhood education assessment is limited and the participants emphasized that although they attended some training courses and seminars, there were no explanations specifically focusing on assessment of young children's education. When this gap is filled, early childhood teachers may be well- trained and this may result in qualified assessment applications in classrooms.

b) Challenges are also addressed by enhancing grouping, note-taking, and naturalistic observation environment.

Well training and good experiences of early childhood teachers will result in good observation data and it enhances appropriateness in the assessment process in the education of children of this age group. Besides teacher training and increased experiences, teachers believe that they may handle the class- size and documentation problem through grouping in activities and development of note-taking skills. When students are grouped during observation, there are different groups instead of individual children in the classroom, and teachers could make close observation of each group. Celep (2002) believed that many opportunities are provided to teachers in small sized classes. In these classrooms, teachers have more time for each child, observe children's development easily and manage classroom more efficiently. Therefore, teachers tried to have a small sized class rather than big sized class by grouping to have efficient observation. This gives teachers time to note what they see and hear during children's activities. Therefore, they may face with fewer documentation problems as they have more time and they may not forget as many important clues about children's movements and communication. Moreover, appropriate documentation reduces the risk to have subjectivity because teachers can note what they see and hear during children's activity.

Additionally, teachers agreed that supporting the nature of observation environment and increase the number of observation resulted in appropriate observation data about children's education. Meisels (1999) insisted that two conditions were critical for the assessment of learning, and one of them was that interaction between teachers and children must occur over time rather than on a

single occasion. Through repeated observation, learning and development of children could be assessed over time; therefore teachers may have chances to catch the issues missed in the previous observation. Moreover, teachers should maintain their observation to get pure information about children's development in the nature of observation environment without any interruption. Smidth (2005) agreed that teachers could make different observations in their classroom to remove some limitations of observing, for instance, during "close observation", observers – especially teachers – record everything they see or hear in detail, and therefore, there would not be any missing data about children and their development.

As the last remark, if an additional assessment tool is used to support the outcomes of observation, there will be more appropriate and beneficial resource related with children's education. Schappe (2005) agreed that subjectivity risk during observation can be reduced when the continued use of early childhood assessment methods as observation and anecdotal records are enhanced along with performance assessment in classrooms in order to reduce the limitations of observation.

5.1.5. Views and Actions of Early Childhood Teachers about Observation

Generally, teachers put their views into the action related with young children's observation.

In the current study, views of early childhood teachers about observation were determined through one- to- one interview and based on the responses of teachers, different categories were arranged. As the second step of this study, teachers were observed in order to define whether they put their views into action or not. Generally, what teachers expressed during interviews could be observed during the researcher's observation. This might be because of the fact that teachers are aware of what they put into action during classroom activities. Although in some conditions, it was realized that teachers acted unconsciously, they noted what they saw or they shared what they observed with their partners. This condition might be because of the internalization of daily routine by early childhood teachers.

During the last meeting with teachers, it was realized that teachers are young and open to learning new information about young children's education.

When the connection between teachers' views and actions were presented to participants, it was noted that in some point teachers did not aware of their own actions. It can be concluded that when teachers are conscious about how they act, they can easily update themselves and their knowledge.

5.2. Educational Implications

The aim of this study is to determine the general views of early childhood teachers on observation as one of the assessment methods in early childhood education. Through the study, firstly the role of the observation in assessment of young children's education, and then benefits of observation data to children, teachers and early childhood program were determined by participants. Lastly the challenges that early childhood teachers faced during observation and dealing ways with these challenges were defined. Based on the responses of participants at the end of one- to one interviews and actions of teachers related with the application of observation; some educational implications can be discussed related with assessment in early childhood education.

Based on the first research question, participants believed that assessment in early childhood education is process-based. Because of the rapid and continuous change in this age group of children's development, there should be a continuum in assessment progress, too. In order to foster this continuum in assessment progress in the following years of children's education, there should be interaction between preschool and primary school then elementary schools. It may be beneficial for both children and their teachers. This continuum may be provided via the application of different documents prepared in accordance with the characteristics of children at different ages. These documents may be a combination of checklist and observation forms that can be easily filled and simple. These documents may be passed to following grades and they may serve as previews of children's development in previous grades.

In this study, there is a clear view about observation that without observing, assessment of this age group of children could not be done appropriately. It is believed that observation is the baseline of assessment progress and there are many contributions not only to children but also to teachers and education program.

Therefore, the application of observation as one of the informal assessment tools in classroom should be enhanced. Such enhancements may be provided via preparation of a more flexible program to have more time, and preparation of classroom with smaller numbers of children. In this school, additional activities and presentations might be added to the daily routines; therefore, teachers might have difficulties to apply daily activities properly. In order to handle such conditions, at the beginning of the preparation of program such additional activities might be taken into consideration for the following days. Moreover, in addition to the observation form filled in the classroom, there should be an additional observation form to be filled by parents in terms of children's behavior at home. The combination of these forms may be beneficial for teachers to enhance children's development and education. Moreover, based on the data gathered from observation forms, the organization and plan of the education program may be revised as well. In terms of children's characteristics or general overview of children, teachers might need to prepare more individualistic program. Moreover, maybe the development of most of the children who are attending to the kindergarten at this year might be above the average. Therefore, additional program in terms of children's interest might be programmed to support these children's interest one step further. Additionally, the bridge between home and school might be more supportive for the development of children.

Although different benefits of observation were indicated by early childhood teachers, there were some difficulties and challenges that they faced during the application of assessment procedure. To this end, they also defined alternative ways to deal with these challenges and they expressed their desires for assessment in early childhood education. They believed that through getting more training and experience, possible challenges may be handled. NAEYC (2003) noted that there should be knowledgeable and well-trained people about assessing children in the field. Therefore, there may be more in-service training for early childhood educators about young children's assessment. Moreover, these training programs should be given by experts specialized in young children's assessment. In addition to the experts in assessment in education, there should be more 'early childhood education assessment experts' and in-service teachers may benefit from these experts' knowledge and experiences about observation and assessment of young children.

Lastly, different physical arrangements (smaller class-size, bigger size of classroom) in classrooms and schools may be helpful for early childhood teachers to carry out appropriate assessment application in young children's education. With these physical rearrangements, teachers will be able to handle possible challenges during observation (interruption of classroom, focusing problem...). Moreover, in this kindergarten there might be camera system in order to record what is going on in the classroom. In order to have such system in a kindergarten might be costly. However, specifically, in this case, the economic statuses of families of the children who are attending the kindergarten are very above the average of Turkey. Therefore, such application might be done in this kindergarten. These recordings might be served to the parents in some cases to enhance the reliance and confidence of parents. Moreover, teachers might be benefited from the camera recordings as well. Teachers might watch these recordings at the end of days or weeks and they might catch the details which might be missed during daily routines. According to these recordings, the assessment of young children might be supported. Also, these recordings might be helpful for teachers to enhance their own self-assessment, too. They can observe their own practices in classroom and these recordings might be served as mirror for teachers to detect their weaknesses and strengths during application of assessment tools in classrooms.

Furthermore, the possible camera system which might be applied in kindergarten might be the good sources for the preparation of educational program, too. Academicians and education coordinators might watch these videos without attending the classrooms. Through this application not only these experts spend more time to visit each classroom but also there will not be any interruptions into the activities in classrooms. These experts might follow the educational applications in classrooms in detail through video recordings. And also they might provide suggestions to the teachers to enhance the quality of activities and assessment application as well.

5.3. Recommendations for Future Study

Some recommendations can be provided for further studies regarding observation and assessment in early childhood education.

The interview protocol of this study was conducted with six early childhood teachers only once. Further research within the same framework using a larger sample to be conducted will help the extension and verification of this study's finding. Besides the increase in the sample size, different early childhood teachers working at different schools in which different early childhood education programs have been applied will be included. The same study will be conducted with these teachers in order to see whether different ECE programs result in differences in early childhood teachers' views about assessment/observation.

Additionally, the responses of teachers may be adapted into the checklists and questionnaires as quantitative data. Therefore, more early childhood teachers can participate in the study and the data of a greater number of early childhood teachers can be obtained.

Further studies may be conducted with other stakeholders of education. Parents of children attending preschools may express their views related with assessment and observation. Moreover, administrators may present their opinions related with assessment progress in young children's education. Through such study, similarities and differences between views of administrators and early childhood teachers may be determined.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I (CONSENT FORM)

OKUL ÖNCESİ EĞİTİMDE BİR DEĞERLENDİRME ARACI OLARAK GÖZLEM: ÖĞRETMENLERİN GÖRÜŞLERİ VE UYGULAMALARI ÜZERİNE BİR FENOMENOLOJİK DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Okul Öncesi Eğitimi yüksek lisans programı öğrencisi Aysun TURUPCU' nun yürüttüğü çalışmaya katılımınız istenmektedir. Çalışma tamamen gönüllük esası çerçevesindedir. Aşağıda belirtilen uygulamanın süreci hakkındaki bilgileri okuyup, çalışmaya katılıp katılmamayı tercih edebilirsiniz.

Çalışmanın Amacı

Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, öğrencilerinin eğitim süreçleri içerisinde yer verdikleri alternatif değerlendirme tekniklerinden gözlem ile ilgili genel görüşlerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Çalışma boyunca alt sorular olarak da;

1. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlemin okul öncesi eğitimindeki değerlendirme içerisindeki rolü ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?
2. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlemin çocuğa, öğretmene ve okul öncesi eğitim programına katkıları/ yararları ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?
3. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlem sırasında karşılaştıkları sorunlarla ilgili ve bu sorunlarla ne şekilde baş ettikleri ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?

Soruları belirlenmiş ve katılımcıların aktarmış oldukları bilgiler doğrultusunda bu sorular cevaplandırılacaktır.

Uygulama Süreci

Eğer çalışmaya katılmaya gönüllü olunursa, katılımcı şu aşamalarda çalışmaya katkıda bulunacaktır:

- a. Yaklaşık 5 dakika sürecek olan katılımcı bilgi formunun doldurulması,
- b. Yaklaşık 25-30 dakika kadar süren ve okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin gözlem yöntemi ile ilgili görüşlerini saptama amaçlı kayıt altına alınacak bir görüşme.
- c. Seçilen üç öğretmenin üç ayrı günde toplamda 5- 6 saat olacak şekilde sınıf içerisinde gözlemlenmeleri
- d. Üç öğretmen ile görüşleri ve uygulamalarını yorumlamaları için yapılacak 10-15 dakika sürecek olan son görüşme

Olası Risk ve Rahatsızlıklar

Çalışmanın uygulama sürecinde ciddi bir rahatsızlık ve risk unsuru bulunmamaktadır. Öğretmenlerden hiçbir şekilde özel bilgi istenmeyecektir. En ufak bir rahatsızlık hissetme durumu olduğunda ise, katılımcının çalışmayı o noktada bırakma yetkisi bulunmaktadır.

Çalışmanın Olası Yararları

Bu çalışma sonucunda, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öğrencilerin eğitimleri süresince uyguladıkları alternatif değerlendirme tekniklerinden gözlem ile genel görüşleri hakkında bilgi sahibi olunacaktır. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin yapmış oldukları gözlemlerin çocuklara, öğretmenlere ve uygulanan programa ne yönde katkı sağladıkları ile ilgili görüşleri belirlenecektir. Ayrıca bu öğretmenlerin gözlem yaparken ne gibi sıkıntılarla karşılaştıkları ve bu sıkıntılarla nasıl baş ettikleri ile ilgili görüşleri belirlenecektir.

Edinilen bilgiler doğrultusunda eksiklikleri giderici eğitimler, yazılı kaynaklardan yararlanma, okullarda uygulanan programlarda küçük çaplı değişikliğe gidilebilme durumları olabilir. Katkı sağlandığı düşünülen alanların da geliştirilerek ilerletilmesi söz konusu olabilir. Ayrıca bu çalışma ile okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin değerlendirme araçları üzerinde farkındalıklarını artırma yönünde de bir destek sağlanmış olacaktır.

Gizlilik

Katılımcılardan edinilen bilgiler ve kayıtlar hiçbir şekilde çalışma ve çalışma dahilinde yapılacak olan yayınlar dışında kullanılmayacaktır. Veriler yalnızca çalışmayı yürüten kişi de kalacak olup, gerçek isimler çalışma kapsamında yansıtılmayacaktır.

Kayıt altına alınan görüşmeler yalnızca yazım aşamasında aksaklıklara, yanlış ve eksik bilgi yazımına yol açmamak için kullanılacaktır.

İletişim

Çalışma ile ilgili herhangi bir endişeniz ve sorunuz olduğu noktada araştırmacıya 05053030358 telefon numarasından ve aysun.turupcu@metu.edu.tr adresinden ulaşabilirsiniz.

Yukarıda belirtilen uygulama sürecini anladım. Çalışma sırasında sorularımın cevaplanacak olduğunu biliyorum ve çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum. Bu formun bir kopyasını temin ediyorum.

Katılımcının Adı Soyadı

Katılımcının İmzası

Tarih

APPENDIX II

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

Bu çalışma Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Okul Öncesi Eğitimi yüksek lisans programı öğrencisi Aysun TURUPCU' nun "Okul öncesi eğitimde bir değerlendirme aracı olarak gözlem: öğretmenlerin görüşleri ve uygulamaları üzerine bir fenomenolojik durum çalışması" başlıklı tezi kapsamında yürütülmektedir.

Gözlemin okul öncesi eğitimdeki değerlendirmenin içerisindeki rolünün ne olduğu; yapılan gözlemin çocuğa, öğretmene ve okul öncesi eğitim programına olan katkılarının neler oldukları; öğretmenlerin sınıflarında gözlem yoluyla değerlendirme yaparken karşılaştıkları sorunların ve bu sorunlarla nasıl baş ettikleri ile ilgili alt başlıklar belirlenmiştir. Bu alt başlıklar doğrultusunda okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin görüşleri alınacaktır.

Aşağıda doldurulması istenen form, bu noktada çalışmanın geçerliliğini destekleyip, çalışmacının bilgi toplamasına yardımcı olacaktır. Katılımcılardan edinilen bilgiler tamamen çalışma kapsamında kullanılacak olup hiçbir şekilde başka kişi ve kişiler tarafından öğrenilmeyecek ve kullanılmayacaktır. Verilen bilgilerin doğruluğu çalışmanın gidişatını etkileyecek olup, cevaplandırmanın içten yapılmasını rica ederim.

Çalışmaya katılım gönüllülük esasına dayalı olup, istenildiği durumda çalışma yarıda bırakılabilir. Desteğiniz için şimdiden teşekkür ederim.

Aysun TURUPCU

Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi

Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi

1.Yaşınız: () 21-30 () 31-40 () 41-50 () 50 ve üzeri

2.Cinsiyetiniz: K () E()

3.Eğitim durumunuz:

() Kız meslek lisesi

() Ön lisans (2 yıllık)

() Lisans tamamlama (2 + 2 yıllık)

() Lisans (4 yıllık)

Diğer (Belirtiniz).....

4. En son mezun olduğunuz bölümün adını belirtiniz.

() Çocuk Gelişimi ve Eğitimi

() Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Öğretmenliği / Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği

() Diğer (Belirtiniz).....

5. Okul öncesi öğretmeni olarak ne kadar süredir çalışıyorsunuz?

() 5 yıldan az

() 6-10 yıl

() 11-15 yıl

() 16-21 yıl

() 21 yıldan fazla

6. Görev yaptığınız kurum: _____

7. Ne kadar süredir bu kurumda görev yapmaktasınız (bu yıl da dahil)? _____

8. Şu ana kadar hangi kurumlarda görev yaptınız? _____

9. Bulduğunuz sınıfta kaç öğretmen görev yapmaktasınız? _____

10. Sınıfınızdaki öğrenci sayısını belirtiniz _____

11. Eğitiminiz boyunca ölçme ve değerlendirme ile ilgili ders(ler) aldınız mı?

Aldıysanız içeriği ne yöndeydi belirtiniz.

Evet: _____

Hayır: _____

12. Eğitiminiz boyunca ve meslek hayatınız süresinde değerlendirme ile ilgili herhangi bir hizmet içi eğitim, seminer...vs. katılımınız oldu mu? Evet ise belirtiniz.

Evet: _____

Hayır: _____

Teşekkür ederim.

APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Konu: Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, öğrencilerinin eğitim süreçleri içerisinde yer verdikleri alternatif değerlendirme tekniklerinden gözlem ile ilgili genel görüşlerinin belirlenmesidir. Çalışmanın alt soruları:

- 1) Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlemin okul öncesi eğitimindeki değerlendirme içerisindeki rolü ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?
- 2) Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin gözlemin çocuğa, öğretmene ve okul öncesi eğitim programına katkıları/ yararları ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?
- 3) Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin gözlem sırasında karşılaştıkları sorunlarla ilgili ve bu sorunlarla ne şekilde baş ettikleri ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?

1. Okul öncesi eğitimde değerlendirme kavramını nasıl tanımlarsınız?
2. Okul öncesi eğitimde başta gözlem olmak üzere kullandığınız değerlendirme araçlarını tercih etme sebepleriniz nelerdir? (kullanımı kolay, pratik, süre...vs)
3. Informal/ alternatif değerlendirme tekniklerinden biri olan gözlemin okul öncesi eğitimde yapılan değerlendirmedeki yerini/ rolünü nasıl tanımlarsınız?
4. Gözlem yaparken, hangi noktalara/konulara dikkat ediyorsunuz?
5. Sınıfınızda uyguladığınız gözlem tekniği ile elde ettiğiniz verileri nasıl analiz edip kullanıyorsunuz?
6. Sınıfınızda gözlem yoluyla değerlendirme yapmanın sağladığı faydalar nelerdir?
7. MEB değerlendirme üç aşamada (öğretmen, çocuk, program) ele alınıyor. Bu açıdan bakıldığında sınıfınızda gözlem yoluyla elde ettiğiniz verilerin, öğretmenin eğitimine ne gibi ve hangi yönde katkıları olabilir?

- 8.** Sınıfınızda gözlem yoluyla elde ettiğiniz verilerin, çocukların eğitimine ne gibi ve hangi yönde katkıları olabilir?
- 9.** Sınıfınızda gözlem yoluyla elde ettiğiniz verilerin, kullanılan/ uygulanan programa ne gibi ve hangi yönde katkıları olabilir?
- 10.** Sınıfınızda gözlem yolu ile değerlendirme yaparken ne gibi sorunlarla/ sıkıntılarla karşılaşıyorsunuz? (süre, mekan, sınıf mevcudu...)
- 11.** Gözlem yoluyla değerlendirme yaparken karşılaştığınız sıkıntılarla ne şekilde baş ediyorsunuz? Ne gibi uygulamalarda bulunuyorsunuz?
- 12.** Son olarak eğer imkanınız olabilse, okul önesi eğitimde uygulanan değerlendirme için yapmak istediğiniz bir değişiklik olur muydu? Evet ise ne tür bir değişiklik olurdu ve ne tür bir uygulama ile bu değişikliği sağladınız?

APPENDIX IV

OBSERVATION SHEET

Participant Name	P...
Date and time	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="text-align: center;">.../.../....</div> <div style="text-align: right;"> 1st session (morning) ___ 2nd session (noon) ___ 3rd session (afternoon) ___ </div> </div>
Place	Classroom / Garden/ Dining hall/ Atelier

Time	Child's action	Teacher's actions

OBSERVATION SHEET (Cont'd)

Observation Guide Questions		
1	Which assessment tools are used?	
2	How often these tools are used?	
3	How do teachers use assessment tools?	Observation forms Note-taking Notebook Sharing with partners ..
4	When do teachers use observation?	In which environment In which condition ...
5	What do teachers pay attention during observation?	Need of children Environment Problem ...
6	How do teachers analyze observation notes/data?	By herself Sharing with partners Sharing with psychologists Sharing with parents ...
7	Are there any problematic situations during observation?	Class- size Interruption (outside of classroom) 2 authorities in class Documentation Focusing problem ...
8	How do teachers handle challenges during observation?	Note- taking (post-it, own notebook) Grouping Continuity of observation (in different place, different time) ...
9	How do teachers use observation note/data?	Preparation of program Individual portfolio ...

APPENDIX V

TURKISH SUMMARY

OKUL ÖNCESİ EĞİTİMDE BİR DEĞERLENDİRME ARACI OLARAK GÖZLEM: ÖĞRETMENLERİN GÖRÜŞLERİ VE UYGULAMALARI ÜZERİNE BİR FENOMENOLOJİK DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

1.Giriş

Eğitimde değerlendirme konusu karmaşık ve zor bir konu olarak ifade edilmektedir (Stiggins ve Chappuis, 2012). Eğitim çalışmalarında değerlendirme konusu önem taşıırken, değerlendirme sürecinin çocukların öğrenmelerinin üzerinde büyük bir etkisi olduğu savunulmaktadır (Broadfoot,1998). Eğitimin farklı alanlarında ve seviyelerinde değerlendirme konusu uzun yıllardır araştırma konusu olarak ele alınırken, okul öncesi eğitim alanında değerlendirme konusu son yıllarda daha çok ön plana çıkmıştır. Meisels ve Atkins-Burnett (2000)'e göre değerlendirme yöntemlerinin erken çocukluk dönemindeki çocuklar için özel olması gerekmektedir. Dunphy (2010), değerlendirmenin eğitim başlığı altında artan bir üne sahip olduğunu ifade ederken, özellikle okul öncesi eğitimdeki değerlendirmenin altını bir kez daha çizmiştir.

Önemi giderek artan “eğitimde değerlendirme” nin tanımlanması istendiğinde genellikle; test, sonuç, raporlama kavramlarıyla karşılaşılmaktadır. Ancak değerlendirmenin testten öte bir kavram olduğu yapılan araştırmalarla desteklenmiş olup, bu kavram için farklı tanımlamalar kullanılmıştır. Örneğin Goodwin ve Goodwin (1987), değerlendirmeyi gözlem ya da test ile bireylerin davranışlarını ya da eğilimlerini, bir programın özelliklerini tanımlama süreci olarak ifade ederken, Farr (1991) değerlendirmenin bir sınıflama süreci olmadığını, yalnızca öğrencilere hizmet etmesi gerektiği düşüncesini vurgulamıştır.

Alanyazında öğrenme ve gelişimin desteklenmesinde önemli rol oynayan değerlendirmenin, küçük yaş gruplarında farklı yapılması gerektiği önemle

vurgulanmıştır. Wortham (2005)'a göre küçük çocukların eğitimi ve değerlendirilmesi bazı zorluklar içerirken, bu zorluklar değerlendirme için kullanılacak stratejileri ve değerlendirme araçlarını da etkilemektedir. Bu yüzden, eğitim alanında farklı amaçlar için farklı stratejiler ve değerlendirme araçları kullanılmaktadır. Genel olarak bu değerlendirme araçları iki ana başlık altında; standart testler ve alternatif değerlendirme olarak verilmektedir. Standart testler kapsamında çocukların farklı gelişim alanlarında sergiledikleri performanslarının skora dönüştürülmesi ve bu skorların belirli kriterlerle ya da başka çocuğun skorlarıyla karşılaştırılması esas alınmaktadır. Bu standart test değerlendirmelerinin mekanik skor odaklı oldukları ve erken çocukluk dönemindeki çocukların gelişimsel alanlarını uygun olarak yansıtmayacağı (Spinelli, 2008), aynı zamanda da bu uygulamaların çocuklar üzerinde akademik baskı oluşturabileceği (Hyson, 2003) ifade edilmektedir.

Standart testlere ek olarak, alanyazında eğitimciler için alternatif değerlendirme araçları da sunulmaktadır. Ayrıca bu yönde yapılan değerlendirmenin yalnızca çocuklar için değil, daha ilerideki sınıf seviyesinde olan öğrencilere de katkıları olacağı farklı çalışmalarla desteklenmiştir (Fore, Burke, ve Martin, 2006; Shinn, Collins, ve Gallagher, 1998). Bu araçlarla çocukların performansları skora dönüştürülmezken, başka çocukların performansları arasında da karşılaştırmaya gidilmemektedir. Ayrıca eğitimde süregelen bir değerlendirme yapmak, etkin ve verimli geribildirimler sağlayacaktır (Neisworth ve Bagnato, 2004). Gözlemler (anekdot kayıtlar, sistematik gözlemler), öğrencilerle görüşmeler, kontrol listeleri, portfolyolar, rubrikler, öğretmenlerin kendi düzenlediği stratejiler ve performans odaklı stratejiler okul öncesi eğitimde de kullanılabilir olan alternatif değerlendirme araçları olarak ifade edilmektedir (Guddemi ve Case, 2004).

Bu araçlar arasında, değerlendirmenin temel verilerini sağlayan araç, çocukların gözlemlenmeleri olarak ifade edilebilmektedir. Neisworth ve Bagnato (2004)'ya göre eğitimde alternatif değerlendirmenin kalbini dokümantasyonun yanında gözlem oluşturmaktadır. Gözlemin temelleri eski zamanlara dayanırken, eğitimin öncülerinden Froebel, Vygotsky ve Isaacs; çocuğun davranışlarını ve kelimelerini dinlemenin, izlemenin ve bunlara cevap vermenin önemini tekrar tekrar vurgulamışlardır (Dunphy, 2010). Okul öncesi dönemdeki çocukların öğrenmelerinin

görünür yapılabilmesi için öğrenmenin gözlemsel kanıtlarından yardım alınmalıdır. Bu da birinci elden yapılan yakın ve katılımcı gözlemlerle gerçekleştirilmektedir. Çocukların doğal ortamlarında gözlemlenerek elde edilecek olan veriler, en doğal ve gerçekçi verileri oluşturacaktır. Bu noktada çocukların öğrenmelerini en uygun şekilde gözlemleyecek olan kişiler de, onlarla yakın iletişime sahip öğretmenleri/ eğiticileri olarak ifade edilmektedir (Dunphy,2010).

Eğitimde öğretmenler, sınıf içinde yapılacak olan gözlemlerde önemli bir role sahiptirler, çünkü çocukların hızlı ve devamlı olan değişimlerini ve gelişimlerini yaptıkları gözlemlerle takip edebileceklerdir. Bunun yanı sıra öğretmenlerin düşünceleri ve görüşleri ile onların sınıf içi uygulamaları arasında ilişki ve etkileşim olduğu da farklı çalışmalarla desteklenmiştir (Brassard ve Boehm, 2007; Flowers, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Browder ve Spooner, 2005; Horton ve Bowman, 2002; Schappe, 2005). Öğretmenlerin görüşleri ve öğrencilerin gelişim ve başarılarıyla ilişkilerini inceleyen çalışma sayısı fazlayken, özellikle erken çocukluk dönemindeki çocukların değerlendirilmesi ve öğretmenlerin bu konuyla ilgili görüşleri üzerine odaklanan çalışma sayısı sınırlıdır. Türkiye’de de eğitimde değerlendirme konusu üzerine yapılan çalışmalar genellikle daha ileri sınıflarda okuyan öğrenci ve bu öğrencilerin öğretmenler ile yürütülürken (Çakan, 2004; Gelbal ve Kelecioğlu, 2007; Pilten, 2001; Yıldırım ve Semerci, 2006), okul öncesi eğitim alanındaki değerlendirmeyi temel alan çalışma sayısı oldukça sınırlıdır (Erdiller ve McMullen, 2003; Mağden ve Şahin, 2002). Daha özel olarak farklı çalışmalarda farklı değerlendirme araçları ve onların uygulanması çalışmaların temelini oluştururken (Eren, 2007; Yıldız; 2012), öğretmenlerin Türkiye’de uygulanan programla ilgili (Şıvgın, 2005) ve değerlendirme ile ilgili görüşleri (Buldu, 2010) diğer çalışmalara örnek olarak sunulabilmektedir. Alanyazın taraması yapıldığında da görüldüğü gibi Türkiye’de erken çocukluk döneminde değerlendirme konusu hala gelişime açık bir konu olarak görülmektedir ve yeni yapılacak çalışmalarla desteklenmeye devam edilmektedir. Bu sebepten dolayı da bu çalışmada, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin alternatif değerlendirme araçlarından bir tanesi olan gözlem ile ilgili görüşlerinin ne yönde olduğunu belirlemek amaçlanmıştır. Genel olarak öğretmenler gözlemin uygulanması ve gözlemin okul öncesi eğitimde uygulanan değerlendirmedeki rolünün ne olduğunun ifade edilmesi istenmiştir. Bunlara ek olarak çocukların

eğitimleri devam ederken kullanılan gözlemler sonucunda elde edilen verilerin çocuklara, öğretmenlere ve uygulanan okul öncesi eğitim programına ne yönde katkılar sağladığı, öğretmenlerin görüşleri doğrultusunda belirlenmiştir. Son olarak da öğretmenler tarafından kullanımı yaygın olan gözlem yöntemini sınıflarında uygularken öğretmenlerin hangi tür olası sıkıntılarla karşılaştıkları ve bu sıkıntılarla ne şekilde baş etmeye çalıştıkları bu çalışmanın sonucunda saptanmıştır.

2.Yöntem

Bu çalışmada temel olarak okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin değerlendirme araçlarından birisi olan gözlem ile ilgili görüşlerini belirlemek amaçlanmıştır. Öğretmenlerin görüşlerini desteklemek amacıyla da, sınıf ortamında bu düşüncelerin ne şekilde uygulandığının belirlenebilmesi için ayrıca öğretmenlerin sınıf içi uygulamaları gözlemlenmiştir. Bu çalışmada aşağıda belirtilen araştırma sorularına cevap bulunmaya çalışılmıştır:

1. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlemin okul öncesi eğitimindeki değerlendirme içerisindeki rolü ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?
2. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlemin çocuğa, öğretmene ve okul öncesi eğitim programına katkıları/ yararları ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?
3. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlem sırasında karşılaştıkları sorunlarla ilgili ve bu sorunlarla ne şekilde baş ettikleri ile ilgili görüşleri nelerdir?

Bu çalışma nitel bir çalışma olup, fenomenolojik durum çalışması deseni ile belirlenen bu hedeflere ulaşmaya çalışılmıştır. Merriam (1998)'a göre, nitel araştırma yöntemleri arasında durumun çerçevesini belirlemek için en uygun yöntem, durum çalışmasıdır. Çünkü durum çalışmasında, bir nesne, bir program, bir organizasyon ya da bir fenomen net bir şekilde belirtilebilmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra Peterson (1997)'a göre, belirlenen fenomenlerin insanların bir parçası olmakla birlikte, bu bireylerin gerek davranışları gerekse hareketleri bu fenomenen farklı şekillerde etkilenebilmektedir. Kısacası Moustakas (1994)'ın da ifade ettiği gibi uygulanan bu fenomenolojik durum çalışması, araştırmacıya okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin gözlem ile ilgili 'yaşanmış deneyimlerini', onların bakış açısından öğrenebilme şansı tanıyacaktır.

Çalışmanın katılımcılarının belirlenmesinde kolay durum örnekleme tercih edilmiştir. Çünkü araştırmacı çalışmanın yürütüldüğü anaokulunda daha önce üç sene okul öncesi öğretmeni olarak çalışmış olup, burada görev yapan okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin eğitim seviyelerinin yüksek olduğunu ve okul öncesi eğitimde değerlendirme konusunda bilgili olduklarını gözlemlemiştir. Bu yüzden 46 okul öncesi öğretmenin görev yaptığı bu özel anaokulu, çalışma alanı olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu öğretmenlerin arasında çalışmaya katılmaya gönüllü olan altı öğretmen, görüşmeler için seçilmiş olup bu öğretmenlerden de üçü rastgele seçimle sınıf gözlemi yapılması için belirlenmiştir.

Çalışmanın verileri, Ankara'da bulunan anaokulundan lise seviyesine kadar (K12) eğitim veren bir koleje bağlı özel anaokulundan elde edilmiştir. Katılımcıların her biri lisans derecelerini okul öncesi öğretmenliği bölümünde almış olup, üçü yüksek lisans eğitimine devam etmektedirler. 4 ila 10 yıl arasında değişen iş deneyimine sahip olan katılımcılar, okulda başka bir okul öncesi öğretmeni ile (partnerlik sistemi) sınıfın eğitimini devam ettirmektedir. Sınıflarda bulunan öğrenci sayısı ortalama 20 olup, katılımcılar 5 ya da 6 yaş grubu çocuklarla çalışmaktadırlar.

Bu çalışmada öğretmenlerin gözlem ile ilgili görüşlerinin belirlenebilmesi için, araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan ve 12 sorudan oluşan bir soru formu kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca öğretmenlerin değerlendirme araçlarından biri olan gözlem ile ilgili uygulamalarını belirlemek için katılımcıların görüşleri temel alınarak yine araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan gözlem formu kullanılmıştır. Araştırmacının yapmış olduğu gözlemlerin süresi her bir katılımcı için ortalama 5-6 saat olup farklı günlerde gözlemler yapılmıştır. Verilerin analizine başlanılmadan önce, görüşme ve gözlem kayıtları deşifre edilmiştir. Deşifre edilen bu kayıtlar iki araştırmacı tarafından (araştırmacı ve ikinci kodlayıcı) tekrar tekrar okunmuştur. Verilerin analizi sırasında araştırmacılar, katılımcıların ortak yanıtlarını belirlemeyi hedeflemişlerdir. Sonrasında katılımcıların yanıtlarından ortak kodlar belirlendikten sonra, benzer kodların birleştirilip kategorilerin belirlenmesi aşamasına geçilmiştir. Sonuç olarak farklı araştırma soruları için farklı kategoriler olmak üzere dokuz farklı başlık altında toplam 26 kategoriye ulaşılmıştır.

Bir çalışmanın geçerliliği ve güvenilirliği büyük önem taşımaktadır. Creswell (2003), nitel çalışmalarda kavramlar arası tutarlılığın belirlenmesinde geçerliliğin

küçük bir rol oynadığını belirtirken, bu çalışma da nitel olarak uygulandığı için daha çok güvenilirlik kavramı üzerinde durulmuştur. Araştırmacı, bu çalışmada verilerin güvenilirliğini desteklemek amacıyla görüşme ve gözlem olarak çoklu veri kaynağı kullanmıştır. Bire bir yapılan gözlemlerin kayıtları deşifre edildikten sonra bu cevaplar e-posta yoluyla katılımcılara tekrar yollanıp; farklı bir algı olup olmadığı ya da katılımcıların eklemek istedikleri olup olmadığı sorulmuştur. Ayrıca bu çalışmada güvenilirlik konusunun desteklenmesi için veri analiz sürecinde ikinci bir kodlayıcı bulunmuş ve çıkarılan kodlar karşılaştırılarak, kodlar arası uyumlara bakılmıştır.

Bu çalışmada bazı sınırlılıklar bulunmaktadır. Durum çalışması olarak altı okul öncesi öğretmeni ile çalışmanın yürütülmesi ve Ankara'da yalnızca bir okulda çalışmanın sürdürülmesi, çalışma için sınırlılık olarak kabul edilebilir. Bunun yanısıra tüm katılımcıların bayan olmasından dolayı, öğretmenlerin cinsiyetlerinin düşünceleri üzerinde bir farklılığa yol açıp açmayacağı konusunda sınırlı bir çalışmadır. Son olarak, çalışmaya katılan tüm öğretmenler 5 ve 6 yaş grubu çocuklarla çalışmışlardır. Bu yüzden öğretmenlerin çalışma grupları sınırlılık olarak görülebilir.

3.Bulgular ve Tartışma

Katılımcılarla yapılan bire bir görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler çalışma soruları doğrultusunda incelenmiştir. Her sorunun altında farklı kategoriler oluşturulmuş olup; ilk olarak okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlemin okul öncesi eğitimindeki değerlendirme içerisindeki rolü ile ilgili görüşleri belirlenmiştir. Daha sonra öğretmenlerin gözlemin çocuğa, öğretmene ve okul öncesi eğitim programına katkıları/ yararları ile ilgili görüşleri alınırken, son olarak da okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlem sırasında karşılaştıkları sorunlarla ilgili ve bu sorunlarla ne şekilde baş ettikleri ile ilgili görüşleri ve uygulamaları belirlenmiştir.

3.1. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlemin okul öncesi eğitimindeki değerlendirme içerisindeki rolü ile ilgili görüşleri

Katılımcılarla yapılan görüşme sonrasında, öğretmenler değerlendirme araçlarından olan gözlemin, okul öncesi eğitimdeki değerlendirmenin temelini oluşturduğunu, ayrıca, öğrencilerle ilgili zengin bir veri kaynağı olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Tüm öğretmenler süreç değerlendirmesinin, erken çocukluk

döneminde yer alan çocukların gelişimini ve eğitimini değerlendirmek için en uygun uygulama olacağını vurgulamışlardır. Bu düşünce, alan yazında da desteklenmiş olup (Shepard ve diğerleri, 1998; Trepanier-Street, McNair ve Donegan, 2001), çocukların gelişimsel özellikleri göz önünde bulundurulduğunda standart testler bu yaş çocuklarının değerlendirilmesi için uygun görülmemektedir (Horton ve Bowman, 2002; NAEYC, 2003). Daha sonra öğretmenlere neden gözlem tekniğini tercih ettikleri sorulduğunda; gözlem tekniğinin öğretmenlere süreç içerisinde çocuklarla ilgili daha detaylı bilgi sunduğu ve bu tekniğin uygulamada çok pratik olduğu belirtilmiştir. Gözlem tekniğinin bu şekilde kullanıcı kolaylığı sağladığı ve kısa sürede etkili dönütler sağladığı farklı çalışmalarda da desteklenmiştir (Brown ve Rolfe, 2005; Johnson ve Beauchamp, 1987; Sezer, 2010; Trepanier-Street, McNair, ve Donegan, 2001). Bunun yanı sıra katılımcılar; programda belirtilen gelişim gözlem formunun zorunlu tutulması gerektiğini de yanıtlarına eklemişlerdir.

Gözlemin değerlendirme araçlarının içerisindeki rolü belirlenirken, öğretmenlerin hangi noktaları özellikle göz önünde bulundurduklarını ifade etmeleri istenmiştir. Bu noktada öğretmenler özellikle çocukların ilgi ve ihtiyaçlarını ayrıca onların gelişimsel özelliklerini göz önünde bulundurduklarını vurgulamışlardır. Çünkü bir çocuğun eğitiminin desteklenebilmesi için öncelikle bu çocuğun ne istediği, nelerin farkında olup olmadığının belirlenmesi gerekmektedir. Smidt (2005)'e göre çocuklar sınıfa ve öğretmenlere zengin deneyimlerle dolu bir geçmişle gelmektedirler. Bu yüzden eğer öğretmenler her çocuk için gerekli zamanı ayırmazlarsa, onlarla ilgili detaylı bilgiye ulaşamayacakları belirtilmiştir. Tüm bunların ışığında farklı ortamlarda, farklı zamanlarda tekrarlanan gözlemlerle birlikte öğretmenler çocuklarla ilgili daha zengin ve kullanışlı doğru bilgiye ulaşacaklardır.

Gözlemler doğrultusunda elde edilen verilerin nasıl analiz edilip kullanıldığı noktasında öğretmenlere yöneltilen soruda katılımcılar arasında fikir birliğine ulaşılmıştır. Tüm katılımcılar tekli analizden ziyade çoklu analizin uygun olduğu görüşüne sahiptirler. Çoklu analiz olarak da; gözlem verilerini kendilerinin yorumlamalarının ardından, iş arkadaşları (diğer öğretmenler), psikologlar ve ailelerle paylaşarak veri alışverişinde bulunulması gerektiği ifade edilmiştir. Yapılan gözlemlerden elde edilen veriler ışığında, bu bireyler arasında bir beyin fırtınası oluşturulup çocuk için en uygun ve verimli yorumun ve değerlendirmenin

yapılmasını uygun görülmektedir. Renck Jalongo ve diğerlerinin (2004) çalışmasında, gözlemden elde edilen ipuçlarının iş arkadaşlarıyla yorumlanması savunulurken, Horton ve Bowman (2001 ve 2002) ve Jones (2002) (aktarım ECT Interviews, 2002)'un çalışmalarında aile ile iletişimin de değerlendirme yapılırken göz önünde bulundurulması gerektiği belirtilmiştir. Bu paylaşımların, herhangi bir bilginin ve ipucunun göz ardı edilmemesi için desteklenmesi gerekirken, bu şekildeki bir grup çalışmasından çocukların eğitimi ve gelişimleri olumlu yönde desteklenmiş olacaktır.

3.2. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlemin çocuğa, öğretmene ve okul öncesi eğitim programına katkıları/ yararları ile ilgili görüşleri

Çalışmanın devamında öğretmenlerin gözlem verilerinin katkıları ile ilgili genel görüşleri üzerinde durulurken, gözlemin genel katkısı olarak 'çocuğu tanıma' konusu üzerinde ortak bir kaniya varılmıştır. Ayrıca gözlem verilerinin, öğretmenlerin ailelerle görüşmelerinde somut veriler olarak kullanılması, aynı zamanda çocukların uygun olmayan davranışlarının arkasındaki sebeplerin belirlenmesinde de bu verilerin yardımcı olduğu düşünceleri ifade edilmiştir.

Gözlem verilerinin yararlarının daha detaylı incelenmesi amacıyla katılımcıların bu verilerin çocuğa, öğretmene ve eğitim programına katkılarının tek tek ele almaları istenmiştir. Bu doğrultuda öğretmenler, gözlemin çocukların ihtiyaçlarının belirlenmesinde ve çocukların gelecek başarılarına temel oluşturması şeklinde yararları olacağını ifade etmişlerdir. Bowman, Donovan, ve Burns (2000) da 'Eager to learn: Educating Our Preschoolers' kitabında değerlendirmenin çocuğun gelişiminin farklı alanlarını belirlemede önemli bir rol oynadığını ve çocukların sonraki öğrenme ve gelişimlerini desteklediğini belirtmişlerdir. Bu yüzden öğretmenlerin yakın gözlemlerinin sonuçları, öğrencilerin şimdiki ve ilerleyen yıllardaki gelişimlerinin olumlu yönde desteklenmesine yardımcı olacaktır.

Yapılan gözlemlerin öğretmenlere sağlamış olduğu faydalar detaylı olarak incelendiğinde, katılımcıların ortak kararı öğretmenlerin kendi öz değerlendirmelerini yapabilme şanslarının doğduğu yönünde olmuştur. Çünkü öğretmenler farklı olayları ve farklı çocukları gözlemlediklerinde zengin bir deneyime sahip olacaklardır. Albert Bandura (1977) da gözlemsel öğrenmenin

önemini ‘Sosyal Öğrenme Teorisi’nde vurgularken, başkalarını gözlemleyerek yeni davranışların nasıl uygulandığı ve bu yeni bilgilerin yeni uygulamalara nasıl yön verdiğini belirtmiştir. Öğretmenler çocukları sınıf içerisinde gözlemlerken, bu gözlemleri yorumlama ve analiz etme sırasında kendi davranışlarını da analiz etme şansı yakalamaktadırlar. Bu şekilde öğretmenler kendi gelişimlerine de ayna tutmaktadırlar ve gözlemsel öğrenme ile kendi gelişimlerini ve öğrenmelerini de desteklemiş olmaktadır.

Son olarak gözlem verilerinin eğitim programına faydaları ele alındığında, öğretmenler programın eksik yanlarının belirlenme fırsatının doğduğunu, ayrıca uygulanan program ile ilerleyen zamanlarda kullanılacak olan programın arasındaki bağlantının sağlanmasında yardımcı olduğunu belirtmiştir. Bu şekilde tercih edilen etkinliklerin yaş grubu için ya da sınıf dinamiği için uygun olup olmadığı belirlenebilirken, bir sonraki programlarda bunlar göz önünde bulundurularak yeni programların hazırlanması sağlanacaktır. Ayrıca Türkiye’de uygulanan Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı’nın eğitim programının özelliğinden birisi de programın esnek olmasıdır. Bu yüzden öğretmenlerin yapılan gözlemler doğrultusunda programa, etkinliklere eklemeler ya da var olanı değiştirme şansları bulunmaktadır. Bu durum da çocukların bireysel ihtiyaçlarının karşılanarak daha etkili bir öğrenme ortamı oluşturulmasına imkân sağlamaktadır.

3.3. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlem sırasında karşılaştıkları sorunlarla ve bu sorunlarla ne şekilde baş ettikleri ile ilgili görüşleri

Karşılaşılan sıkıntılar ile ilgili görüşler

Çalışmanın üçüncü aşamasında öğretmenlerin, değerlendirme tekniği olarak gözlem aracını kullanırken ne gibi sıkıntılarla karşılaştıklarını belirtmeleri istenmiştir. Görüşmeler sonucunda en önemli sıkıntının sınıf mevcudu olduğu belirtilirken, farklı sebeplerden dolayı etkinliklerin bölünmesi, sonuç olarak da yapılan sınıf içi gözlemlerin engellenmesi diğer bir sıkıntı olarak ifade edilmiştir. Gelbal ve Kelecioğlu (2007)’nin de çalışmalarında belirttikleri üzere sınıf mevcudunun yüksek olması, çocuk-öğretmen oranının da yükselmesine sebep olup, etkili bir değerlendirme yapılmasına engel olacak ortamlar ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Çünkü sınıfta fazla sayıda çocuk olması, öğretmenin çocuklarla birebir ilgilenmesi için daha az süre olarak sonuçlanacaktır. Böyle olunca çocukların davranışlarının ve etkinliklerinin detaylı gözlemlenebilmesi gerçekleşmemiş olacak, çocuklarla ilgili eksik bilgiler, yanlış değerlendirme yapılmasına neden olacak ve böylelikle önyargılı değerlendirme sayısı artmış olacaktır. Farklı çalışmalarda (Neuman ve Roskos, 1993; Silverstein, Brownlee, Legutki ve MacMillan, 1983) da belirtildiği üzere gözlem yöntemi doğası gereği fazla öznellik içermektedir. Bu durumun engellenmesi için de öğretmenlerin farklı kaynaklardan ve farklı zamanlarda çocuklarla ilgili detaylı bilgiler edinmesi gerekmektedir. Ancak bu şekilde verimli ve faydalı bir değerlendirme yapılmış olacaktır.

Bu sıkıntıya ek olarak, katılımcılar sistematik dokümantasyonun da gözlem sırasında karşılaşılan diğer bir problem olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Sınıf mevcudunun fazla olmasına bağlı olarak zaman darlığı, öğretmenlerin zamanında etkili bir şekilde gözlemlerini kayıt altına almalarına engel olmaktadır. Flowers, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Browder ve Spooner (2005) çalışmasında, gözlemin ve diğer alternatif değerlendirme araçlarının uygulanması için öğretmenlerin daha fazla zamana ihtiyaçları olduğunu ve bu dokümantasyonların iş yüklerini arttırdıklarını savunmuşlardır. Okul öncesi öğretmenleri düşüncelerini bu şekilde ifade ederlerken, etkinlikler sırasında gözleme ek diğer değerlendirme araçlarının kullanımı ile karşılaşılan sorunların azaltılabileceği durumunun olduğu da eklenmiştir. Farklı değerlendirme araçları çocuklarla ilgili farklı ipuçları sunacak ve kaçırılma ihtimali olan küçük detayları yakalama fırsatı verecektir.

Karşılaşılan sıkıntılar ile baş etme yolları ilgili görüşler

Okul öncesi öğretmenleri sınıf içi gözlem yaparlarken karşılaştıkları sorunları tanımladıktan sonra bu sorunlarla ne şekilde baş ettikleri ile ilgili fikirlerini de belirtmişlerdir. Katılımcılara göre öğretmenlerin deneyimleri ve eğitimleri desteklendiği zaman sorunlarla daha rahat başa çıkabilecekleri ifade edilmiştir. Sınıf mevcudu ve sistematik dokümantasyon ile ilgili sorunlarla baş edebilmek için katılımcılar, not alma yönteminin ve sınıf içi gruplama uygulamalarının yapılabileceğini belirtmişlerdir.

Öncelikle öğretmenlere verilecek olan eğitimler ve seminerler doğrultusunda, öğretmenler değerlendirme aracı olarak gözlemi daha etkili ve verimli nasıl kullanabilecekleri hakkında bilgilerini tazeleyecek, yeri geldiğinde de tecrübelerine yenisini ekleyeceklerdir. Öğretmen her zaman iyi bir öğrenci olmalıdır ki gelişen eğitim ve sosyal ortama ayak uydurup, öğrencilerine daha verimli aktarımlarda bulunabilsinler. Ouilter ve Cher (1998)'in çalışmalarındaki bulgulara göre, öğretmenlerin değerlendirme ve ölçmede bir şekilde eksiklerinin olduğunu itiraf ettikleri belirlenmiştir. Bu yüzden de çalışmalarında, bilgili ve eğitilmiş çalışanların sahada bulunmasının önemini bir kez daha vurgulamışlardır.

Eğitilmiş çalışanların sahalarda var olabilmesi için de, okul öncesi eğitimi alanında değerlendirme üzerine uzmanlaşmış akademisyenlerin ve uzmanların var olması gerektiği düşüncesi desteklenmektedir. Eğitim alanında yer alan değerlendirme ile ilgili genel bilgilerin yanı sıra, öğretmenlere sunulan erken çocukluk dönemindeki çocukların eğitimlerinin ve gelişimlerinin değerlendirilmesi ile ilgili bilgiler; öğretmenlerin gözlem sırasında karşılaşılabilecekleri olası sorunlarla baş etmelerine yardımcı olacaktır.

Uzman kişiler tarafından sunulacak olan eğitimlerin yanı sıra; öğretmenler sınıflarında gruplama yöntemini ve not alma uygulamasını da gözlem sırasında karşılaşılabilecek olan olası sorunlara çözüm üretebilmek için kullandıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Bu uygulamalar genel olarak sınıf mevcudunun fazla olduğu sınıflarda uygulanırken, öğretmen sınıfı gruplara ayırdığında çocuk-öğretmen oranını düşürecek, böylelikle öğrencilerle daha çok birebir ilgilenme olasılığını arttıracaktır. Bunun yanı sıra, unutmayı ve özneliği engellemek için de öğretmenler anlık anekdotları not alma tekniğiyle herhangi bir yere not edip, daha sonra bu bilgiler ışığında sistematik dokümantasyonu önyargısız ve tam bilgiyle doldurma şansına sahip olacaklardır.

Tüm bu uygulamalara ek olarak, öğretmenler doğal sınıf ortamını destekledikleri sürece, daha fazla bölünmeyen, engellenmeyen gözlemler yapma şansına sahip olacaktır. Eğer öğretmenler sınıfa müdahaleyi (dışarıdan gelen bir katılımcı, dışarıdan gelen bir telefon, ailenin görüşme talebi vb.) en aza indirebiliyorlarsa ve farklı alanlarda birden fazla gözlem yapma ortamı ayarlayabiliyorlarsa, çocuklar hakkında daha fazla ve detaylı bilgiye ulaşılmış

olacaktır. Bunun sonucunda da verimli ve doğru bir değerlendirme yapılmış olacaktır.

3.4. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, gözlemlerle ilgili görüşleri ve gözlem tekniğini kendi sınıflarında uygulamaları

Bu çalışmada, öğretmenlerle yapılan görüşme verilerine ek olarak, üç okul öncesi öğretmenin sınıf içi uygulamalarının gözlemlenmesi sonucu da bu görüşleri destekleyici veriler elde edilmiştir. Yer yer öğretmenlerin uygulamaları görüşlerini yansıtmazken, genel olarak düşünceleri ve uygulamaları arasında bir paralellik olduğu bulunmuştur. Bunun bir sebebi öğretmenlerin konuyla ilgili farkındalıklarının yüksek olduğu şeklinde ifade edilebilir. Çünkü öğretmenler erken çocukluk dönemindeki çocukların gelişimsel özellikleri ve ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda uygulamalar yaparak, bu doğrultuda çocukların değerlendirmelerini gerçekleştirmektedirler. Bu yüzden de yanıtlar ve uygulamalar örtüşmektedir. Bazı noktalarda (belirlenen kategoriler üzerinden) öğretmenler düşüncelerini görüşme sırasında ifade etmemiş olsalar bile, uygulamalarında bu durumlar gözlemlenmiştir. Bunun sebebi de öğretmenlerin bilgilerini çok içselleştirdikleri, yapmış olmak için değil de gerçekten gerekli olduğu düşüncesine sahip oldukları için bu uygulamaları yaptıkları şeklinde ifade edilebilir.

Son olarak da tüm uygulamalar sonrasında; genç nesil öğretmenlerin her zaman öğrenmeye açık oldukları, bu şekilde kendi gelişimlerini ve öğrenmelerini de desteklemeye devam edecekleri sonucuna ulaşılabilmektedir.

4.Öneriler

Bu çalışmada okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin değerlendirme araçlarından biri olan gözlemlerle ilgili görüşleri belirlenmiştir ve öğretmenlerin ortak görüşlerinden bir tanesi okul öncesi eğitimde süreç değerlendirmesinin kullanılması gerektiği yönünde olmuştur. Çünkü bu yaş grubu çocuklar hızlı ve sürekli bir gelişimin ve değişimin içerisindeyler. Bu yüzden süregelen bir değerlendirme ile en uygun şekilde onların gelişimi değerlendirme altına alınabilir. Bu yüzden anaokulu, ilkokul hatta ortaokul seviyesine kadar öğrencilerin gelişimlerinin takip edilip, öğrenciler sınıf ilerledikçe onların bilgileri de onlarla birlikte ilerlemelidir. Bu takibin sağlanabilmesi için farklı

yaş özelliklerine dayanan dokümanlar hazırlanabilir. Daha sade ve daha pratik olarak doldurulabilecek olan gözlem formu ve kontrol listesinin bir arada kullanılmasını amaçlayan bir dokümantasyon hazırlanabilir. Böylelikle çocukların gelişimlerinin takip edilmesi daha kolay ve daha gerçekçi verilere dayanmış olacaktır.

Bu çalışma sonucunda varılan bir gerçek var ki öğretmenler okul öncesi seviyede gözlemsiz bir değerlendirme olmayacağına inanmaktadırlar. Ayrıca değerlendirmenin temelini oluşturan gözlem verileri sadece çocuğun eğitimine değil bunun yanısıra öğretmene ve uygulanan programa da katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu yüzden öğretmene ve çocuğa daha fazla zaman tanıyan daha esnek bir programın uygulanması, verimli bir gözlem için zemin hazırlamış olacaktır. Daha esnek bir program ve daha az çocuğun bulunduğu sınıfların oluşturulması ile öğretmene ve çocuğa daha fazla zaman kalacaktır. Böylelikle de hedeflenen bireysel eğitim programı daha rahat uygulanacaktır. Daha verimli gözlemler sonucunda, çocuklar hakkında detaylı ve önemli ipuçlarını yakalamak daha kolay olacak ve böylelikle çocuğun hem gelişimi hem eğitimi en uygun bir şekilde desteklenmiş olacaktır.

Bunların yanısıra, her ne kadar katılımcılar gözlemin çok yararlı olduğunu ifade etseler de, yine de uygulama sırasında bazı sorunlarla karşılaştığı belirtilmiştir. Bu zorluklarla baş edebilmek için NAEYC (2003)'in de vurguladığı gibi alanda bilgili ve iyi eğitilmiş çalışanlara ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Katılımcılar, bunun da okul öncesi eğitimdeki değerlendirme konusunda uzman kişiler tarafından sunulan hizmet içi eğitim ve seminerlerle destekleneceği inancına sahiptirler.

Son olarak, çalışmanın yürütüldüğü bu anaokulunda kamera sistemi uygulanabilir. Sınıf ve etkinlik ortamları kayıt altına alınıp, daha sonrasında öğretmenler bu kayıtları etkinlik anında kaçırdıklarını yakalamak için izleyip, değerlendirmelerini eksiksiz bir şekilde tamamlayabilirler. Bu anaokuluna çocukların devam edebilmesi için aileler yüksek bir miktar eğitim ücreti ödemektedirler. Bu anlamda uygulamanın gerçekleşmesi için pek engel bulunmamakla birlikte, öğretmenler bu somut veriler ışığında daha net bilgilerle çocuğun ailesi ile iletişim kurabileceklerdir. Bunun yanı sıra bu kayıtlar yalnızca çocuğun gelişimin değerlendirilmesi için değil, öğretmenin kendi uygulamalarını değerlendirmesi için de bir ayna görevi görecektir. Öğretmenler kendi öz değerlendirmelerini yapma fırsatı yakalayacaklardır. Ayrıca bir çeşit gözlem verisi olarak kabul edilebilecek

olan bu kayıtlar, akademik alanda uzman kişiler tarafından da takip edilip hem uygulamalar anlamında hem de programın verimliliği anlamında geri bildirim sağlanmış olacaktır. Bu noktada hem farklı bir kişinin sınıf ortamına girmesi ile etkinliğin akışı bozulmayacak hem de uzmanların zaman kaybı yaşamamasına yardımcı olacaktır. Böylelikle çocukların, öğretmenlerin ve programın iyi yönde gelişimleri desteklenmiş olacaktır.