THE SURVIVAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL IN CENTRAL TURKEY:
THE CASE OF A PARENT CO-OP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

THE SURVIVAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL IN CENTRAL TURKEY:
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This study focuses on exploring how learning experiences are realized at an alternative K-4 school owned by a parent cooperation in Central Turkey, what components of the school makes it alternative, how the alternative learning environment is perceived by the internal stakeholders, and what challenges are faced while implementing alternative education. The study aims to inform theory and practice on how a democratic and innovative child-centered school system operates in the context of Turkey. The case selected for this study is pseudonymized as Anatolia Alternative Elementary School (K-4), a co-op elementary school in Ankara. The school's mission is to enable children to realize themselves, to be governed by participatory democracy, and be ecologically balanced and distant from pursuing commercial interests. The study was designed as an illustrative qualitative single case study. The data were collected through observations and on-site field notes, interviewing the teachers (N=9) and the school administrator, and analyzing emerging documents such as instructional materials, the school mission statement, and protocols. The data were analyzed through inductive content analysis method. The findings reveal that the case is characterized under five major themes including democratic school governance, freedom of expression, sense of community, child-centered education, and ecological stance. Findings provide insightful reflections on

the challenges of implementing alternative education: fuzzy status of the parents, inefficiency in time management especially, for seeking consensus on decision-making processes; challenges in establishing discipline, lack of alternative school models and resources in the national context, restricted financial resources, and the dichotomy of parents' academic worries versus holistic education. Several implications were discussed regarding the national teacher education, improvement of alternative practices, transfer of useful alternative practices to mainstream education, future research for effective alternative instruction, parents' role in education, and cultural transformation.

Keywords: Alternative Education, Alternative School, Democratic Education, Democratic School

ÖZ

TÜRKIYE'NİN MERKEZİNDE ALTERNATIF BIR İLKOKULUN AYAKTA KALIŞI: EBEVEYN DESTEKLİ BİR KOOPERATİF OKULU İLE İLGİLİ DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

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Bu çalışma, Ankara ilinde, ebeveyn işbirliğinin sahibi olduğu alternatif bir ilkokulunda öğrenme deneyimlerinin nasıl gerçekleştiğini, okulun hangi bileşenlerinin onu alternatif kıldığı, alternatif öğrenme ortamlarının iç paydaşlar tarafından nasıl algılandığını ve alternatif eğitimi uygulamada hangi zorluklar ile yüzleşildiğini araştırmaya odaklanmaktadır. Çalışmanın temel amacı, demokratik ve yenilikçi çocuk merkezli bir okul sisteminin Türkiye bağlamında nasıl işlediğine dair kuram ve pratiği ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu çalışma için seçilen durum, Anadolu Alternatif İlköğretim Okulu (K-4) olarak adlandırılmış olan Ankara'da bir ebeveyn ilkokuludur. Okulun misyonu, çocukların kendilerini fark etmelerini sağlamak, katılımcı demokrasi ile yönetilmek, ekolojik olarak dengeli olmak ve ticari çıkarlardan uzak durmaktır. Bu çalışma, açıklayıcı nitel tek durum çalışması olarak tasarlanmıştır. Veriler, dersliklerin ve okulların gözlemlenmesi, öğretmenlerle görüşmeler ($N = 9$) ve okul yöneticisi ile görüşme ve mevcut belgelerle toplanmıştır. Veriler tümevarım içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir Bulgular, okulu alternatif yapan temel özelliklerini demokratik okul yönetimi, ifade özgürlüğü, topluluk duygusu, çocuk merkezli eğitim ve ekolojik duruş olarak ortaya koymuştur. Bulgular, alternatif eğitimi uygulama zorlukları ile ilgili temaların yansımaları'

ebeveynlerin açık olmayan statüleri, karar verme sürecinde fikir birliği ilkesinin getirisi olarak zaman yönetimindeki verimsizlik, disiplin kurmada sorunlar, alternatif okul modeli ve kaynaklarının eksikliği, kısıtlı mali kaynaklar ve ebeveynlerin akademik kaygıları ve bütünsel eğitim ikilemi olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Sonuçlar, pratik bağlamda ulusal öğretmen eğitimi, alternatif uygulamaların iyileştirilmesi, faydalı alternatif uygulamaların ana eğitime aktarılması, gelecek araştırmalar bağlamında ise etkili alternatif öğretim araştırmaları, ebeveynlerin eğitimde rolü ve kültürel dönüşüm temaları ile tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alternatif Eğitim, Alternatif Okul, Demokratik Eğitim, Demokratik Okul

To the memory of

İsmail Hakkı Tonguç

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MoNE	Ministry of National Education
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is a qualitative single-case study aiming to describe and explore how learning experiences are realized at an alternative K-4 school owned by a parent cooperation in Central Turkey. It tried to explore what components make this school an alternative, how the alternative learning environments are perceived by the stakeholders, and what challenges are faced while implementing alternative education.

This chapter provides the background to the study, the purpose, and significance of the study as well as key terms used throughout the study.

1.1. Background of the Study

Alternative schools, with the broadest definition, are non-traditional schools (Aron, 2006) that set alternative principles to mainstream schools. Alternative schools have been of interest to the parents in the world for decades seeking alternatives to variety of problems brought by mainstream schools (Spring, 1999).

Whereas alternative approaches to mainstream education is older than a century throughout the world, initiatives in Turkey can be considered to be new. Although at the beginning of the Turkish Republic there have been several alternative primary school models established, they have either been closed down or melted away into the mainstream models of public education. Village institutes (1940-1946) are early examples of those schools which are characterized by democratic participation and

student-centered learning which aimed to change agents for the rural settlements by educating future village teachers (Altunya, 2014).

More than a decade ago, the First International Symposium on Alternative Education in Turkey was held in 2005 in order to address theoretical and practical gaps in Turkey in the field of alternative education. This event later led to the foundation of Alternative Education Association (Akdağ and Korkmaz, 2008), preceding the foundation of the model for BBOM (Başka Bir Okul Mümkün Derneği, [Another School is Possible Association]). Such initiatives can be said to aim a getaway from what they perceive to be heavily centralistic (Akdağ and Korkmaz, 2008) and monolithic (BBOM, n.d.) education system of the country.

Although there are many types of alternative schools in the world, their common characteristics can be said to emphasize individuality and diversity, have a family-type small community atmosphere, value collaborative work versus competition, aim children and other members of the school to have the ownership of their own lives, and aim to raise awareness of participation in social formation (Nagata, 2006).

Similarly, the case investigated in this study is a small nursery and elementary school (k-4) owned by a parent cooperative with 52 students, emphasizing democratic participation, learner-centered education, ecological stance and nonprofit financing.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Democratic stance and effectiveness of the mainstream education system of the country is not only questioned by the parents who look for alternative schools. Lack of democratic education is revealed at all levels of schooling. A number of studies address to the issues with democratic values of the schools in Turkey. Kaldırım (2015) surveyed 464 8th grade students in 12 schools. The results indicate that a considerable number of students have misconception about democracy, equality, political party, and liberty. Another study by Tufekcı and Okutan (2006) reveals that 80 % of the teachers shouts in order to manage the class, 43 % use punishments, and almost all regard that they know the best in the class. University students also

report that their professors are inadequate in terms of democratic education (Demirtaş, 2004).

Current mainstream education is not only criticized for not being democratic. Whether Turkish education system prepares its students with the skills required for "information age" is another issue being raised especially after Turkey's performance in Programme for Intenatıonal Student Assessment (PISA) 2015. In 2015, Turkey's already far below the OECD average in average rankings dropped further by being placed at 50th rank out of 70 countries. PISA measures students' ability to apply knowledge and skills and to analyze, reason and communicate effectively as they examine, interpret and solve problems, which are considered to be as the most important skills for students to success in increasingly science-based information world (OECD, 2016).

The national curriculum reform in 2005 shifted education approach from behaviorist- cognitivist to constructivist-cognitivist approach in order to be aligned with the information age. (MEB, 2017) However, whether this change is actually reflected on the classroom application is arguable. Several studies show the shortage of public school to implement constructivist education. (Fidan and Duman, 2014; Yıldırım and Dönmez, 2008; Dinç and Doğan, 2010; Bozdoğan and Altunçekiç, 2007). The inability of the mainstream public schools to adapt to the information age paradigm can be argued to be an important factor in low PISA scores. According to PISA results, not only are science, mathematics, and reading far below OECD average, but also are several affective measures. Life satisfaction, sense of belonging at school are at minimum degree and school work-related anxiety is at the maximum (OECD, 2016).

According to PISA results, not only are science, mathematics, and reading far below OECD average, but also are several affective measures. Life satisfaction, sense of belonging at school are at minimum degree and school work-related anxiety is at the maximum (OECD, 2016).

From the points above, it can be concluded that it is critical to holistically investigate the problems of Turkish education system in relation to democratic values, acquisition of information age skills, and students' satisfaction in order to restore the system. One way of this investigation can be done within an innovative system which produces alternatives to those problems. The school to be investigated in this study was chosen as an example of this kind of a system with its unique system. The school's mission statement claims that the school not only is centered on democratic participation and ecological stance but it also realizes children's rights and allows their self-realization with their alternative stance in each unit of education from objectives to content, instructional methods and evaluation. This alternative stance is not limited to but includes individualized instruction, problem solving abilities, critical thinking, creativity, children's choice and voice, autonomy, non-competitive individualized evaluation, respect to differences in learning abilities, multi-age learning group, learning beyond the school walls, and learning by living.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The study aims to investigate a child-centered alternative school which puts constructivist-cognitivist approach to its center. This investigation can inform us about how those schools operate in the context of Turkey, how a democratic and innovative system takes place in practice, the difficulties of sustaining that kind of a democratic and pluralistic microsystem in the mainstream education system that it perceives as monolithic , and how the stakeholders deal with the challenges.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study aims to contribute to alternative schooling literature in the context of Turkey by exploring how alternative education works in practice in terms of learning and instruction and how the stakeholders perceive those experiences. Besides, the study can also provide data for the schools which want to adopt a similar model, and also give feedback to the school to be investigated. In short, this study aims to have practical contribution as well as informing alternative school literature in the context of Turkey.

1.5. Definition of Terms

Alternative school. There are different definitions of "alternative education" or "alternative school". In general it refers to school and education systems which are critical of mainstream public education, which emphasizes individuality, small community with a family-like atmosphere, valuing cooperation over competition, children and staff having sense of they are creating their own lives and their own learning, devising teaching methods, innovative programs and autonomy (Nagata, 2006).

Reviewing the literature, we can see that the term "alternative school" is used in the literature to refer to two disparate types of schools (Martin, 2000). The first is mainly used in American academic literature. It refers to 'second chance' schools for 'at-risk' youth or dropouts who could not succeed at the traditional schools. The second is philosophically alternative schools for all individuals . Our case fits into the second definition. Therefore, the scope of this paper is going to cover the second type of alternative schools.

Positive discipline. Discipline is a concept of cultivation which aims to gain desired and regular behaviors. The aim in the discipline is to improve self-control (Dinçer, n.d.).

Positive discipline, according to Nelson, Lott and Glenn's definition, is a management technique that helps children to control their own movements and solve their problems. At the same time, positive discipline allows children to feel good about themselves as they learn social rules. Instead of the reward penalty system, the principle of positive discipline is to confront the child with the natural consequences of his action. To illustrate, if the child refuses to eat, he is told that he will be hungry instead of rewardig the child for eating or punishing for not eating (Dinçer, n.d.).

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter investigates the history of alternative schools, alternative school types in the world and in Turkey, and empirical studies on learning outcomes of alternative schools.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

This part provides historical and theoretical background of alternative schools in the world and later at the context of Turkey.

2.1.1. Philosophical Foundations of Educational Alternatives

In the 19th and 20th centuries, compulsory education began in schools in order to educate citizens and workers in the industrial economy (Spring, 1999). Since then, mainstream schools have been criticized for producing boring, monotonous, personalized workers by following the factory model. People have been looking for an education system that will create free, non-authoritarian people against factory model schools (Freire, 1970).

Spring (1999) dates the radical criticism back to J. J. Rousseau's concept of 'ownership of self'. In the 18th century, J.J. Rousseau objected moral teachings to children until puberty because he believed any social or moral thought taught before puberty would be based on submission to authority, not on reasoning. In his book Emilie, he advocated teaching that was product of "reasoning" of the child based on obligations of life and pragmatism, which led to "freedom" of the child. Max Stirner

developed this idea and named it as "ownership of the self" (Spring, 1999). It was historically a time of conflict and transition between individualism emerged by the bourgeois society and the old feudal society. Rousseau's debates about the role of education in society had large effect. He supported democratic reconstruction that would come with the French and other revolutions (Reich et al, 2016).

Another important figure in educational alternatives is John Dewey and his progressive schools. In his book Experience and Education (1938), John Dewey puts an alternative against the traditional education, progressivism, and contrasts traditional and progressive education. He defines traditional education as passing of knowledge from past generation. He characterizes it as being sharply distinct from other social institutions, in which students are obedient and passive receivers. The subject matter is imposed by adults and irrelevant to child's experience. He advocates progressive education which is opposite of it: It cultivates and expresses individuality, students learn from experience, they are acquainted with the changing world, and can act freely. He emphasizes learning by doing to narrow the gap between school and life. He believes that in that way learners will be intelligent people by pursuing of activities which they are engaged in and they will construct social change and reform.

Dewey believed that democracy requires intelligent, active participation of citizens who have a share on producing and managing social institutions. Consistent with this idea of democracy, he advocated experimental problem solving, teachers as guides encouraging students to dialogue, question and engage in thoughtful reflection. Many alternative schools possess this orientation which sees the world is as a continuously changing stream in which everything flows (Martin, 2000).

By 1900s, progressive thinkers started to proclaim the ideas of freedom, democracy, and self-determination in education. (Neill, 1960) The basic principle was to replace the authority with freedom, teach the child address his curiosity and needs without using force. It took the idea of autonomy and freedom one step further from progressive education. Some blamed progressive education as using covert authority

using persuasion and not being truly liberative, and supported Neill Summerhill school as the true democratic school (1960).

Neill's Summerhill school (1921) is based on his principles that intellectual development is not enough and emotional development should be emphasized. The aim of the education is not to create good successful workers, but happy human beings. Discipline and punishment create fear, which destroy freedom of the child, and it should be avoided. In the school, everyone has equal rights and a vote of child is counted as much as a teacher's. No child is compelled to attend lessons. They have classes from morning to noon. In the afternoon, all children are free for games, workshops, or art activities (Neill, 1960).

Famous with his critical pedagogy, Freire (1970) contrasts his liberatory conception of education with what he calls the 'banking concept' of traditional schooling. Banking education is monological problem solving and constituted by teachers' views of the world. Liberatory education, on the other hand, is dialogical, problem-posing and constituted by students' views of the world. In banking education, according to Freire, knowledge is seen as "the property of the teacher rather than a medium evoking the critical reflection of both teacher and students" (Freire, 1970, p. 80); and education is seen as a transaction in which teachers deposit knowledge in their students. In liberatory education, "through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher–student with students–teachers" (Freire, 1970, p. 80).

Additionally, the content of liberatory education is "the organized, systematized and developed 're-presentation' to individuals of the things about which they want to know more" (Freire, 1970, p. 93). While the content is "constituted and organized by the students' view of the world", "the task of the dialogical teacher is to 'represent' that universe to the people from whom he first received it - and 're-present' it not as a lecture, but as a problem" (Freire, 1970, p. 109). Thus in liberatory education, students are 'producing and acting upon their own ideas - not consuming those of others'

At first glance, Freire's and Dewey's philosophies might seem similar. According to Robert (1996), Freire is very different from Dewey, Dewey's Laboratory Schools in Chicago gave children opportunities to experience new things, learn in new ways, and grow in new directions, however, they were limited by the teachers. On the other hand, Freire's culture circles, were challenged to object, question and move beyond what they learned as a child, which made the school socially transformative. According to Roberts (1996), the liberating education concept of Freire aims to problem-pose and transform the whole society by letting adults be free. Dewey's progressive schools are concerned more with individual problem solving and have a more laissez-faire, apolitical approach (1996).

Kellner (2003) points out that while Dewey wanted education to produce democratic citizens familiar with social aspects of life, who communicate with whole society, Freire "sought to develop a pedagogy of the oppressed that would produce revolutionary subjects, empowered to overthrow oppression and create more democratic and just social order" (Kellner, 2013, p.171). Robert asserts that the main difference between two philosopher is that Dewey sought to strengthen the cultural elements that already existed in Progressive Era of America during 1900s aiming shared, cooperative and open spirit of science and democracy. On the other hand, Freire aimed to eliminate the culture dominance, division, and oppression among the groups of people in Brazil and other countries following the World War II. While Dewey used activities developing students' natural tendencies, Freire challenged the oppressed to see their world in a way to realize the possibility of a better world and considering fighting for it.

2.1.2. Alternative Schools in The West

This section presents different types of alternative schools in West and in Turkey chronologically. The focus is on the philosophy, values, methods, and, instructional methods of each type of those schools.

The first prominent alternative schools are free schools. In 1921, Summerhill school was founded in Britain by Neill. The guiding principle was that the school must

respect the nature of the child. Traditional school cuts children from their nature and alienates them to their own nature. In Summerhill, children were allowed not to join to the classes. There were weekly meetings in which the laws were made by everyone including the children. A 6 year old and Neill had the same vote, just like everyone else (Appleton, 1992).

Free schools revoked in the North America in the late 60s, against the mainstream education which they saw as oppressive. Five writers, A.S. Neill, John Holt, Herb Kohl, George Dennison and Paul Goodman were regarded as the major sources for the movement (Appleton, 1992).

Principals of free schools include the beliefs that the basic nature of human being is good, every person has a right to autonomy, a child will follow naturally if allowed to follow his own interest, the best learning is having one's own experience, a school should provide a free environment and a teacher is fellow learner and a resource (Neill, 1960).

In free schools, physical and affective concerns are at least as high as academic concerns. In his exploratory study of free schools, Montgomery (1980) surveyed 156 alternative schools in the USA. He detected that some schools require students to create a curriculum, while some are more controlled, some sees nature as the learning environment as the real world. However, he found that all the schools were learner-centered and they relate learning to the learners' own life. The role of the teacher varies from watching, setting up the environment, and guiding the learner.

The most typical common characteristics of the free schools were multi-age groups, guest lecturers, open environments, flexible scheduling, overnight field trips, community used as classroom, student-staff problem solving sessions, athletic activities, cross-age tutoring.

Another major alternative schooling movement of early 20th century is Waldorf schools. Earl 20th century German elementary schools were for eight years, which covered basic literacy, German history and culture, religion and mathematics. Most

students quitted after elementary school. Many thinkers criticized those schools as dull and uninspiring. Those reformists such as Paul Oestreich, Fritz Karsen, Adolf Reichwein, Karl Wilker, Elisabeth Rotten, C.H. Becker, Paul Geheerb emphasized child-centered instruction, development of the total personality of the child, they were opposed to the too much intellectualization of the subject matter (Uhrmacher, 1995).

Rodulf Steiner founded the first Waldorf school in Germany in 1919, which was first planned to educate the children of the workers of Waldorf-Astoria Factory, and then has spread out around the world. Steiner aimed to affect the technocratic system; he believed that individuals should be encouraged to develop their own talents rather than being trained in a way to meet the needs of the industrial world. He hoped for a new society, which is liberated from the powerful modern state. The Waldorf school was child centered, and designed to educate the total personality without one-sided emphasis on the intellect (Uhrmacher, 1995).

Waldorf schools are open to all children of social and economic background (Uhrmacher, 1995). It offers twelve-year curriculum as described below:

Waldorf education system divides the child development into 3 stages. The first stage is from birth to age seven, in which student learn by empathy and doing. The child is suggested to learn from the whole body and moral talks have little effect on the child. Children do not learn reading nor do they memorize facts during this stage (Steiner, 2003).

The second stage is around age seven with the drop of baby teeth. It is characterized as the stage of feeling, especially with rhythm. Children are thought through vivid pictures, images, rhythm to awake the forces of feeling such as fairy tales, legends, stories. Steiner also suggested that during this age children have inner need for an authority in the form of leadership. However, at the age of nine everything the teacher says need an explanation. Teacher works on child habits and memory during this age (Steiner, 2003).

Finally, the third stage is between 14 and twenty-one. This is the age of consciousness. Child thinks and judges. Abstractions are started to use during this stage (Steiner, 2003).

Steiner supported teacher autonomy. He thought it was unnecessary to make the methods strictly uniform and that teachers can do different things which are equally good (1922). Teachers were prohibited to teach from the books, which was found to be a passive method with lack of feeling. Teachers instead were encouraged to teach using their sense of rhythm and their souls. Curriculum was designed and adapted according to the level of stage of the children. Steiner encouraged formative evaluation rather than summative. However, he compromised his ideal school since he wanted students to be able to transfer to other schools after Waldorf, so preparation classes for the national exam was included in the curriculum (Steiner, 2003).

The third major alternative schooling in the West is Montessori schools. As a physicist whose early studies focused on the development of mentally impaired children, Montessori (1870-1952) observed that the methods she developed for the mentally impaired children also educate normal children. She had success in developing the independence of the children, and she moved on to apply the same principles and methods to the normal children and observed that they also work for all children (Montessori, 2004).

Montessori turned upside down the instructional routines such as memorization of facts and recitation in Italian schools in which students copy from teacher and books; storage and retrieval approach, which Freire calls as "banking education." In Montessori's school Casa Dei Bembini, the individual became the center, the teacher became the guide which facilitated the child's self-learning. She believed that children already can learn without direct instruction since they possess the interior power to absorb and assimilate the complex culture. If the children are interested in the activity, they would concentrate their energy on it, and they would stay on the activity until they master it (Montessori, 2004).

Montessori highlighted the importance of stages of development of a child as J.J. Rousseau (1712- 1778) and other early educators did. They both rejected the external discipline on children, rewards, punishment. However, Rousseau based his ideas on his own reflection, but Montessori made use of empiric, scientific methods on the actual students, and she concluded that children needed to experience activities proper to their phase of development. While recognizing the value of Rousseau's promotion of child integrity and freedom, she was critical that his romantic ideals ignored the child's need of structured learning environment (Montessori, 2004).

During the sensitive periods, children were in readiness for certain learning activities, such as sensory, language development, motor skills, and social adaptation, etc. During those periods, children were provided self-correcting materials that they could choose. Each child chose his/her own material, which provided the progress in his/her own pace, and also cultivated intrinsic motivation, self-discipline and self-reliance (Montessori, 2004).

Montessori made sure that physical environment was appropriate to children's need and would not limit the children's freedom to move. Tables and chairs were sized and movable according to this principle, and cupboards and washstands were reachable (Montessori, 2004).

At the same time Montessori was developing her pedagogy, progressive educators were developing new methods, the most well-known was John Dewey's Laboratory School (1859-1952). They had common characteristics such as child-centeredness, individualism, and freedom. However, they were different in that Montessori emphasized structured learning environment. Therefore, progressivists criticized her to be out-of-date and her methods to be limited in socialization and creativity. However, Montessori alleged that structured environment would make children feel more secure, offer a set of choices, enhances their freedom, and the climate of order would cultivate independence and self-assurance (Montessori, 2004).

A more modern type of alternative schools is Reggio schools which were founded in 1994 by Reggio Emilia.The education model is based on the ideas of Piaget, Vygotsky and Dewey. Developed by Loris Malaguzzi, the model sees the child as strong and competent. Children have rights as well as needs. The Reggio schools are run democratically by parents, teachers and the local community. The instruction is shaped by student's interest and choice. The learning takes place through discussions, experiential, and social learning (Carnie, 2003).

The teachers have roles as learners and researchers who always experiment with new ideas. They provide a loving and caring family-like environment. Variety of materials are provided to cultivate sensory experiences (Carnie, 2003).

Reggio Emilia method started 50 years after Montessori education. They are similar in their focus of child autonomy, learning by doing, mixed-aged education and experiential learning. However, they differ in their methodology. For example, Reggio schools are less structured. It gives more space to teacher to establish methods. On the other hand, Montessori method has predetermined curriculum and expected learning outcomes. In Reggio Emilia method, the teacher constantly takes notes of the development of the kids and plan their instruction accordingly. Teachers work in pairs and expected to learn and research on their teaching. Parents are also actively involved in the learning process daily by learning with their children and collaborating with the teacher (Flavin, 2016).

2.1.3. Alternative Education in Turkey

The discussions related to critical education movements in Turkey are strongly centered on the dynamics of political powers governing the country. İnal (2015) argues that progressive forces mainly formulated critical education starting from late Ottoman to modern Turkey by advocating positive scientific views against traditional Islamic views. It was not until 1990s that critical pedagogy and revolutionary critical education came on stage (İnal, 2015).

Village institutes are seen to be the most prominent type of alternative schooling at the history of the Republic of Turkey. The Village institutions (1940-1953) were found in order to meet the need of trained village teachers (Altunya, 2014). There were many big expectations from village institutes such as modernizing the social relations, creating intellectual peasants, increasing agricultural productivity, and spreading the modern republican values (Karaömerlıoglu, 1998). It has been subject to ideological conflicts which gradually melted it into mainstream education and then finally brought its end in 1953.

The institutes were built upon a set of values that were aligned with the republican values. One was a holistic educational approach which aimed to educate the student's personality with its all aspects, teaching both theory and practice, providing mixed sex education and gender equality, combining universal values and methods with local culture, agricultural production and its fair distribution, ecological and moral stand, use of agricultural technology, autonomy of institutes, teachers, and students (Altunya, 2014).

The founder of the village institute models, İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, aimed at set of characteristics and behaviors as students outcomes: 1. The students love working for the sake of the country more than their own good. 2. The students are full of life. They are cold-blooded at the face of adversity. 3. They are active people and appreciate nature, art, and music. 4. They obey fair and moral rules and object otherwise. 4. They depend only on their hardworking (Altunya, 2014).

The curriculum of the village institutes were unique. In the first three years, there was no definite curriculum in the institutes. There were only general instructions for teachers and some examples of programs in their specialty, but the curriculum mostly was left to their initiative. However, the amount of time was absolute for each semester: 114 hours for general education; 58 hours for agriculture; and 58 hours for technology. The following subjects were taught under General Education: Turkish, History, Geography , Civil Education, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Foreign Language, Penmanship, Painting, Physical Education and National Folklore, Music-instrumental and vocal, Military training, Rural Economics and

Cooperative Organization. Agriculture displayed local variants and included the following subjects: fieldwork, industrial cultures, zootechnology aviculture, apiculture, silkworm culture, fishing and pisciculture. Under the technology: Iron work, woodwork-masonry-mechanicse, elements of electricity, and specialties for women in field and housework, child-rearing and others (Vexliard and Aytaç, 1964). The students received regular classes until the moon and studied in natural environments after the noon. (Tısıoğlu, Kaya, and Çağıltay, 2018).

As Kirby and Berkes (2000) report the daily program at the institutes, the students woke up at 6 am, and do physical activities such as local dance or walking. Then, students had breakfast and then cleaned the classes and dorm. After that, students took both formal courses and assigned organizational works in total for 6 hours. Until the dinner, sports, music, literature, theatre, spectacle, choir practices, individual or group studies and activities were performed. Also meetings and discussions about the books, articles, activities, programs, teachers and organizational problems were organized and analyzed. After the dinner, students studied individually or in groups (as cited in Tısıoğlu, Kaya, and Çağıltay, 2018).

As Ülkü (2008) states, teachers were given flexibility to choose their method and content with flexible understanding but they were supposed to implement the activities and courses according to learning by doing method (as cited in Tısıoğlu, Kaya, and Çağıltay, 2018). The teachers and the students also collaborated for the production, agriculture, art and managerial tasks. They ate together. Every 15 days all students and teachers met to discuss the tasks. Teachers and students were equal and collaborative (Altunya, 2014).

The instructional methods were characterized by group discussions, learning by doing, learning within work method, cooperative learning, individual reading sessions, and scientific research and publications (Tısıoğlu, Kaya, and Çağıltay, 2018).

Democratic governance is a prominent characteristic of the institutes. Teachers board had decisive role in administration when the managers doubted a matter.

Every work made at the institutes were evaluated not only by managers but also by teachers and student board, each had equal right of expression. The students could freely criticize teachers and managers at evaluation meetings (Altunya, 2014).

Tısıoğlu, Kaya, and Çağıltay (2018) conclude that the instructional environment in village institutions was diverse than the schools now. They had real laboratories and environment to in different areas like manufacturing, building, farming, etc. The students were also encouraged by various cultural and social activities. Learner-centeredness and democratic relationships were valued. The students and teachers were considered as equal and responsible. The institutions were whole living mechanism aiming to develop students in different aspects of life.

Even though the model of the villages were innovative and ahead of the schooling paradigm of its time, the village institutes are not seen as truly alternative schools by some critics since they were operated by state and aimed to spread the state values (Akdağ and Korkmaz, 2008). Akdağ and Korkmaz argue (2008) that the monolithic political and legal structure of education has prevented alternative schools to emerge in Turkey except a few Montessori preschools. It was not until 1990s that prominent critical pedagogy books were published in Turkey. The first International Symposium on Alternative Education was held in 2005. Different alternative approaches were presented in that symposium such as Montessori, Waldorf, critical pedagogy, and free schools. The symposium led to the foundation of "Alternative Education Association" which aimed to develop methods and practices (Akdağ and Korkmaz, 2008).

In 2009, ("BBOM", n.d.) Another School Possible (Başka Bir Okul Mümkün) association was founded in İstanbul. The association built its own alternative school model which based on four axes: Aiming to develop an original alternative education model specific to Turkey, the volunteers of the association examined the models, samples and applications in the world to draw inspiration. The Association aimed to replace the current system what they perceived to be uniform, hierarchical and disciplinary with their own model. The BBOM Model includes alternative methods

and techniques, based on the principle of democratic, participatory, social justice and ecological values. In their mission statement, they state:

> We dream a school which involves the words of children, who are the main subject of education-teaching processes, heard, and incorporated them into decision-making mechanisms. That's why based on the fact that every child is unique, learning is at different speeds and in different ways for everyone, we imagine a school that approaches all and nourishes innate creativity. That's why we dream a school that is founded and operated with collective capital that is not operated for the purpose of market and profit and which does not harm the sense of social justice. That's why we; We imagine a school where the bird, stone, water, soil, ant, or the whole being is considered as valuable as human.

Apart from those four stances, the BBOM model also states that their values are social justice, freedom (thought, expression, movement, choice), solidarity, pluralism, social responsibility, anti-discrimination (nationality, race, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, economic, social, physical), creativity, productivity, honesty, criticism, scientificism, and empathy ("BBOM", n.d.).

The BBOM Association itself does not open schools but supports the parents and volunteers who want to open schools in their local communities; for this purpose, it develops, transfers, organizes training and advocates for the BBOM training model. The local cooperatives' role is to open and operate schools. The BBOM association's role is to develop and disseminate the model. The Executive Board of the Association meets in a different city every two or four months and takes decisions on the policy of the general association. The first BBOM school was opened in Bodrum in 2013, however; it was closed down because of financial restrictions. So far, the BBOM model has three running cooperative elementary schools and five preschools in Ankara, İzmir, İstanbul, Çanakkale, and Eskişehir ("BBOM", n.d.).

Instructional system of BBOM model is characterized by multi-age groups, personalized instruction with individualized education plans, multi-disciplinary approach, formative evaluation, alternative evaluation techniques such as peer evaluation, portfolio, personalized evaluation, community works and visits, project based learning, voluntarily participated workshops, with highlighted child choice ("BBOM", n.d.).

2.2. Research on Alternative Education

This section summarizes the empirical research done on the outcomes and challanges of implementing alternative education throughout the world and in Turkey.

2.2.1. Outcomes-Based Research on Alternative Schools

There is a number of research indicating positive developmental outcomes of alternative schools. In order to evaluate the social and academic outcomes of Montessori education, Lillard (2006) studied a Montessori school located in the USA, which is recognized by Association Montessori International for its good implementation of Montessori principles. The choice of students by the school was random lottery. Therefore, the study was designed based on the school lottery of student selection in place in the school in order to control the parental influence. The students accepted by the school were assigned as the Montessori group and those who were not accepted assigned as 'other educational systems group'. The results indicated that children in Montessori schools received significantly superior outcomes in several dimension than the other group. By the end of kindergarten, Montessori children performed significantly better than the other group on standardized tests of reading and maths, engaged in more positive interaction on the playground, showed more cognitive and executive control, and showed more concern of fairness and justice. At the end of elementary school, Montessori children performed significantly better than the other group on writing creative essays with more complex sentence structure, selected more positive responses to social dilemmas, and reported feeling of a sense of community in class.

Another research showing positive outcomes of Montessori education is the doctoral dissertation by Hobbs (2008). He evaluated the academic achievement of students in the sixth grade both in Montessori and non-Montessori schools using the Ninth Edition of the Stanford Achievement Test. The results indicated that the academic achievement of Montessori students in reading and maths were significantly higher than those who were not. On the other hand, there were no significant difference in

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the academic achievement in language arts, science and social studies. He attributes the success to that Montessori schools do not teach to test, nor is it based on rote memory activities, and that the teachings are based on higher degree of group activities, critical thinking skills development, and self-reliance training.

For another study showing superiority of alternative pedagogical approach in Freinet and Montessori schools to that of traditional (Besançon and Lubart, 2008), the researchers conducted a longitudinal study with 210 students elementary students in three types of school. The results indicate that children schooled in alternative pedagogies (Montessori and Freinet) obtained higher creative performances than children schooled in traditional pedagogy.

A study on progressive schools from 1979 (Horwitz, 1979) reviews the literature on open classrooms of progressive schools in 1970's USA and finds out that the open classrooms do not result in loss of academic proficiency in the school subject, and there is a gain in terms of initiative, skill in dealing with problems, and social participation in those classes.

On the other hand, some research findings suggest that alternative pedagogies do not bring positive developmental outcomes (Cox and Rownlands, 2000, Lopata et al, 2005). Upon the inconsistency, Lillard (2012) examined the implementation fidelity in the Montessori schools and compared high fidelity classic Montessori programs, lower fidelity Montessori programs that included conventional school activities, and conventional programs. Pre and post test on academic and socials skills are used at the beginning and end of the program. The results indicate that the students in high fidelity classic programs have significantly higher outcomes than others in the results of executive function, reading, math, vocabulary, and social problem-solving which suggests that higher fidelity implementation brings better outcomes.

There are a few researches done on the description and outcomes of Waldorf pedagogy which suggest positive outcomes as well. Randoll and Peters (2015) have reviewed the results of surveys of German Waldorf Schools and concluded that in

Waldorf schools, the learning environment is holistic as opposed to the public Germany schools' curricula with disconnected facts, and students appreciate teaching as meaningful.

Dahlin (2010) compared beliefs and values related to civic and moral issues between students in Swedish mainstream and Waldorf schools at the age of 15-16 and 18-19. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative analyses of survey data from a strategic sampling of schools. Students received problems with no given answers. The data is analyzed inductively and thematically and the results indicate that while the interest and engagement in social and moral questions were similar for the younger group, Waldorf students showed more engagement and interest in those areas than the other group in the older group. Furthermore, Waldorf students show more positive attitudes in both age group. Dahlin argues that the results show that Waldorf schools foster active citizens with a strong democratic ethics however the parental influence might as well be a factor.

Ida Oberman (2007) investigates the relevance of Waldorf education for public urban school reform. The researcher analyzes survey data from over 500 graduates of private U.S. Waldorf schools, review of documents from the Gates Foundation, and staff-interview and student-achievement data from four public Waldorf-methods schools. The results indicate that graduates with more years of Waldorf reported greater influence on their ability to do independent analysis such as thinking critically, forming judgments, challenging assumptions, and viewing a wider context, also reported greater influence on their ability to serve as global citizens with more interest in different views and cultures. Moreover, the students in the study's four California case study public Waldorf methods elementary schools match the top ten of peer sites on the 2006 California test scores and outperform the average of their peers statewide. According to teacher, administrator and mentor reports, they achieve these high test scores by focusing on the 3 Rs - rigor, relevance, and relationship rather than on rote learning and test prep.

A research by University of West England (2005) surveyed 21 Waldorf schools in England and used on-site structured interviews. The results point out to some characteristics of Waldorf schools in 3 dimensions:

a) Curriculum. Including the National Curriculum, Waldorf schools also teach science through observation, imagination and the engagement of pupils' artistic features, emphasis on crafts, importance to art and aesthetics.

b) National tests. National tests are regarded as unhelpful and taking time away from teaching Waldorf curriculum. Assessment is integral. However, the test results of Waldorf students are noted to be good pass rates.

c) Pedagogy. Both the mainstream and Waldorf education traditions in England regard the individual child as important and aims to educate the whole child. However, Waldorf schools take a particular perspective in that the teacher's role is sacred; s/he grows the child's spirit, curriculum and pedagogy are tailored by children's different phases of development, curriculum activities are not for utility but for developing the child's spirit, and each teacher's artistry, own autonomy and also authority on children until puberty is emphasised.

Two studies from Turkey show superior outcomes of Montessori pre-schools. The children in Montessori school significantly scored better on creativity, fluency, flexibility, detaility and originality at verbal and painting tasks given to them compared to the students in traditional schools (Şahintürk, 2012). However, it should be noted that Montessori school was a private school while the other school was a public school. The study did not consider any possible entry level differences between the two groups of the students, which might be a confound variable. Another comparative experimental study in Konya showed that the Montessori Method made positive contribution to preschool children's self care skills and it was more efficient than Ministry of National Education Pre-school Education Program about the personal care and cleaning, eating, resting, wearing skills (Bayar, 2015). It should be noted that children in the two groups receive education from the same private institution, but half of them receive standard MoNE program while the other receives Montessori education. Another study (Selçuk, 2016) made at the same preschool showed that Montessori method affects kindergarten children's large

muscle skills more positively and is also more effective in terms of large muscle skills.

On the other hand, a research by Larsson et al (2012) shows poorer academic outcomes for U.S. Waldorf schools. 20 public Waldorf schools in California, the United States were compared to their comparison schools by their district standardized test scores in Reading and Maths. The results suggest that Waldorf schools provided a slower academic build-up resulting in poorer test scores in the lower grades followed by higher levels of advanced performance in the 8th grade. Nevertheless, parent comments are positive. According to quantitative content analysis of parent comments, public Waldorf is a more holistic approach with greater emphasis on the arts, community and developmentally appropriate practice. The researchers argued that standard measures of school quality may misjudge the effectiveness of holistic education particularly with regards to academics.

Another study by Eyles et al. (2015) investigated charter schools in the United States, free schools in Sweden and academy schools in England and the results suggests that they can improve student performance in certain settings.

A qualitative study by Karakuş (2017) investigates village institutions through interviewing five institute graduates. The study shows that the graduates perceived their entry to institute as a turning point from their poor rural life to a more satisfying structured daily life.It was not only the students who were transformed. When the students graduated, they also transformed the village they were appointed by starting production, building schools, educating the adults on literacy, introducing cultural activities such as drama performances and reading hours.

2.2.2. Research on Challenges of Implementing Innovative and Alternative Schools

Alternative schools are known with their innovative curriculum and instructional processes. However, those innovative characteristics bring challenges as well. A multiple case study on innovative schools by Gilles and Hargreaves (2006) suggests that innovative schools have a weak record of sustaining success over time because

of attrition of change, pressure and envy in the surrounding district, and standardized reform.

One of the schools, Lord Byron, which was defined as the most innovative school in the district in 1973, turned to a typical conventional high school with those influences:

- After the charismatic founder's left, the management was left to people who were inconsistent with the democratic, innovative, and egalitarian values of the school.
- And with the growth of the school, the feeling of family was lost, the sense of community weakened, and many teachers lacked the philosophy of the school.
- Though parents accepted the student-centered philosophy which also caused high expectation, loose pedagogy and unsupervised spare periods felt outside children caused the school to work on public relations. The school did reforms to appease critics and introduced traditional programs. At the end, the school was closed completely.

The second school, Durant was an alternative high school found in 1970s with multidisciplinary innovative nonhierarchical structure, close family-like atmosphere which aimed to attract alienated students from different backgrounds and races. It had a successful beginning. However, it faced threat of closure by the conservative school district management after a while. Therefore, like Lord Byron, it compromised and introduced a more traditional program. Most of the later students consisted of the underperforming violent students who saw the school as a "last gate". External accountability mandates increased; the school size increased, and it turned to a magnet school, and as a result, the sense of community was lost (Gilles and Hargreaves, 2006).

Blue Mountain, a learner centered, leadership-shared high school mostly for Eastern Indians shared the same threats of attrition, succession of leadership, district and community pressure, and standardized reform (Gilles and Hargreaves, 2006).

The findings are supported by findings on alternative schools in Asia-Pasific region (Nagata, 2007). Nagata found out that the public agencies imposes standards and accreditation on alternative schools. While accreditation gives the social credibility for the schools, it cause them to lose their own uniqueness. In addition, the governments take an authoritarian stand against alternative school, and many schools around the world faced closure orders and court trials (Nagata, 2007).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, research questions, study design, the setting, the participants, data collection procedures, data analysis, validity and reliability, ethical issues and the researcher's position are presented.

3.1. Research Questions

The study aims to explore the basic components of alternative education that takes place at the school, the experiences and perceptions of the stakeholders in relation to the educational experiences at the school, and understand what kind of challenges are experienced during the process. To this end, the research questions of the study are determined as:

- What are the main characteristics of alternative education implemented in the school?
- How do teachers perceive alternative education in relation to learning, teaching, and professional development?
- How do administrators perceive alternative education in relation to school management and decision-making processes in the school?
- What are the challenges of implementing alternative education and how are these challenges dealt with?

3.2. Study Design

This study is designed as an illustrative (aka descriptive) qualitative single case study. The underlying epistemological philosophy of this study is interpretive (aka constructivist) approach. In this approach, it is assumed that the reality is socially constructed and there is no single observable reality. There are multiple realities of a single event. Researchers are viewed as constructors of knowledge. In interpretative studies, the aim is to describe, understand, and interpret the phenomena. The reality is context-bound (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). However, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, different epistemological orientations might intersect in a study, which is also true for this study. Besides being interpretivist, the study also has post positivist orientation. Although there are multiple realities and the reality is context-bound, the researcher of this paper also acknowledges that it is possible to distinguish between more and less plausible claims by using empiric evidence (Patton, 2015).

Based on this philosophical foundation, the study employs qualitative research method. In qualitative research, the focus is on process, understanding, and the meaning. The overall purpose of qualitative research is to understand how people perceive experiences. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection. The data is acquired inductively; the bits of information from observation, documents, and interviews are combined into a larger theme. The data is also richly descriptive in the forms of quotes, pictures, field notes to support the findings. (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

From different types of qualitative research methods, a single case study is chosen as the most appropriate one for this study. As stated by Marshall and Rossman (2006), little-known or innovative systems are best understood by qualitative case study by exploring the context, setting, and participants' frame of reference since human actions are strongly influenced by the setting they occur and therefore they should be studied in real-life context.

As stated by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016) case studies are used for deeper investigation of factors about individuals, environment, events, and states. Similarly, Merriam (2009) states that case study is used for extreme, unique, special cases.

There are also different types of case studies; illustrative (aka descriptive), exploratory, cumulative, and critical instance case studies. The illustrative case studies are used in order to inform the audience about a phenomenon that was unknown before. The illustrative case study describes a situation and makes unfamiliar familiar (Hayes et al., 2015).

Anatolia Elementary School is one of the few cooperative alternative elementary schools in Turkey with its innovative pedagogy. Therefore, I am interested in representing a holistic picture of this unique school by exploring the actions in the system, perspectives of stakeholders, and its context. To this end, I have chosen illustrative qualitative single case study method for this study.

Illustrative Qualitative Single-Case Study

Initial Phase	**Data Collection**	**Data Analysis**
Investigating the school website	Observations (40 hours)	Transcribing the interviews
Initial meeting with the school coordinator	Document collection	Document analysis
Determining research questions	Teacher interviews (N=9)	Coding and creating the codebook
Creating data collection instruments	Administrator interview	Writing up

Figure 1. Study Design

3.3. Setting

This section describes the school's physical setting, history and background briefly. The data to describe the school setting is collected through triangulation of emerging documents, fieldnotes and observation.

Anatolia Alternative Elementary School is located in the outskirts of South Ankara with 24 students at Kindergarten and 28 at Elementary level. The school was founded in 2015 by parents as a cooperative elementary school. The school is a one-floor three-building small school with a play garden surrounded by rurals of the city. At the biggest building, the school has a class for each elementary grades, one class for English class, a teacher's room, a manager's room, a psychological counsellor room, and a small library all in one building. On the right to this main building, there is another building for nursery classes. On the left, there is a small building with kitchen and tables in it.

The schools has 9 teachers, all hold undergraduate teaching degrees from Turkish universities. The school board consists of all parents whose children are on education. The parents are middle-class white collar working parents mostly with higher education degrees. There is one child whose parents are working class. This child receives full scholarship for his tuition.

The school' mission is stated to enable children to realize themselves, to be governed by participatory democracy, and be ecologically balanced and not to pursue commercial interests.

3.4. Participants

The participants of the study consist of the teachers (N=9) and the school administrator(N=1). All hold undergraduate degrees from education faculties of Turkish universities.

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The school's all academic staff were interviewed for the study. An outline of 9 teachers' and one administrator's demographics can be seen at the table below:

Table 1
Participants

Teacher's pseudo names	Teacher's role	Years of experience at the institution	Background
Berna	Preschool teacher	3 years	7 years of previous experience at private and public schools
Şeyma	English	5 months	Novice teacher
Aylin	Elementary school teacher	5 months	9 years of teaching experience at private schools
Deniz	Elementary school teacher	2 years	Previous experience in teaching drama
Narin	Physical education teacher	2 years	2 years of experience as swimming trainer, lifeguard, summer courses in private schools
Hülya	Part time elementary school teacher	5 months	Previous experience as educational volunteer and teaching at after school courses
Özge	Preschool teacher	3 years	Previous teaching experience in private & public schools
Kemal	Elementary school teacher	5 months	Previous experience as educational volunteer
Esra	Psychological counsellor	5 months	Novice teacher with dual BA in psychological counseling and special education
Meral	School administrator	2 months	7 years of biology teaching at private high schools

Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016) state that in general, random sampling is not necessary since qualitative studies and case studies in this context are not intended to generalize to the school. Researchers work with all populations or if not possible, they use purposive sampling methods.

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection for the study included collecting documents, interviewing the internal stakeholders, observing the school site and the classes and fieldnotes. The development stage of the procedure is detailed below.

Initially, as the researcher, I contacted the school association's coordinators, and a telephone conference was conducted for one hour. During this conference, the researcher introduced herself, the research focus and questions, the plans of data collection and methods. The respondents reported their willingness to take part in this study, so they could evaluate their system, too. I required some documents such as policy papers, meeting minutes, etc. They informed me that I could check the association and school cooperative protocols and send email if I have any further questions.

Later, I started with analyzing the protocol, weekly school program, and alternative education evaluation form. Those documents provided me with the initial knowledge about how the alternative school system works in general, so I could focus interview schedules and observation form (See. Appendix I, II, and III).

Then, I prepared a one-page document including time frame, purpose, data collection plan, and confidentiality to inform the school. The school approved the study at their School Management Committee which consisted of the teachers, the school administrator, and the parents.

After receiving the consent, I started the data collection process at the school. I visited the school for a month every two days. First, I observed each elementary class for the whole school day as well as breakfast and lunch time at the kitchen, the garden and teachers' room during the break times. I also conducted short interviews with teachers after the class observations in order to gain further perspective to illuminate the themes emerging from the observations. After the observations, I conducted an interview with every teacher and the administrator at the school according to their available time ranging from 45 minutes to 90 minutes.

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3.6. Data Collection Methods

The methods of observation, interviews, and document analysis were used in order to collect data for the study. This section details the rationale as well as the details of each data collection method that was used for the study.

3.6.1. Observation

Observations in qualitative study have several affordances. An observer can notice that become routine to the participants, observations can be used to triangulate the data from other sources, observation provides contextual information thus can be used as reference point for interviews (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Observer involvement can vary on a continuum from non-participant observer to complete immersion to the setting. Another continuum is that observer can be overt or covert which means that the researcher can fully disclose her role or there might be no disclosure of her role. There is also no predetermined observation duration; it can range from one single observation to months or years of long term observation until the new information is scarce and information is saturated (Patton, 2002; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Observation for this study was made during the second quarter of educational year. Prior to the fieldwork, formal consent was acquired by school committee consisting of school management and parents. The whole school days were observed in five different sessions for total of 40 hours until no new information emerged related to the research questions. During this process, breakfast times, circles, elementary classes, lunch time at kitchen, workshops, interactions in teachers' room and interactions at school garden, and school parliament were observed with the focus on setting, interaction, and activities. An observation guide with an expert review was used prior to data gathering. (See Appendix III for observation guide.) The observation guide states the four dimensions to be focused during the observation: school setting, school structure, interactions in school, and school activities.

As suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), descriptives notes about setting, people, activities as well as direct quotations were taken with a seperate column for observer reflection in order to be used for subsequent data analysis.

The researcher role was overt to all participants during the study. I introduced myself to all stakeholders before starting the observation with stating the aim briefly as understanding the school characteristics. While I observed the activities most of the time without fully participating to them, at times I was a participant observer during breakfast, lunch time, and circles.

3.6.2. Interviews

Interviews in qualitative research is needed in order to enter into participants' perspective and learn about their experiences (Patton, 2002).Observations provide limited data because they only provide information at a specific time. Moreover, (Patton, 2002) observations, thoughts, and intentions cannot be observed. Therefore, observations are needed to be triangulated with more in depth-rich data, which is provided through in-depth interview data.

Interviews can be divided into three by their structure: Highly structured, semi structured, and unstructured. (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The semi structured interviews are the most common (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). An interview guide is used with the list of questions and issues to be explored during the interview. Interview guide provides topics within the interviewer to illuminate the subject. The interviewer remains free in building a question in the specific subject, wording questions spontaneously, having a conversational style but within the focused predetermined subject (Patton, 2002). On the other hand, unstructured interviews consist of questions that are exploratory (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). They will flow from the immediate context upon observing the setting (Patton, 2002). Unstructured interviews are used when the researcher does not know enough about the phenomenon (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

A semi-structured interview with the teachers, a semi-structured interview with the administrators, and unstructured interviews with the teachers were done for this study. Unstructured interviews took place after classroom observations in order to illuminate the occurrences during the observation in the setting. The semi-structured interviews with the teachers and the school administrator aimed to answer the research question 2 and 3 respectively (See Appendix I for the teacher interview schedule and Appendix II for the school administrator interview schedule). The interview schedules consist of several questions separated by their themes. The schedule was reviewed by a subject and methods expert.

All the interviews were done in person at the school. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled according to the teachers' and the administrators' free time at the school. Unstructured teacher interviews made immediately after the observation or during the break times of the observation. In total 10 interviews were made which lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. All interviews were audio-taped and later fully transcribed by the researcher for later analysis.

3.6.3. Document Analysis

Documents were collected as a complementary data source to interviews and observations. Emerging official documents were gathered throughout the study such as school manifesto, protocols, schedule, programs, and student artifacts.

The following chart summarizes the data collection sources and methods in relation to the research questions:

Table 2
Data Collection Methods

Research question	Data collection method and sources
Q1. What are the basic components of alternative education implemented in the school?	Documents, observation, field notes unstructured teacher interviews, semi structured teacher interviews, semi structured administrator interview

Table 2 (cont'd)

Research question	Data collection method and sources
Q2. How do teachers perceive alternative education in relation to learning, teaching, and professional development?	Semi structured teacher interviews
Q3. How do administors perceive alternative education in relation to management and decision making processes in the school?	Semi structured administrator interview
Q4. What are the challenges of implementing alternative education and how are these challenges dealt with?	Observation, semi structured teacher interviews, semi structured administrator interview

3.7. Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) asserts that data analysis in qualitative study should begin early. She indicates that the data analysis does not come after the data collection is ended but it is intertwined with it. Thus, collected data will be more vivid in the researcher's mind, and at each analysis, s/he will be able to answer any ambiguity or follow up further questions at the fore-coming stages of data collection. Therefore, after the end of each collected data by documents and interviews, I started the data analysis.

Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016) describes two important types of analyses for qualitative research: descriptive analysis and content analysis. While descriptive analysis answers the question "what" and describes the respondents' views, content analysis enables us to explain "why" and "how" and includes the interpretation of the researcher. In the research, I used content analysis in order to answer the research question and be able to conceptualize the findings.

From the two types of content analyses methods, inductive coding method is used in this study. Inductive analysis refers to detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by the researcher. In deductive analysis, the data analysis tests whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theory, or hypotheses identified by the researcher. Conversely, inductive analysis allows researcher to explore significant themes and

create meanings emerging from the raw data without the restraints of predetermined structures (Thomas, 2006).

Inductive coding method is chosen for this study since the study is not based on a specific theory or theories and nor does the researcher have any expected outcomes from the data. The data analysis is guided by the research questions which identified the topics to be investigated. The transcripts were read several times to identify themes and categories by the researcher. All the transcripts were read by me (SG) and a subsample was read by thesis advisor HA. The transcripts coded by SG and revised upon discussion with HA. A coding frame was developed. The coding frame was revised several times based on the new coded transcripts to focus the relevance of the analysis. All the findings arise directly from the analysis of the raw data, not from a priori expectation or models. See Appendix V for an example of coded raw data.

3.8. Transferability, Credibility, and Trustworthiness

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) argues that qualitative researchers are regarded as unreliable and lacking in validity and generalizability, therefore qualitative researchers developed strategies to address validity and reliability. First, human subjects permission was obtained from METU Human Subjects Ethical Board with the document number 28620816/06 (See Appendix VI). I indicated the methods I found feasible for my study below.

3.8.1. External Validity: Transferability

In order to address transferability of the study, think descriptions and maximum variation in the sample are used.

Merriam (2009) and LeCompte and Goetz (1982) suggest thick description for the possibility of being able to transfer a setting to others. Thick description refers to a great amount of descriptive and detailed account of the study (Merriam, 2016). In this study, the researcher has provided rich details about the setting, participants,

school characteristics, structure, activities, and instruction. Will we see rich descriptions in the text?

The principle of maximum variation in the sample was planned for the study in order to capture a pluralist and holistic picture of the case. However, since it was feasible, the researcher interviewed the whole population of the teachers and school administrator at the school with the objective of capturing all related experiences and perspectives that will provide a holistic picture of the case.

3.8.2. Internal Validity: Credibility

Merriam (2009) and LeCompte and Goetz (1982) state that internal validity issue is concerned with how much the research reflects the reality. Although there is not a one-dimensional truth in the qualitative research, it is expected that the researcher will be consistent and explain how s/he provides this coherence. (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016, p. 271) The researcher has used the following strategies suggested in the literature in order to increase the credibility of the research.

The first strategy used is triangulation. Two types of triangulation is used throughout the study: Data triangulation and methodological triangulation (Guion et al., 2011).

Data triangulation involves using different sources of information in order to increase the validity of a study. During the analysis stage, feedback from the stakeholder is compared to determine areas of agreement as well as areas of divergence (Guion et al., 2011). In this study, teacher interviews were triangulated by comparing the data from different teachers' interviews. Thus, the convergences and discrepancies were compared during the analysis. Later, those similarities and differences across different teacher interviews were explicitly written in the results section of the study.

Method triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods of data collection in the same study about the same phenomenon (Guion et al., 2011). Document analysis, interviews, observation, and field notes were used and compared in this study to see if similar results are found.

The following table indicates which type of triangulation is used for each research question.

Table 3
Triangulation

Research question	Triangulation method
Q1. What are the basic components of alternative education implemented in the school?	Method triangulation: Documents, observation, field notes, interviews Data triangulation: the teachers interviews and the school administrator interview
Q2. How do teachers perceive alternative education in relation to learning, teaching, and professional development?	Data triangulation: 9 individual teacher interviews
Q3. How do administors perceive alternative education in relation to management and decision making processes in the school?	Triangulation is not available. There is only one administrator of the school.
Q4. What are the challenges of implementing alternative education and how are these challenges dealt with?	Method triangulation: Documents, observation, field notes, interviews Data triangulation: the teachers interviews and the school administrator interview

Another strategy considered was participant researchers (Le Compte, 1982,) or respondent validation (Merriam, 2009) In order to minimize the possibility that the researcher misinterprets data (Merriam, 2009, p. 217) (Le Compte, 1982, p42) the researcher shared the analyses with the respondents and requested for validation. However, the respondents have not replied.

The third strategy is related to the integrity of the researcher. As suggested by Merriam (2009), the researcher took reflective notes before and during the fieldwork about her biases, assumptions and position in order to show the reader how she might have arrived to conclusions.

Another strategy is peer review. Some of the raw data was also analyzed by a curriculum specialist. One of the structured teacher interview data was cross coded

with the curriculum specialist. Furthermore, the themes and the coding book were devised multiple times upon the discussions with the curriculum specialist.

3.8.3. Trustworthiness

In quantitative research, reliability is concerned with giving consistent results when the study is replicated, which cannot be expected in qualitative research (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). In qualitative research, reliability is to clarify the researcher's own position (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016) and to give clear information on how the data is gathered and analyzed, and how it is being investigated. (Merriam, 2009).

Through the thesis, I aimed to explicitly write the process of data gathering, instrument formation, analysis and all the procedure and my perspective and stance as the researcher. The following table summarizes the validity and reliability methods used in the study.

Table 4
Transferability, Credibility and Dependability

Transferability	Credibility	Dependability
Thick description	Triangulation	Clarity
Maximum variation sampling (the whole population)	Integrity of the researcher Peer review	Researcher's position

3.9. Researchers' Perspective

I have been teaching for the last 7 years. Most of my teaching experience are constrained to factory-like schools, which are mostly teacher-centered with a highly central curricula, large school populations and standardized teaching methods across students and classes, curricula, and exams. As a teacher, I have always believed that this factory-like school system I am in is dysfunctional because it does not address to personal student needs, interests, abilities and does not empower the teacher since also the teacher autonomy is limited, which I believe that it is not to learner's best interest since they often deal with something they do not enjoy, not motivating, not related to their real life experiences, or simply not at the level of their skill. Those impacted my teaching enjoyment in a negative way. It might have meant that I could

highly have regard alternative education which could have affected my approach to the topic in a positively biased perspective, so I took precautions. I kept a reflective journal to be aware of my own perspectives, judgments, and biases during the study. I was also a complete outsider to the setting. I had neither any experience of alternative schooling or elementary school experience professionally. This brought the perspective of an outsider.

At the beginning of the study, my purpose was to focus only on curricular and instructional processes. However, after I started the fieldwork, I realized that out of curricular and beyond instructional aspects of the school such as democratic governance, family-type atmosphere, parent-cooperative structure and its dynamics, and the educational philosophy of the stakeholders were very major parts of what makes the school alternative and they have big impact on instructional and teaching process. If I had discarded them, I would have not been able to draw a holistic picture of the school's alternative education. Therefore, the study's focus involves those structural and organizational aspects as well.

3.10. Timeline

Table 5
Timeline

The parts completed	The date
The determination of research topic and research questions	2016 June
Preliminary contact with the research site	2016 September
Submitting research proposal	2017 May
Human Research Ethics Committee Approval	2017 October
Data Collection	2017 December
Data Deciphering	2017 December - 2018 April
Data Analysis	2018 April - 2019 January
Concluding thesis writing process	2019 May

The study was designed in the 2016-2017 academic year, data were collected during 2017-2018 fall semester, and data analysis and thesis writing process lasted from

2017-2018 spring to 2018-2019 spring semester. The following table displays the study timeline.

3.11. Limitations of the Study

The study was a single case study designed and conducted by a single researcher. The data collected is limited to the observation of inside and outside class activities in one month, and the perceptions of the stakeholders are limited to those of the teachers' and the school administrator. The parents and the students are not interviewed. However, the thick descriptions of student behaviors within learning environment are provided to provide a holistic picture.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of each research question. The results are explained into four sections: The characteristics of alternative education at Anatolia Alternative Elementary School, the perceptions of the teachers in relation to learning and teaching at the school, the school administrator's perception of the school in relation to management and decision giving process, and the challenges of implementing alternative education. The results are presented consecutively.

4.1. Characteristics of Alternative Education at Anatolia Alternative School

This part presents the outcomes in relation to the values of alternative education at Anatolia Alternative School. The results are obtained through triangulating the data from the stakeholders, observation of the classrooms and school site, fieldnotes and documents. The results emerged into five main themes: democratic school governance, freedom of expression, sense of community, child-centered education, and ecological stance. The results will be presented respectively.

4.1.1. Democratic School Governance

Democratic school governance is one of the core values of the school and presents itself at different stages of the school from school level governance to classroom level. Two main principles appear in relation to democratic governance: horizontal organizational structure and decision-making process based on consensus rather than majority of votes.

The position of all stakeholders in the organizational schema is horizontal as opposed to hierarchical structure. This is not limited to but even visible at the daily

communication among the stakeholders. For example, everybody calls each other with second singular pronoun and their first name, including how children call their teachers. It can be clearly seen that the principle of horizontal structure is internalized by the stakeholders. One indicator is that the school administrator and teachers look comfortable being called only by their first names and second singular pronoun by the children.

Another aspect of horizontal scheme is seen by how the role of the school administrator is defined. The school administrator's main role is being a bridge among the parents and teacher. The administrator does not dictate decisions to the teachers. They give decisions together and the administrator starts the decision-making conversations by asking the teachers' opinion such as *"How do you think the new construction should be like? How would you like to organize the panel board?"* The administrator does not use her own initiative to give judgment. Rather, she acts according to the decision given together by the stakeholders.

The second prominent principle of democratic governance at the school is consensus versus majority of votes. Consensus is valued for every decision even when it is not applicable for every issue discussed. Meral gives an account of how compromise is valued:

> Even if a suggestion is accepted by a majority of votes, still a compromise is sought. The majority is careful with the language they use not to get the upper hand. For example, they ask opposers 'What would you ask for to accept this suggestion? 'Everybody's suggestion, everybody's acceptance is very important.

The parents, the teachers, and the school administrator take part in the decision-making process through the school management board. Different commissions of parents are formed such as education commission, construction commission, food commission, etc. The parents volunteer for those comission, often based on their profession. For example, there are parents whose occupations is teaching at education commission. A commission of parents is responsible for recruitment of the school staff. However, not only parents but also the teachers take part in recruitment decision of a new school administrator. After parents, the teachers make

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an interview with the applicant and state what they expect and need from a school administrator.

Children also take part in school management through school parliament held every Friday morning at gym. All children, teachers, and the administrator sit on the ground by forming a circle. Before Friday, one responsible teacher collects agenda items from everyone by visiting each class. Those items can be about any issue related to the daily organization of the school such as what is to be taught at workshops, whether to allow the animals inside the school, or where to leave the shoes when entering to the school building. Then, she brings the agenda items to the parliament on Friday mornings. Another teacher who is responsible from facilitating the parliament meeting announces the items of the agenda respectively. Then, those who want to speak raise their hand.

The facilitating teacher gives a puppet to the first person who wants to talk. When finished, the first person gives the puppet to any of the people who raise their hands. And the second person finishes her talk, she gives the puppet to another person, and so on. Thus, who will speak is not determined by a teacher or only one person which indicates 'equal participation in decision making.' Finally, the facilitator teacher summarizes the suggestions. When one solution is settled on, she asks "*Does that solution work for everyone?*" If there is an opposition, the discussion goes on. If no one opposes, the solution is put into effect starting from the following week. In school parliaments, everyone has equal weight in giving decisions regardless of their position. A preschool child's thought is respected as much as that of the school administrator.

When preschool children raise their hand to speak, they often speak unrelatedly to the subject, but still their participation is encouraged. For example, when whether the animals should be allowed in the school garden was discussed, one preschool student received the puppet. He started his talk by *"I ate spaghetti today''*, and he did not say anything related to animals at all. Nonetheless, everyone listened to his speech in silence. Two third grader girls wanted to laugh, but they held themselves

and tried to hide their face. This incident indicates that children are also aware of the importance of respecting and 'encouraging raising one's own voice'.

The same democratic values hold true inside the classrooms as well by encouragement of 'children's active participation to problem and conflict solving'. For instance, children actively give decisions about how to solve peer conflict and how to establish discipline rules. One incident during the classroom observations proved this. At third grades, the two teachers had difficulty managing the class during the day. There was too much noise. At the end of the day, the teachers brought this issue to the class and asked for the children's opinion about how to solve the noise problem in the class. The children produced ideas such as asking for permission before talking, talking slowly to the peers during the class, ringing a warning bell, etc. The teachers eliminated some of the ideas by saying *"We tried this before. It doesn't work."* If they had concerns about an idea given, they indicated it: *'Are you sure you want to take this responsibility of managing your friends?'* After the ideas were gathered, the teachers brought them together and asked: *"Okay. Here is the suggestion you gave to solve the noise problem. Do you want to try this? Does that work for everybody?"* Adults do not impose solutions for the children. Children themselves seek the solutions that work for them.

4.1.2. Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression is given great importance at the school. Both children's and teachers' freedom of expression is respected. There are several proofs of freedom of expression underscored by the communication in class and extracurricular activities and decision-making process among the teachers and the school administrator, which will be detailed below. Even the interviews made for this study reveal the freedom of expression since the participants looked completely comfortable in expressing their critical ideas about the school and other stakeholders.

One notable feature of the freedom of expression is that children are able to 'freely criticize their teachers'. They remind the rules to the teachers when they violate it, and the teachers welcome those criticism. To illustrate, in one instance the students

warn the teacher for talking loudly at the class which breaks the class agreement. The teacher explains that she thinks she has to since she speaks to the whole class. Then, she adds: *"But okay, I will be careful the next time I speak."* This indicates that teachers are hold accountable by the rules. In another similar instance, a group of students try to take a dog inside the school garden. When Kemal sees it as the garden guard that day, he prevents them saying that the dog is not allowed inside the school borders. Then, the children oppose him by stating that it is not a decision that Kemal can give alone. The issue is then brought to the parliament to be discussed all together democratically. In the parliament, Kemal introduces the problem by saying

> They were right. I cannot give this decision alone. However, they [the few students who tried to take the dog inside] cannot give this decision alone, either. We need to give the decision here all together.

This incident shows how the freedom of expression is respected and the democratic governance is internalized both by the teachers and the students. In another instance, the third graders study healthy eating during one of the class times. To introduce the topic, the teachers advocate consumption of organic food by telling them *"as you know, we consume organic food here at school"*. Then a few students oppose that they preach but the teachers themselves ordered fast food a day before for the teachers' meeting. Hulya acknowledges that it is true and gives her excuse for violating the rule. *"You are right. We were very busy and short of time that day. So, we ordered the food."* As those examples prove, the behaviors are justified to the children. The administrator, Meral, says *"Otherwise, the children will react."* Those incidents show that the children play an active role in protecting the core values of the school.

The freedom of expression reveals itself through 'open communication among the teachers' as well. Disagreement is seen as a natural part of the communication. To detail, in one instance Hulya wants to invite a trainer to the school for in-service training. After she gives a summary of who the trainer is and what he can provide, Meral tells that she would be interested in it. However, Seyma opposes by stating that she feels that it is unnecessary, and she disagrees to spend the training budget

for that trainer. Seyma asks her in a calm and respectful tone: *"Can you tell me why do you think this way? I won't try to convince you, I just want to understand you."* It is noteworthy that even Seyma is the most novice teacher at the school, she felt free to express his disagreement to the administrator's and a more experienced teacher's suggestion. When this disagreement was discussed, there was no visible tension at all. The teachers look comfortable when opposing each other and facing the oppositions.

4.1.3. Sense of Community

Sense of community is another important characteristic of the school. As McMillan and Chavis (1986) define sense of community means that members have a feeling of belonging. They share the feeling that members matter to one another and to the group as well as the faith that members' needs will be met through commitment to be together (McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

Sense of community is underscored by the relationship of stakeholders through their communication, cooperation versus competition, and how they show they value each other's wellbeing. It seems that the relationship among the stakeholders have gone beyond traditional parent-teacher roles. They feel a shared responsibility for the children. In one instance, a parent of a child needs to go away for the weekend, and she asks from Narin if she can look after the child. Narin accepts the request. This kind of devotion also depends on the personal boundaries of the individual teacher. Narin gives the account of the event:

> A parent called me. She asked if I could look after her child at the weekend when she needs to stay out of town because of her job. I did. But in that case, another teacher might say she cannot. I would ask why she wouldn't do it. She could say it is because of her private life. Another can say it is an extra job. Everyone can have different reasons. They can have different visions, differences, whatever. I can devote myself that far. It is not a problem for me. I cannot do it all the times though. I have a boundary as well. But we need to show the solidarity and support.

The idea of solidarity and support also occurs by creational time out of the school the parents and the teachers spend together. They spend creational time out of the school. For example, the teachers and other parents go to a celebration of one the

parents' cafe anniversary. This friendly relationship also help them to deal to get over the disputes at the school as Kemal states:

> We can sit with parents and have a drink somewhere. They can come to my apartment. I invited them before. I went to their apartments with different people. [...]We can discuss different topics. In school management board, you can clash with a parent because we need to decide on a matter. You have different views. But once we get out of the meeting, we walk out side by side in solidarity because we also have another relationship related to the school. So I have no negative experience.

Relationship between the teachers and the children are also beyond traditional teacher-student role. Their friendly relationship, interdependence, and care for each other indicate the signs of being a community. Even when the children have a dispute with their teachers one day, the next morning they hug the teacher when coming into the class. Another aspect of that sense of community can be seen through the changing roles between the teachers and students. For example, a child leads yoga during the lunch time for everyone who feels stressed out, and a group of children and teachers join her. Teachers see themselves learning together with the children, sometimes learning from the children. For instance, the third-grade teacher Hulya was learning English. One of her students who was born and raised in Britain was helping with her reading during break times. Those changing roles indicate a shared responsibility for growth and wellbeing of each member of the school regardless of their status or role.

Cooperation over competition is another major characteristic of the school in relation to the sense of community. Teacher - teacher and teacher - administrator relationship is cooperative. For instance, when one teacher tells that she does not feel good, the other can teach her class. The teachers share workload spontaneously, voluntarily, and willingly. The teachers do not compete or compare against each other. There is no proof of competition in fieldnotes or interviews related to either teachers' or children' performance or behavior. Kemal's statements support this observation:

> In other schools, the teacher is at his table. When he goes next to a child, the other children say *'Why don't you come next to me?!'* But it's not like that with us. We already sit very close all together. I don't have a table. I don't have a

chair. We are always together with the children. […] Also with the teachers, we never say your class is like this, my class is like that because a class is all of ours. Children are all of ours. The school is all of ours. Naturally, there is no sense of property, so there is nothing to cause conflict.

4.1.4. Child-Centered Education

Child-centered education mainly focuses on the learner (APA, 1997) and aims to enable the optimal development of a child's personality and competencies that aligns with the child's individual needs and requirements. To this end, child actively takes role in shaping learning methods in accordance with his/her individual learning requirements (Eder et al., n.d.).

Learning and teaching process at the school reveals that child-centered education is one of the major characteristics of the school. Two major themes appeared under child-centered education: Child-centered educational practices and characteristics of the child-centered instruction. The following sections gives a detail account on both themes.

a. Child-centered educational practices

Certain child-centered practices are embedded into the school curriculum across all grade levels. The triangulation of fieldnotes and interviews revealed five major child-centered educational practices: circles, school parliament, workshop, individualized weekly learning plan, and alternative evaluation. Each is explained below consecutively:

Circles. All students get together on the floor in a circle with the teacher as the first thing and the last thing of the day in the class. In the mornings, they talk about their past weekends or day, how they feel that day, and what they plan to do that day. In the evening circle, they reflect on the workshops they attend which is the last thing they do before the evening circle. If there is a problem in the class, it is also discussed in the circle. Circles are also followed by activities at different days such as "asking questions circle", "interesting information circle", handwork circle", "free day", etc. (See Figure 2). Some teachers also call "emergency situation circle" spontaneously in order to solve a classroom management problem collaboratively with the class.

Figure 2. The figure is taken from the board of 2nd grade. It displays the weekly program of circle activities. Circle activities take place right after the morning and evening circles during which the children share their emotions, plans, or reflection for the day. The teacher name is removed from the image due to privacy reasons

School parliament. The school parliament meeting takes place every Friday morning in order to discuss problems related to daily life at the school. All students, teachers and the school administrator make a circle at the sports hall of the school. Previously gathered problem items from each class are brought into agenda by a facilitator teacher. Then everyone speaks about their perspective about the issue. It does not matter if the suggestion comes from a student, teacher or the administrator. Everyone's idea is treated equally. After a number of people speak about the problem, a consensus is reached, and the decision is announced by the facilitator teacher.

Workshops. Workshops take place each afternoon led by either children or teachers. Some types are science (e.g. alternative energy resources), handwork, ecology (e.g. recycling, vegetable garden, compote, sports, etc (See Figure 3). Children are aimed to learn by doing during workshops by giving place to their choice and demands. Workshops are multi-aged, however; restrictions are made when seen necessary such as drama workshop. Workshops are multi-aged: children are not grouped by
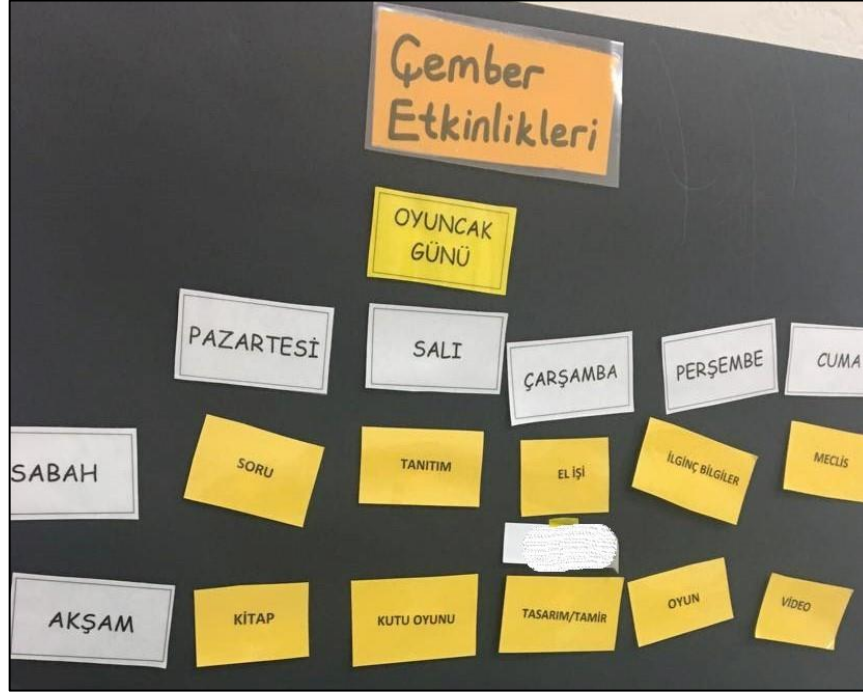
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their age or grade levels. Any child can join to any workshop s/he likes. During children-led workshops (See Figure 4), teachers are also present, however; their only role is physical support.

Figure 3. The picture displays the weekly program of the workshops. The sports and music classes take place during the workshop hours. Therefore, everyday there are two class of children who do not attend to workshops. It can be seen that some workshops last for the whole semester (drama, reading and writing, animals, language club, maths) but others last for shorter period of times. The teacher and children names are removed from the image due to privacy reasons

Figure 4. The picture displays the child-led workshop form. The form is filled out by the child who volunteers to conduct a workshop. A teacher accompanies to the child to provide physical help such as cutting papers. However, the child is responsible for the planning of the workshop as well as conducting it

Individualized weekly learning plan. Each week, students are given a weekly learning plan. In those plans, activities for the learning

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objectives of all academic subjects of the week are divided into three segments. There are three stars for each subject. The first activity with the first star includes the basic object of the subject and it is compulsory to complete it. The second and third stars reinforce the attainments of the first star, include higher-order skills, and integrates the learning objective at the first star to daily life. Lately, the third stars have been left blank for the student to create their own activity. After the students complete the first star of each subject, they can complete as many stars as they want (See Figure 5).

Figure 5. The picture displays an example of an individualized weekly learning plan of third graders. The weekly individualized plans include Turkish, mathematics, and science lessons. After the child completes her planned study, the teacher checks if she solved the questions correctly and then signs by each subject. The notes I took on the paper are removed since they were irrelevant

Alternative evaluation. Child evaluation that takes place at the school is characterized by one-hour individualized verbal feedbacks and descriptive written feedbacks. The children are given verbal feedback at the end of the first quarter and written feedback at the end of the second quarter of each semester. During the verbal feedback, the class teacher, sports teacher, music teacher, English teacher, and psychological counselor teacher all meet together with children one by one at a table. If the child asks, the parents also can join to the meeting. An overall evaluation of student's academic and social learning is reported to the child by the teachers. This evaluation includes the strengths of the child and areas of improvement *e.g. difficulty in focusing after break times.* The teachers give suggestions such as *"This semester, you have not contributed to the parliament much. You can give more suggestions."* Student is also asked if s/he has any feedbacks for the teachers. Written feedbacks consist of the same areas of learning. It describes the child's performance, learning, and improvement qualitatively.

There is some place for peer evaluation, too. The child who is leading a workshop is given written feedback by the attending children (See Figure 6).


Figure 6. Peer feedback form for child-led workshops. After the workshop, the attendees are given this form. They fill out this form and give it to the child who leads the workshop

b. Characteristics of the instruction

Child-centered education is characterized by children's freedom of choice and self-directed learning. Self-directed learning is underscored by self-planning, self-monitoring, child autonomy, and learning by inquiry.

Children have freedom of choice in many ways. They design their own workshop. They choose instructional activities by teachers offering them options or working stations. The children even can leave the class in order to attend another class if they want to. When she wants to do so, the teacher gives a class change form to be filled out by the teacher whose class the child is visiting (See Figure 7). For example, a second-grade child can join to the classes of a third class. Thus, some preschool kids were able to learn literacy by visiting the first-grade class.

Figure 7. Class change form is filled out by the teacher to give information about what the visitor child is doing during the class. Then, it is given to the class teacher of the child. Thus, the teacher is informed on the child's behavior and learning, and the child is monitored. The school name above was cut due to privacy reasons. And, the notes taken on the paper are removed since they were irrelevant.

The students have a range of different free decision to give. They can also decide if their parents can join to their verbal feedback. They choose which workshop to attend. If their freedom is violated, they can react. In one case, the drama workshop was multi-aged and optional like all other workshops. However, after a while, the workshop teachers saw that the multi-aged grouping did not work with drama. And they needed a minimum number of children to attend, which meant all fourth graders. Therefore, all fourth graders had to attend to drama workshop. After a few sessions, fourth grade children reacted to not being able to choose the workshop they want to attend. Upon the reaction, this compulsory attendance was cancelled since it was not aligned with the principle of freedom of choice.

Apart from those points pointed above, the level of children's freedom of choice differ from class to class according to their teacher's own vision. In second grade, the children sit by a seating plan pre-arranged by the teacher, Deniz. Deniz explains that at first, they were free to sit where they wanted, but because of classroom management issues, she then arranged the seating herself by giving justifications to the children. In third grade, however, the teachers Hulya and Aylin let the children sit wherever they want but warn when they cause distraction to others. During individual study time, the third-grade children are allowed to go out of the classroom and study at the library, even lay down by the windows during which one of the teachers accompany them and scaffolds their learning. At the second grade, drinking water at the class time is restricted while it is free at the third grade. Again, Deniz expected the children to raise their hands when they speak. Conversely, Hulya and Aylin opposed to the idea of raising hand or asking for permission to talk. They wanted children speak without asking for permission. Therefore, they ignored the children who raised their hands to speak. Hulya sees this application as an extension of egalitarian culture of the school:

> Rather than raising hands, I am against the behavior of giving one another permission to speak. We won't be on equal terms when we give children the right to speak. If the child needs to speak, he can. He doesn't have to ask it to us. You might have spoken at the same time. Wait or if you are very excited and need to speak, ask [permission from the person who is speaking] immediately. We are trying to breed it[this culture] but it is very difficult. Even in adults it is very difficult to do. We couldn't do it yet, but our ultimate aim is to create a space that everyone gives their own permission to speak.

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Deniz is also stricter at time management, too than Hulya and Aylin. The children are more disciplined, and they also discipline each other in this class. In one instance, the children warned each other to focus on the study during the class time. During the interview, Deniz explained this behavior: If they waste the class time, she compensates it at the break time. Therefore, she tells, the children remind each other to focus on work to avoid spending time in the class during the break time.

At third grade, there were diagnosed students. The teachers provided flexibility to those students in terms of discipline. For example, the child could go out of the class if he wanted to for a long period of time. Academic worries came later than psychological wellbeing. Deniz was overall stricter in class management. While being stricter, Deniz always justified her expectations and the rules in that class. When this difference of attitude is pointed out, Deniz highlights the importance of putting clear limits to children and explains her perspective of how this process developed in her class:

> At the first-grade last year, we had no rules or agreements with the children. Agreements emerged according to the problems we experienced. Everybody was talking, no one could listen to each other. How could we resolve this? One of the kids said we should talk by asking, or let's listen when someone is talking. Then we started making agreements with the kids. Then time passed, for example, violence in the classroom increased. They're hitting each other. Then we said this cannot go on like that. There are certain rules of living together, but we are experiencing problems in this way. We are experiencing conflicts. How can we solve this? They said we should not be violent. Then we put it into an agreement. This year, for example, we have come to the class, we had agreements last year and we continue with them this year. [I explain to the children that] we had difficulties without the agreements, so we continue to do so. Does anyone have an objection? Usually everyone accepts.

From the excerpt given above, it is seen that the problems regarding classroom management necessitated the rules and restrictions. It should be also noted that even the strictest teacher at the school does not dictate any rules. She asks children to resolve the problems, and it is always the children themselves who come up with the ideas for solutions. Moreover, all children's agreement is sought.

Upon her experience, Deniz concludes that clear boundaries are necessary for children. While she finds putting limits necessary, she always justifies them to children:

> I advocate the idea that the child [should] know the limits in advance, then stretch it. But in the beginning, he [should] see that there is a limit ... Maybe I did it because I saw the third graders. I do not know, either, because it's making a different impact. If we respect the children and do not use a violent language, then I expect the same thing from children, too. I believe that the boundaries are good at this point, and that it is good for us. That's why the boundaries in our class were stricter. Yes, you can do it, or you might want to do something, but you need tell your need to do it first. You can't go out of class whenever you want. You can go, but you can say that: *"I need to be alone. So I will spend time out there. I am letting you know."* Because when you are not in the classroom, I might wonder if something happens to you, I won't be able to help you, so I'm telling you not to leave the classroom without telling me. I'm telling children about this; I'm letting them know.

'Self-directed learning' is another distinctive characteristic of child-centered education at the school. Its prominent aspects can be summarized as planning and controlling one's own learning, looking up resources to learn, learning by inquiry, and child autonomy.

Children are expected to plan their own learning. In morning circles, children plan the rest of their day. They tell what they will study that day. They also plan their own weekly study plan by filling out individualized weekly plans (See Figure 5). At evening circles, they evaluate the school day. Mostly they talk about what they learned from the workshops since it is the last thing they do before the evening circles. Their reflection and feedback also serve as an informal evaluation for the person who leads the workshop.

'Learning by inquiry' versus direct instruction is another important aspect. However, the amount of direct instruction taking place varies from teacher to teacher. At the second grade, direct instruction has its place. The teacher, Deniz lectures in front of the whiteboard or uses video lectures. On the other hand, at third grade, the teachers Hulya and Aylin do not directly teach almost at all. Instead, they use inquiry questions. For example, during the individual study time, a child studies the subject of light. After a while, he exclaims *"Hulya, it is too difficult!"* Hulya

doesn't explain him how the light works. Instead, she suggests *"Then how about you do it this way?"* and she points out to the example in the book. When the child does not understand it either, Hulya gives another example. Another child does an activity on the study paper. The result is supposed to be a password. He asks Hulya if the password will come out. Hulya says *"I do not know whether the password will come out, you will see. You need to explore. You always want support from me. You have a lot of resources. We all have the capacity and ability to do that."*

Instead of lecturing, Hulya and Aylin ask children to learn from other resources such as books, videos, and software program, or they ask Socratic method-like questions to the students that direct them to learning. Hulya gives an example of how she facilitates the child's learning with questions:

> For example, the kid wants my support. I ask questions by which he can reach to the information. For example, I ask *"So you can't see it in the dark. What do you need?"* He says *"I need light."* I do not tell him *"Some lights exist by their own, some are handmade, some are artificial...."* I want him to find out: I tell *"You can look at their word origin, what does natural mean? what is artificial? You can think of your daily life."*

Child autonomy' is highlighted. When children set their own goals at weekly study plans, the accountability is ensured by the teachers by mentoring children on planning, studying, and reaching their goals. If the children do not reach to their goals, additional assignments are given, or the teachers make a meeting with the children to help them plan the following weeks. Autonomy is encouraged in terms of social behavior, too. Peer complaints are ignored, and the interpersonal problems are expected to be handled by the children themselves. Children seek solutions to the problems. Children voluntarily take responsibilities.

Kemal gives a striking account on how a child's study habits have been transformed after he transferred from a strict private school to Anatolia Alternative Elementary School:

Kemal's account of child transformation through freedom of choice:

When he first came, he was never in the classroom, but now he is transformed. Yesterday, he was doing maths during lunch time, so I had difficulty sending him to the lunch. He said
- I will finish my study first!
In fact, he didn't want to study at his old school because he had difficulty. He had to enter to the classroom. We do not have such a necessity. The child does not have to enter the classroom if he is not feeling well, we give him some space. In other schools, if the class time is Turkish course, he must study Turkish. He came and told me
- Kemal, I don't want to do the lesson.
We cannot force a thing that he does not want. After all, he is an individual.
- Okay, what do you want to do?
- I want to paint
- Then what about making the painting a bit thematic?
- How so?
- For example, you can do letters from the sky, or create a world of numbers.
In fact, he does not do Turkish, but he wants to paint. He combines it with Turkish, and he does what he wants. At the end of two weeks, he started to trust [us]. He thinks "They don't do anything I don't want here, so I'm happy here." My guess is that at least ... He wasn't getting into class at first. I never got mad. I never asked why he doesn't go into the class or never told that he needs to get into the class. So he was bored out after a while. He wanted to enter inside, because his friends, other children etc. are there. He dealt with it himself without us forcing him for anything.

The account shows that how giving the children freedom can result in a positive attitude change to the school and academic subjects.

4.1.5. Ecological Stance

Ecological stance is another major characteristic of the school. The school's mission statement indicates that ecological stance is formed by questioning the architectural structure, diet, curriculum and all other activities with an ecological perspective considering that the ecological balance of the world is deteriorating, and the environmental crisis is present.

This ecological sensitivity is revealed with the actions put into practice with the consumption of ecological food during school meals and products *such as organic toilet paper* as well as workshop activities that focus on environment preservation such as garbage recycling, vegetable garden, and compote. I did not have any account or observation of ecological production except recycling workshops during my fieldwork. Rather, ecological stance was highlighted by ecological consumption and ecological sensitivity through instructional practices. Berna tells that children

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are highly knowledgeable in ecology thanks to their parents. Berna gives an account of how she was transformed by children's awareness of ecology:

> I'm 28-29 years old and in my life so far, I have no knowledge, no experience of at which season tomatoes are planted, or where the flowers are grown. After I came here, this changed. Because of their parents, the children know. They say *"It's time to plant tomatoes"*, I stare *"What? Is it time to plant tomatoes?"* So I look up to learn when to plant it, how to plant it, whether it is reproduced by its seeds... I start to be curious about those kind of things and I realized that I am seriously transformed by the school (.....) I resemble it to Village Institues. I resemble the effort of existing by doing, living, and producing.

4.2. Teacher Perception on Alternative Education in Relation to Learning and Teaching

This part answers the second research question "How do teachers perceive alternative education in relation to learning and teaching?" Based on the analysis of semi-structured and unstructured teacher interviews, five themes emerged: reasons for teaching at alternative school, teacher and administrator roles, teacher perception on curriculum and instructional processes, teacher perception on child-centered educational practices, and school needs. The themes are elaborated on in the forthcoming sections.

4.2.1. Reasons for Teaching at Alternative School

The two major reasons for teachers to teach at Anatolia Alternative Elementary School is educational philosophy of the teachers and the educational policies.

The data revealed that educational philosophy of the individual teachers played the major role in relation to why teachers have chosen to teach at Anatolia Alternative School. The values they associate with the philosophy of the alternative schooling versus the philosophy of the mainstream schooling seem to have played the biggest motivator as to why they have chosen to work at the alternative school.

The negative perception of the mainstream private schools can be divided into subcategories. One is school climate which is viewed negatively. Ozge finds the climate of mainstream private schools to be `artificial` while Berna defines the

stakeholders' relationship at those schools as 'mechanic' and `fake` when she tells the story in her previous teaching job that the school management misinformed parents about what the students were doing at the school:

> It was an environment in which the children were in mud until evening when their clothes were cleaned, and hair was organized for their parents to see. Doing those things did not align with my conscience and moral or anything. Showing things as if they were happening, Covering up what is happening, explaining it in a false way, etc.. Those were the very big troubles I experienced in private institutions. [...], At the same, as a teacher, you are under a very intense executive pressure, there is a power and you're below it, and you have to do whatever it says, you have to show even the things you could not do so you will not be scolded[...]

The majority of the teachers also view learning and teaching at the mainstream private schools negatively with using words `competitive`, `restrictive`, `lacking meaningful learning`. They think those schools have an overloaded curriculum which lacks creativity and overly emphasizing tests. Deniz makes an additional point saying that mainstream schools lack teaching human values while overemphasizing academics. On the other hand, she says that social and emotional learning is the most important highlights of Anatola Alternative Elementary School:

> I was very impressed by the expression 'educated monsters.' Yes, he can know everything, but one day he can kill people in a gas chamber. Yes, he can be very good at this and that, but one day he can make an atom bomb…. They [the mainstream schools] are not interested in any emotional aspects of children. I saw that there is too much violence there. Even if not physical, there is psychological. You feel very desperate [....]. Here we work more on emotions. [...]

Additionally, the data reveals that all teachers share a democratic world view which values lack of hierarchy in organization, freedom of expression, autonomy, critical pedagogy, cooperation over competition, which are the reasons stated as motivators to choose to work at the alternative school. Berna gives an account of how the lack of hieararchy in organization motivates teaching:

> The fact that there is not a strict hierarchical relationship is something that makes you much safer here. You don't do anything based on fear. You have no concern if your manager will be angry, you will be angry, you have no concern that I will give him an account. There is peace in the place where there is no anxiety. And peace naturally gives you confidence in yourself, confidence in discovering new areas, and learning new things.

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It can be understood that the teachers' educational philosophy is a very important factor for them to join to the school. The teachers already possess the egalitarian, democratic, libertarian, and ethical values the school promotes. Kemal's views support the point that it is important for the teacher to hold those values to be adapted to the school:

> If a child doesn't want to, she doesn't have to learn anything. I cannot decide it for other children, but if my child doesn't want to go to the school, then I will let her not to[...] If I was not personally like that, it would have been very difficult to adapt here. It is not something you can change only with orientation training. You need to break taboos.

It should be noted that not all teachers possess that radical degree of libertarian values. The idea of freedom changes from person to person which will be presented and discussed in following sections.

As for other minor reasons, issues related to education and social policy such as teacher contracting, and school type limitation also has had a role in motivating the teachers to work at the school. To specify, Berna stated that not being able to be appointed by the state is a motivator for her to choose to work at this school. Hulya said that this was the only alternative school at the country. Meral and Esra stated that the school staff were an important factor for them.

4.2.2. Teacher Perception on curricular and Instructional Processes

The school curriculum is based on National Education Ministry's 2013 elementary school curriculum. Besides that, the school has a holistic educational approach in which they give focus to affective learning with the elements of recognizing and expressing one's emotions, conflict resolution, anger management, respect for others, and sharing.

Teachers find 2013 curriculum to be flexible and facilitating alternative education. Weekly study plans and instructional materials are prepared based on MoNE learning outcomes. However, MoNE learning outcomes are sorted by the teachers

since there are fewer lesson hours since circles, individual study time, and afternoon workshops limit the lesson hours.

A typical day at the school starts with 30-minute circles at each class. Those circles serves as a tool for students' expression of emotions and experience and daily planning. After the circles, there is a 50-minute individual study time during which each student studies on their weekly plans individually. Individual study time is followed by two class time during which academic subjects are taught to the whole class until noon. Lunch takes place at the kitchen with all students and teachers sitting together at tables. The menu is organic with a few variety of food everyday. After the lunch break, the classes gather at the classroom again either for English, physical education, or workshops. (See Figure 8).

Figure 8. Example of a weekly schedule. HP (weekly plan) refers to the individual study time during which children complete their individualized weekly plan. The weekly schedule is consistent through all grade levels. However, the lesson hours allocated to Turkish, Math and Science can differ across grades since each classroom teacher determine how many hours to allocate to each for her own class.

The teacher takes initiative in shaping the curriculum rather than trying to cover the whole MoNE learning objectives. Kemal gives an example of how he sorts the learning objectives based on needs:

> Today, according to the MoNE program, first-graders need to learn to rank in math: the first, the second, the third... I don't stick with it because they already see it in life. They go to the canteen, you're in the second line, you're in fourth… We do not have to go to the board and teach it. We reach to a lot of learning objectives at circles or cafeteria.

Especially most learning objectives of 'life studies' lesson are given implicitly without covering them explicitly by the class hours. Kemal explains how this process works:

> We are already covering most of MoNE 'life information' learning objectives in the circle and in the school parliament., naturally we do not need to do it as an extra lesson. The objective says 's/he listens to his friends S/he follows table manners.' We already do them constantly in school. It says 'the student does not harm the living creatures.' We live in the school with chickens and cats.

Therefore, if a teacher thinks a learning objective of 'life studies' is already covered implicitly by alternative activities, s/he skips it. It is aimed to reach to the learning objectives of 'life studies' lesson through the principles of learning by doing and living. Kemal contrasts this with the test-centered instruction of mainstream schools:

> In other schools what do they do? They give out tests: *'What shouldn't we do to other living things around?'* The options are *'we shouldn't beat them', 'we shouldn't hit them',* etc. We do not need this. First, we have circles and parliament. Listening, speaking, expressing oneself, you can observe them all there. This gives us an advantage. It is also a big advantage that we eat in the school because you observe a lot of things. You reach to a lot of objectives there: Balanced diet, which vegetable and fruits to eat according to its season, etc. Many learning objectives are handled here.

Teacher and school values are also important factors in shaping the curriculum. MoNE curriculum is adapted to school values. Kemal gives an example of how he sorts the learning objectives based on those values:

> One MoNE learning objective is *'The student knows that s/he needs animal food for feeding.'* I don't want to contradict by first saying not to harm the cat in the garden and then saying that s/he can eat the meat of a sheep or a cow. Naturally, I don't teach this learning objective. One can also have a balanced diet with vegetables. I'm not a vegetarian, but it is a very confusing thing for the child to be told that s/he can't hurt the cat, but s/he can cut the sheep.

The teachers express they are autonomous at and responsible for transforming MoNE curriculum to school programs. There is not a curriculum expert or a guide

to help them to determine the lesson hours and planning. Deniz states *"Those plannings, yearly plans… I question how good I did it because I do something that I am not an expert at."*

Alternativeness of the instructional planning is based on individual teacher's perception of alternative education since there is no centralized or determined alternative teaching methods at the school.

Teachers express different individual perceptions regarding this individual experience. Özge expresses that she does not feel her teaching methods are alternative enough due to environmental restrictions. She thinks if the school was surrounded by a forest that students could learn by exploring around, her teaching could be more alternative. Deniz mentions that she goes by the students' pace rather than sticking to the timeline of MoNE curriculum which she believes to bring meaningful learning. Berna states that she uses trial and error method while planning the instruction based on the research she has done on different alternative methodologies such as Montessori and Reggio. She gives an account of how this planning process works for her in planning working stations. It can be seen that it is an individual process at which the teacher has all responsibility and autonomy:

> I made an analysis by documenting which centers are active, which learning objectives are supported in each in terms of affective, social, psychomotor, and then decided to continue accordingly. I've been trying and discovering all my own, and I've been reading and studying the alternative educational approaches in the world.

She notes that while it is quite challenging to plan it, it is also rewarding:

> You are not given a plan; you do not have a plan to be implemented in all schools in local areas. You don't have a plan given from above. You sit and plan: This is the child's curiosity. I'll get this ready this week. That is the child's interest, how can I bring them together and apply? It is really a difficult process, but quite pleasant. I think that the teacher will learn a lot here, if s/he is open and willing.

4.2.3. Teacher Perception on Alternative Instructional Practices

Teachers' perception on alternative instructional practices emerged in relation to six major alternative instructional practices: circles, workshops, parliament, multi-aged learning, individualized learning plan, and alternative evaluation.

The teacher interviews reveal that the teachers mostly attribute the following attainments to circles: time management, self-regulation, and ability of expressing emotions and thoughts. Kemal states that the children unconsciously acquire curriculum attainments during the circles. He also adds that he adds his personal interest to the circles. To illustrate, he likes astronomy, therefore "interesting information" days of circle are dominated by sharing the information about space.

The teacher interviews reveal that the teachers attribute several affective and psychomotor attainments to workshops. To detail the affective attainments, the children gain self-confidence through leading child-led workshops and orienting the new kindergarten students to the school when they lead the workshop. Kemal tells that children show respect to the children who are leading the workshop. Hülya takes the idea of workshop a step forward and she suggests a school at which all attainments are given through workshops without separate courses.

The teachers attribute a set of benefits and challenges to the multi-age learning which occurs mostly at workshops. The common theme emerged by the teacher interviews is that multi-aged learning creates a sense of community which establishes bonding and solidarity among children. Deniz explains it by saying *"When one child is not able to do something, the other one does. So they learn solidarity"*. Hülya states that younger students are not intimidated by older students unlike at many schools. Another benefit is peer teaching. Kemal states that children are better at understanding and teaching each other. Kemal and Deniz note that thanks to free class visits, some kindergarten children visited first grade classes and they could learn reading and writing just by observing.

On the other hand, teachers face a set of challenges at workshops due to multi-age classroom setup. One challenge is younger and older students do not always learn at the same pace. Younger students often need more scaffolding which means that older students have to wait. When teachers differentiate the activities to avoid this problem, it takes a lot of preparation time for the teacher which is tiring. Deniz gives an account of this challenge:

> [...]At some points, you say, I'm going to do an activity like this. There are two groups. You have to think about both ends and prepare accordingly. For example, when you prepare something written to the group who can read, you need to prepare something with lines and drawing to the group who cannot read. It requires teacher labor.

The multi-aged learning also occurs at kindergarten class, but the kindergarten teachers Berna and Ozge report that it only has positive results unlike at workshops. Older students teach to younger students, and they also help orient and transmit the school culture to the youngers. Berna tells in the interview how multi-aged learning facilitates culture transfer:

I find the multi-age so precious. it is very valuable that they can see how a child has the ability to do something without getting the upper hand. For example, the last year, especially in the culture transfer, a culture is formed in this school and multi-age, facilitates the culture transfer a lot. The older children tell new children: "Now we are making a circle, the circle is like this". It is a process that I get out of teaching role and the children themselves transfer information to each other. It is like mentor-apprentice model. So, it is precious. One of them doesn't know how to hold the scissors, and the other one helps 'Look, this is how we hold the scissors.'

Individualized weekly learning plan is another major instructional practice that teachers view positively. The teachers note the star system to be relaxing and externally motivating the children. Kemal states that even though they did not plan it this way, the stars externally motivate the children. They try to reach maximum stars in general. Even though the child gives the decision on how many stars he wants to complete, Kemal and Deniz statee that the teacher can intervene the selection process to improve the child's learning. To illustrate, if the student has already completed the first star easily, the teacher suggests completing the second

as well or encourages the child to complete more stars. The teacher also scaffolds time management when the children are too slow and look like they will not reach their weekly goal. Or when they finish before the week ends, the teacher finds other educational activities at the remaining class study time. Hulya gives an account of how she sees weekly individual plans as a tool of self-directed learning:

> The child tries to do something on his own. He aims his target at the beginning of the week. I think it's a great thing to know how much you can do. 'Can I make nine stars out of fifty minutes for five days, or can I only do one? My capacity is this. My wants and skills are that.' Apart from this, he has the right to choose, which is great. If someone wants to do maths that day, instead of me saying that we're going to do this today, he starts with mathematics. If he wants to do science, he starts with science. If he wants to start with Turkish, we starts with Turkish. And now we leave them with empty stars. they fill the empty stars themselves.

All teachers highly regard the verbal feedback given to individual child at the end of the first and third quarters as the summative evaluation. They state that it creates intense emotions to the point that the teachers cry. Kemal tells *"I cried for the first time after 12 years. We all four cried. I know the children, but I have never seen them like that."* They see that child feels valued and that the teachers talk to the child individually leaves a big impress on children. So far, they have only received positive reactions from the children regarding the practice of verbal feedbacks as well as parents. One parent was nervous at first because her son had problems with the teachers. After the evaluation, she even cried and thanked to the teachers. Berna reports some shortcomings of the practice of alternative evaluation, however. She perceives deficiencies in alternative evaluation: At the second and fourth quarters, the children are given written feedback, but each teacher uses a different format and content. She thinks a standardization is needed.

The teachers note that at school parliaments, the children learn to produce solutions such as where to put the shoes or how to live with the animals when there are children who have allergies. The attainments they attribute to the school parliament are communication skills such as listening, cooperating, raising voice, and problem-solving skills. It can be seen how the parliament is seen as a tool of cultural change by Hulya's account:

As a country, we are not a solution-oriented community. We are people who generally complain because we learned it that way from our parents. In the parliament, we focus on what we can do to work on problems instead of complaining. There is a lot of things that need to be solved, and there are a lot of things that need to be solved if we come up with a lot of agenda every day; even silly problems such as where I am supposed put my shoe or how my living space should be like. There are a lot of problems even in a tiny school area. And there are a lot of solutions produced.

4.3. The Administrator's Perception on Alternative Education in Relation to Management and Decision-Making Process at the School

This part answers the third research question "How do administers perceive alternative education in relation to management and decision-making processes in the school?" based on the themes emerged from semi-structured interview done with the only administrator of the school, who is the school administrator, Meral.

4.3.1. Reasons for Working at Alternative School

Before starting the management position at the school for the last two months, Meral has had seven years of teaching experience at a private high school. The data revealed two major categories in relation to her reasons for working at an alternative school: negative experience at mainstream private schools and the negative perception of hierarchical organizational structure.

The first category is the negative experience at mainstream private schools. Based on her experience, Meral has had a negative judgment of the mainstream private schools in terms of both teaching and learning and management.

In terms of teaching and learning, Meral perceives the instruction in the mainstream schooling system as to be ineffective. According to her, there is too much academic pressure on the students. This expectation brings about the overloaded curriculum, which in turn results in passive learning. She gives a detail account of her perception on the issue:

> Even though the students were not ready to learn, our academic calendars were intense due to the intensity in the curriculum. The tight hours were quite intense. The period in which the students were at school was very intense and

this period was constantly about coming in to the class and then leaving. There was hardly any environment in which they could express themselves. The students did not have the right to speak in class. about organizing class, or about anything. It didn't seem right to me because the students were supposed to be an important stakeholder there as learners. The only part of this learner's role was like 'We will tell you the information here, and you'll take it!' It didn't feel right. Most of the time they weren't usually ready, but anyways we forced them: You have to learn. You have to go. You can do better.... This was partly due because of not planning the program in a good way.

The expert reveals that while the mainstream private schools had a behaviorist understanding of planning with a focus on quantitative measures such as increasing the class hours or putting more study hours, Meral thought the problem was deeper and she looked for a holistic change in understanding of education:

> Actually, this is not planning. You do not use the time effectively. As the child is still unable to take the breath he is looking for, the increased course hours or study hour after the school does not mean anything. We still can't solve the problem this way. Those were the parts I questioned. As I said, a much more productive, much happier environment could have been provided but I saw it was moving further away from that ideal. And, I said I do not want to take part in this system, and I left.

In terms of management, Meral finds the hierarchical top-down management to be oppressive at mainstream private schools, at which important decisions regarding the teaching and school affairs were solely done by the management. Looking for a way out of the problems with the mainstream education system, she starts to work at the alternative school.

4.3.2. Perceptions on School Governance

Meral defines the governance structure at the school to be a non-hierarchical and horizontal organizational structure. Her main role in that structure is to be an organizer.

The horizontalness of the structure goes as far to the point that the teachers take part in the recruitment of a new administrator. In that structure, consensus is sought, not only the vote majority. However, the administrator takes initiatives in some cases. Those cases are school procedures that the school obliges to do because of the regulations beyond the school level, or they are the cases which requires quick

decisions. The problem is that those decisions can create non-consensus. Nevertheless, she gives the decision without seeking the consensus. According to Meral, the disadvantage with this structure is that she puts mental effort questioning if the decision really needed her initiative. This situation puts her in dilemma.

The democratic values are also seen at the level of children's interrelationship. Students are encouraged to solve conflicts among themselves. When two or more children consult to Meral to solve a peer conflict, she asks them to solve that conflict among themselves without she telling them what to do. Meral thinks that the children are also adopted to the democratic value. For instance, when the teachers and the administrator asks the students to follow a rule, they justify the rule to the students. When they do not, the students react.

The democracy and openness of the school governance is highly valued. It is visible even at the teacher dismissal process as proved by one instance. The decision regarding the dismissal of the teacher was not done without her presence. A consensus on her dismissal was reached including the teacher herself. Meral gives the account of that process:

> It is one of the first and general rules here: If there is an issue, the person addressed should be there and be informed. She was the interlocutor of the matter, and, apart from my one-to-one interviews, it was very valuable to have her and her having the right to express herself at the meeting when I presented the report at the school management board .

4.3.3. The administrator's Roles

According to the interview results with Meral, she has two major responsibilities as an administrator: The first is being a bridge between the teacher and the cooperative while conducting the school affairs. The second is handling the school procedures such as paperwork or managing daily purchases.

Being a bridge between teachers and the cooperative, she is expected to be at an equal distance to both. She needs to takes initiatives while listening to the both sides' views.She finds this challenging for two reasons: The first is it requires a lot of

communication. She spends a great deal of her day texting back and forth. The second is some parents at cooperative wants more involvement in school while the teachers want them to be more distant. This requires her to manage this tension. She thinks that the cooperative should be distant to educational process until the evaluation at the end of the year. On the other hand, she finds the cooperative's involvement very helpful and do not want to be prejudicial about the cooperative's suggestions or demands. She strives to keep the objectivity.

4.4. Challenges of Implementing Alternative Education

This section aims to answer the fourth research question "What are the challenges of implementing alternative education and how are these challenges dealt with?" based on the themes emerged by triangulation of the coded data from the teacher interviews, school administrator interview, observations, and field notes.

The data revealed five major themes as the types of challenges faced in implementing alternative education.

4.4.1. Fuzzy Status of the Parents

The interview data reveals that one major challenge regarding implementing alternative education is the fuzzy status of the parents in relation to their role in school affairs. Parents' status both as the school cooperation and employers of the teachers bring about power struggle between the teachers and the parents.

The data reveals that the degree of the acceptable involvement of parents to the school affairs is not defined or agreed upon. While the teachers want the parents not to be involved in educational process which they see as their professional area, they think not all parents protect the necessary border. Meral gives an example to a recent conflict they faced with the parents:

> There were parents who wanted to have a birthday party at the school. I was not very eager for that, and then I directed the matter to other teachers. But then the plan changed a little bit and the parents wanted to come to the school for cake-cutting time and decided to come. But the school doesn't know it. And we

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don't want it to happen. This is a contradiction. For the moment, it is a matter we oppose to each other. What happened in this case? I heard it from the teachers. Parents should not have taken this decision alone. *"Let's go, it is our school, let's join the cake-cutting time!"* But here we have a process and a system. I wish they'd let me know. They didn't. So, the working group skipped me and the other teachers, and they contacted our kitchen personnel.

It can be understood from the excerpt above that there is a different understanding regarding the status of the parents between the internal stakeholders and at least some of the parents. In that case, the parents had a sense of ownership of the school as the founders of the school. However, the teachers and the school administrator see that the teachers should decide the matters inside the school affecting daily organization and educational process.

Even though Meral has a clearly defined role as the bridge among the teachers and the parents so those controversial issues can be handled, she expresses that it does not always work due to complex network the cooperation structure brings about:

> Although they tell me that the final decision is mine, even they tell me to be at equal distance to both parties [the school and the cooperative], here in the background there are strange networks. For example, a member of the cooperative is relative to someone who works here [at the kitchen]. Or they decide things at the service bus that I don't even know about. And there is a secret communication thing. We are also trying to prevent this at present. From now on, we say do not accept it unless you hear it from the school administrator's mouth. We especially do not use the name ' Meral', we say 'the administrator', so we can prevent this.

From the teacher perspective, this dual status of parents both being parents and employers of the teachers and owners of the school cause a role confusion. Seyma as the most novice teacher gives an account of this confusion from her perspective:

> It is very nice that parents are so much involved in the process of education. On the other hand, sometimes the hats can get mixed. Are you the parent of the child I am teaching or are you the part of the cooperative who employed me? With which identity you tell me what you are telling?

Berna gives an account of the dismissal of the former school administrator by the parents. According to her perspective, the power of the parents can overrule the democratic values:

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> We are a democratic school here, but you don't ask to the teacher[regarding the dismissal decision of the former school administrator], you don't get the opinion of any teacher who lives in this school, most importantly you don't ask to the children. You [the parents] get to come together and say that the manager is not be able be the bridge and you see yourself right to dismiss her. Then where is the collective consciousness? Where is the democratic participation? Where is the alternativeness of this work?

The teachers express that the school lacks autonomy from the cooperation by the parents` intrusion to educational processes. The teachers express that the teachers should be given the whole autonomy over their teaching practices which suggests that the parents interfere with teaching. In one instance, Berna makes a mandala activity with the children after the school ends. Then, one parent opposes it saying that she doesn't want her child to draw mandala. Some parents argue that mandala inhibits creativity with its lines. Berna sees this as an intrusion to her professional area. Her reaction is very firm:

> Who are you, and how do you get into what I do after 3.30? If you know so much, come and take your kid. […] We argued about mandala for months whether it is necessary or not necessary in this school. And finally, I said, no one can interfere with what I am doing inside this school. You chose me. If you don't like it, you get a better teacher. I found myself saying things I would never say.

However, the teachers do not always stand firmly. It is also the case that the teachers sacrifice alternative principals to conciliate with parents. To specify, Ozge states that she feels exhausted by some parents' expectation of childcare by the teachers which does not align with the school's vision of child autonomy. According to the teachers, not all parents share the values of the school. Ozge says:

> There are some parents who couldn't get out of college logic from that classic education I mentioned here. There are those who expect childcare. They tell his clothes were lost, he lost this, he lost that... you expect the child to develop self-care skills and take responsibility. We're putting his dirty clothes to his bag, we're doing this, we're waiting for him to take his bag home, but they don't do it, and the parent is expecting you [the teacher] to do that. There is something else you try to do here, it is something that strengthens the child to see that he can actually do it[himself], but there are other points that parent are stuck there, they are stuck at just that moment. They don't see the next step. [They worry that] he forgot his bag, his clothes is like that... Here you see the conditions. It is wet... everywhere is wet. Even if you change it [the clothes] three or four times a day, you get wet again. you [the parents] need to be a little

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relaxed, mothers and fathers should be in a bit different mind, unfortunately I
don't see them all very much in this mind.

The friendship relationship between the parents and the teachers also makes it
difficult for the teachers to handle the confrontation with the parents in terms of
drawing the boundaries. Berna gives an account of this:

> We [the teachers and the parents] cleaned the plaster together, we painted the
> doors together. Of course, there is a different relationship with them, but
> sometimes when this relationship comes to the boundaries of the school, it is
> very difficult to make the line when you confront. That is, you have different
> minds at a subject with your close friend, then you discuss it, and then this
> discussion turns into fight. When this happens, you find yourself questioning.
> You think if we did not have this bond, I might have said something very
> mechanical, I could have expressed my feelings more comfortably. This is the
> handicap for me in the context of relationships. But in terms of emotions I can
> always say that I am much happier here as a teacher in terms of relationships.

4.4.2. Inefficiency in Time Management for Seeking Consensus

Extensive time spent in commission decision process is also another big complaint
of the stakeholders. Both Deniz and Berna exclaimed in the interviews that while
they are happy with the horizontal structure, sometimes they are at a point that they
wish there was a boss to tell people what to do and get the job done.

The school is governed by commissions that are formed by the parents, such as;
financial commission, construction commission, food commission, etc. All
procedural decisions (such as buying a technological tool for a class) are discussed
through those commissions. And since the school's one of the main values is
democratic governance, consensus is sought through those decisions. This procedure
takes a lot of time and sometimes delay the needs.

The data points out other deficits of commissions. One is that the culture transfer
can be difficult since there is a frequent circulation of the commission members.
This results in lack of a definite structural executive scheme.

To solve this problem of slow decision-making process, some teachers propose professionalizing the committees and giving them the full autonomy. Hulya concludes that *'this is an inherent result of democracy.'*

4.4.3. Discipline

Children's misbehavior is another challenge faced. One of them is violence. The teachers express that some children sometimes show violent behavior *'like in other schools.'* They have difficulty in finding an effective way to handle that problem.

One foundational value of the school is employing 'positive discipline` versus reward and punishment system. Deniz explains the idea of 'positive discipline'.

> For example, when I give you a reward for reading a book, I match two things that have no connection. Although there is an increase in reading books at first, there will be a decrease in the future because you will not be motivated internally but externally. In order to maintain the external motivation, for example, if the award I give you today is a candy, what will I give tomorrow? I have to increase the award all the time in order to keep that external motivation alive. Even if I increase it, that external motivation disappears over time and the reading seems to have increased, but in the long process it actually goes down.

However, while the teachers do not advocate rewards and punishments, they do not find positive discipline as an effective alternative, either. According to their experiences, an unwanted behavior is repeated after a while.

Another issue regarding the positive discipline approach at the school is that there is a different understanding of what `punishment` or `freedom` is among people; especially between the children and the teachers. Children know that they are not supposed to be punished for their misbehavior. In one case, one third-grade child was punished for beating his teacher. The school decided to suspend the student from the school for one week. The child objected to the decision saying that this decision meant punishment, which is against the values of the school. However, to the teacher, this is the natural result of his misbehavior. Ozge tells:

> All right, there is no reward or punishment at this school. But in life, we all
> live the consequence of a behavior that we all do. It would be very unrealistic

thing if we didn't. If you do not greet a friend for three days, what happens at the fourth day is that she doesn't say hello to you ...This wouldn't come off as punishment, right? Here in the school as well children are required to see the consequence of their behavior. If you behave as if there is no consequence, then it will be very unlimited. Children should know their boundaries, freedom does not mean that ... there are people who do not understand it. Let the child do what he wants, let him shout, fling, strike a friend, or anything without any consequences... And when the child faces the consequence, there are parents who react as *"There isn't supposed to be a punishment in this school".*

Some teachers believe that children are inclined to push their limits. This causes chaos and difficulty in classroom management. Kemal and Deniz give an acccount of how they believe that limitlessness of children brings about chaos and violence:

I observe that at some points, this limitlessness brings about disrespect, and the disrespect brings about the violence. And that sounds both frightening to me and an environment that I wouldn't want to be in. If we respect to the other, not respect because of being a teacher but a human being, if we try to communicate, communicate in order to solve things, I expect the other person[the child] to do the same as well. At this point, I find the borders important. (Deniz)

The child wonders*: 'What can I do most at this school? What is the upper limit? '* The child is asking this because she's curious. [...] We adults are like that, too because our brain cannot perceive unlimited things. For example, 120 billion years… When you talk about it, the years it's all gone because there is eternity, That is why we cannot understand the universe. The child is like that, too. S/he thinks s/he doesn't have limits. In fact, we have a limit, but when we exceed the limit, because we do not know what to do, especially about violence, children wonder: What is my upper limit? (Kemal)

It seems that there is not an agreement all the times on the boundaries, which creates confusion. Aylin tells:

No matter how much we try to be in unity, we cannot give the same reactions. And there are no great rules and limits here. It's all on the initiative. And we are constantly taking the initiative on a lot of issues. It is a problem even not creating a common language. Let me give you an example: There is a high wall in the garden. Three teacher tell the children not to climb on the wall, that it's dangerous. But four of them allow. And the kids are puzzled. Are they going to climb or not? Children don't know. Teachers don't know what to say. Things like that...

4.4.4. Lack of Alternative Education Models and Resources

Another difficulty is lack of alternative teaching models and resources in Turkey that the teachers can look up to or use as a guide.

When the data was collected in December 2017, the school had an experience of only three years. The teachers also did not have prior teaching experience at another alternative school. Berna tells:

> My first year was very enjoyable for me but also painful and complicated because I entered into a process that I couldn't understand, In this process the school opened. There are children, there are parents and there I am. And they give something in your hand called alternative education. You are going to do this. Yes, I know there is alternative education, but I do not have any reading or research about it except my undergraduate years. I had not had any experience or observation.

There is actually a program to orient the teachers to alternative education, There is an orientation training program each summer for all incoming teachers, which is called "Teacher Village". In teacher village, the main topics are as follows: positive discipline, children's rights, non-violent communication, child's perception, special education, conflict-solution mechanism, and principal axes of the school. While the teachers find the training program to be strengthening, they state that it did not have much practical contribution in terms of guiding them in terms of teaching methods or techniques. Deniz explains:

> There was nothing we could do in practice in terms of different methods and techniques or how to do measurement and evaluation in alternative school. The teacher trainers give shallow information, yes we know in theory, but what can we do in practice? there is nothing much practical that we could take with us to the school. The information was always in theory. […] We created things by inspiration from different things and coming together and brainstorming with people from here or association.

As a result of lack of alternative teaching models or experience, the teachers feel left alone at their teaching at their first year:

> There is no program. No plans. You're trying to make things happen by yourself. Yes, there is a written text. There are some things planned based on it. But when you go into the class, you do not have anything to apply. There are foundational axes. But there isn't any training plan, targets, what should be done, what kind of a school vision we have, what is our vision. There is not much work about those. In fact, they only created a frame. Inside that frame is empty. Put the teachers and students in class, and let's learn it all together on the road. This is how it is like. (Deniz)

> In orientation process, there was not a relationship like master-apprentice. There is you and only you. You are alone. So when we looked back, both the

association and cooperative gave their self-criticism. They said we left you in a dark well. We gave you a torch. And we said do whatever you do with this torch. But there wasn't anyone who guided. (Berna)

As a result, the teachers rely on their own view of how to teach. Some of them consult to Western alternative education methods such as Montessori and Reggio and try to come up with an eclectic approach and adapt it to the local setting. They mostly employ a trial and error method until they find an effective teaching methodology that works at their classroom. The observation data also clearly demonstrates that there is not a determined, systematic, or structured teaching methodology at the school. How the teachers teach is an individual process which is based on the teachers' own understanding of alternative or effective teaching. Berna tells:

But in terms of teaching, alternative education was emptiness to me. I did not take much from cooperative or association to fill it. Then I told myself, I will do whatever I understand from alternative education. If it doesn't work, I will go back to the start and try it again.

The teachers also state the need of alternative instructional resources to support their teaching. They think they need the school needs its own instructional resources since the resources from abroad have cultural differences. Teachers produce their own resources, however, it takes too much teacher effort. Pre-structured instructional resources such as booklets, measurement tools, teaching method guides with alternative activity plans are suggested.

4.4.5. Restricted Financial Resources

Since the school is a non-profit school owned by the parent cooperation, restricted financial resources is another issue faced while implementing alternative education. The data does not reveal what specific struggles emerged due to restricted resources. However, the teachers suggested several solutions to this problem such as increasing tuition fee, advertising, and doing projects.

However, the administrator interview at least reveals some concerns and suggestions in relation to the spent made at the school. The school buys organic products to meet

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ecological stance, which is one of the most important foundational values. The organic products are significantly more expensive than regular products. The administrator is the person directly involved in organizing the purchase of the daily products. She finds the money spent for ecological products too much. She doubts if this really is aligned with their ecological stance. While the school support the organic agriculture by purchasing them, the disadvantage is they have to travel further for this purchase which means more diesel fuel consumption. Or while some products such as toilet paper is marketed as being organic, she questions if this is really true, or if they are only greenwash. She also finds the stationary consumptions such as paper to be too much and offers recycling instead.

4.4.5. Academic Worries of the Parents vs Holistic Education

Difficulty in meeting some parents' academic expectations is another sub-theme emerged from the teacher interviews.

Seyma and Meral express that some parents have academic worries and expectations, which they find difficult to meet. The school has fewer academic class hours than other schools. The students have academic courses only in the morning and the afternoons are dedicated to the workshops which is aligned with the holistic approach of the school. The teachers express that this means sacrificing academic excellence.

4.5. The Summary of the Study

The study aimed to investigate an alternative elementary school which puts child-centered education to its center. The research questions focused on what makes the school alternative, how the alternative school operates, how the internal stakeholders perceive alternative education in terms of learning, teaching, management, and decision-making process., and what the challenges of implementing this innovative and alternative system are. Thus, the study aimed to contribute to alternative schooling literature in the context of Turkey by exploring how alternative education works in practice in terms of learning, instruction, organizational structure, and the

perceptions of the teachers and the school administrators regarding their experiences.

The study was designed as an illustrative qualitative single case study. The data was collected through observations in the school site and in classrooms, field notes, the semi-structured and unstructured interviews with all teachers ($N= 9$) and semi-structured interview with the school administrator ($N=1$), and the school documents. Inductive content analysis was used for data analysis.

The results identified the main values and characteristics of the school, the alternative educational practices, the perceptions of the teachers regarding the alternative education implemented at the school, the teacher philosophy, the role of the stakeholders, and the challenges of implementing alternative education. The following tables shortly summarizes the findings and the roles of the stakeholders:

Table 6
Summary of the Findings

Values	Means to values	Challenges
Equal and democratic participation of all stakeholders to the school governance is valued.	School management board School parliament Nonhierarchical organizational and management structure	Excess time spent to reach consensus Power struggle and conflicts
A sense of community including all stakeholders is valued.	Informal friendly relationships among the stakeholders All stakeholders including children calling each other with their first name and second person singular pronoun Out of school recreational time among the stakeholders Cooperation over competition Positive discipline	Discipline problems and fuzzy boundaries
The children's freedom of choice, self-	Sorted MoNE attainments based on needs and values Freedom of choice in workshops	Lack of school models and educational resources in Turkey

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regulation, autonomy, and active participation in learning is valued.	Child-led workshops Freedom of visit to different classroom during class hours Morning and evening circles Learning by inquiry Flexible lesson plans Individualized weekly study plans Multi-aged learning Alternative evaluation	Academic worries versus holistic education
Ecological awareness and nature preservation is valued.	Consumption of ecological products Workshops on ecological awareness	Restricted financial resources

Table 7
The Roles of the Stakeholders

Teacher roles:	Student roles:	Administrator roles:
Curriculum adaptor Lesson planner Organizer Facilitator A part of school governance	Active learner Problem solver in interpersonal problems, school management, classroom management, etc. Decision maker with regards to learning, instruction and school organization	Being a bridge between the school and the cooperation Handling school procedures; daily purchases, paperwork

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the discussion of the main themes of the study. Then, it displays practical and theoretical implications of the study, and the recommendations for future research.

5.1. The Discussion of the Main Themes

This part presents the discussion of the main themes as the school model versus different alternative school models, the impact of teacher philosophy in curriculum development and instructional process, the parents' control, and challenges of being a pioneer school by comparing the emerged themes to related literature and doing conclusions.

5.1.1. The School Model Versus Different Alternative School Models

The school has an eclectic approach of alternative education by carrying qualities from Western alternative schools and early national models. It does not follow one specific alternative school model, therefore, it is a unique alternative school model. The following paragraphs compare the school's model with different alternative school models.

The school's main characteristics converge with school models of Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia. At Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia schools, it is valued that children realize their full potential and be active subjects of their own development and parents are seen as partners in education. (Pope, 2002). Similarly, in Anatolia Elementary Alternative School, the education is child-centered in which the children have active role in learning and decision giving. Furthermore, the parents are active actors in school through commissions. Thus, it

can be concluded that the characteristics of the school in relation to child centered education and active status of parents overlap with those of Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia alternative school models.

The school differentiates from those school models with its structure of co-op parent initiative and democratic school governance. Those characteristics overlap with Western parent co-op free and democratic school examples (Woodin, 2012; Facer, 2012). Similar to Anatolia Elementary Alternative Schools, those schools are founded by parent co-ops and run democratically by all stakeholders including the parents.

What makes the school different than the Western examples above is its ecological stance. Its focus on ecology resembles the historical Village Institute's model that focused on environmental education (Altunya, 2014).

In short, each characteristics of Anatolia Alternative Elementary school is consistent with different models of alternative schools in the West and the early national models. However, when they all combine, it makes the school a unique model of its own with its eclectic approach since it does not follow one specific alternative schooling model.

5.1.2. Impact of Teacher Philosophy in Curricular and Instructional Processes

It can be concluded that sustainability of alternative education requires the teachers to be equipped with alternative values. The findings revealed that the teachers' educational philosophy was aligned with the school values of equality, democracy, and holistic education even before they started working at the school. The teachers' teaching style were consistent with the school values and characteristics. They acted consistently with the values of child-centered education, direct democracy, equality among everyone in the school, freedom of expression, and sense of community. Therefore, it can be argued that alternative education requires teachers who believe in the values of the school.

In designing the course curriculum and instructional processes, it is found that teachers' philosophy impacts their planning. In other words, an individual teacher's philosophy shapes the curricular and instructional processes. For example, when a teacher believed that it was wrong to advocate eating meat, he adjusted the learning objective *'The student knows s/he needs to consume meat, eggs, cheese, milk, water, fruit, and vegetables for balanced diet'* accordingly. The belief in the degree of freedom of the child and the need of limits differed from teacher to teacher. This difference impacted the practices across the classes. The classes differed in terms of the level of child's autonomy at instructional processes, the amount of teacher control, and classroom management such as direct instruction, asking for permission to speak, freedom in choosing the seating, etc.

5.1.3. Parental Control Mechanism

The findings revealed that parents' dual status of being the parents and the owners of the school and the capital affected the power relations at the school. This result is consistent with the literature of parent co-op free school initiatives in Britain (Firestone, 1975). While the open government structure of those schools provide input from all stakeholders to decision-making, the conflict between parents and the teachers occur regarding the control of the teachers' in class activity (Firestone, 1975). Anatolia Alternative Elementary School is no exception.

As the results indicate, the parents' intrusion to in-class activities and the teachers' reaction differed in an individual basis. For example, some parents opposed to mandala drawings arguing that it limits child's creativity, and they asked for freer activities. Some expected more academic rigor. Some expected more teacher control such as expecting the nursery teacher to organize the clothing and the bag of the child, some expected tolerance for disruptive child behaviors. The teachers' reaction differed as well. For example, Berna did not allow the intrusion attempts and insisted on her full autonomy as a teacher. On the other hand, Ozge reconciled and sacrificed what she sees as alternative education in order to agree with the parents.

The parents and teachers come from a teacher centered school tradition. The change in applications and expectations does not evolve easily. As seen above, the expectations regarding the educational practices and the different views on teacher autonomy sometimes clash. All teachers and the school administrator believe that the teacher should be given the full autonomy in the class. They think that the parents should not interfere with teaching until the end of the year teacher performance evaluation during which they can dismiss the teacher if they are unsatisfied. However, the similar co-op free democratic school examples in Britain (Firestone, 1975) suggests that the parents in those school believe that the teachers should be sensitive to the needs of the school community, and they reject the false and constraining roles among the parents, the teachers, and the children. Therefore, they see that it is good to be able to influence a teacher when necessary. The threat of firing cannot be used in minor cases when the parents want to convince teachers to change their approach. Firing is only the last resort (Firestone, 1975). There is also evidence that parent involvement in school is beneficial (Herman and Yeh, 1980). Giving parents some involvement in school can help the school to be more sensitive to the students' needs. It also transfers some of the responsibility for instruction from school to the parents. Thus, if there is any dissatisfaction with the instruction, it is shared by the parents (Herman and Yeh, 1980).

To sum, several parents intrude to the teachers' in-class practices with expectations either aligned or not aligned with the school's core values. Whether the teacher resist or setback at the face of those parents' expectations differ from teacher to teacher. Nevertheless, all teachers ask for the full autonomy of the teachers in those in-class practices. However, the literature shows that some degree of parent involvement in teaching occurs in co-op democratic schools (Firestone, 1975) and it is beneficial (Herman and Yeh, 1980). Therefore, I argue that a complete exclusion of the parents' input in relation to teaching processes might be an unrealistic expectation. I conclude that some level of parent involvement in teaching process is the natural result of the democratic and co-op school structure, and the instruction can benefit from it. The degree of the involvement should be set by the stakeholders in a way that makes both the teachers and the parents feel satisfied.

5.1.4. Challenges of Being a Pioneer School

 Being a pioneer alternative school with its unique structure in Turkey, the school faces a challenge of not having models to follow. The school's flexible alternative approach does not depend on a singular alternative methodology. Whereas, this uniqueness provides flexibility and freedom for the teachers, the lack of a systematic instructional methodology and guidance causes difficulties in teachers' effective adaptation to alternative teaching.

On the other hand, while standardized reforms cause attrition of change in innovative schools (Gales and Hargreaves, 2006), the school did not face similar challenges of outside pushing factors. One might suggest that Turkish elementary school system is flexible enough for an alternative school to run without sacrificing its innovativeness. Another explanation can be that the school is careful to be consistent with MoNE regulations, however, there is more research needed to conclude the underlying mechanisms.

5.2. Implications

This part suggests implications for the practitioners and for further research based on the results discussed.

5.2.1. Implications for Practice

This part presents several implications and suggestions for practice in the context of the school and national teacher education.

1. Curricular and instructional processes are mainly based on the individual teacher's perception of what alternative education is. The teachers express difficulty in dealing with understanding and adapting to the alternative education system at which they do not have almost any guidance. This has implications for both the teacher education programs and the school's in-service training. First, the teacher education programs can remedy this shortage by developing preservice teachers as curriculum developers. Second, the orientation training of

the school provides the basics of alternative educational philosophy and theory, however, providing the in-service teachers with practical instructional guidance is necessary. This guidance can be put together by documenting the effective strategies and methodologies the school already has with the accumulated experience of individual teachers.

2. According to UN's 2030 agenda for sustainable development (UN, 2014), one crucial goal by 2030 is to provide the learners with education that promotes human rights, culture of peace and non-violence, pluralism, and culture of peace. The universities in Turkey should equip the preservice and in-service teachers with those values to be aligned with 21st century's values. The school's democratic, egalitarian, and pluralistic structure can serve as a local model to spread these values in a national level. This model can be helpful for national educational faculties while incorporating these values to teacher education.

3. The results indicate that positive discipline has shortcomings when dealing with disruptive behaviors such as violence. The lack of certain rules blurs the borders of acceptable behavior which confuse the teachers and the children. Precise sanctions need to be defined in face of serious disruptions such as violence.

4. The results indicate that there is a conflict in the degree of parent involvement in school affairs and in-class practices. There is a need of agreement among the parents, the teachers, and the school administrator on determining how much the parents should be involved in the process.

5. The results indicate that the cultural norms affect the attitude of several parents to teachers' practices that encourage child autonomy in a negative way. A parent training can be effective in addressing the issue of child autonomy and independence.

6. The student workshops are not structured in terms that it is not documented how a specific workshop meets a certain learning objective. The objectives of the workshops and criteria over how they reach to those goals is an area that teachers need to work on.

7. While consensus regarding the decision given process is one of the core values of the school, it can cause excessive time spent and, as a result of it, exhaustion. Different subgroups can be created in different domains. When services are divided into subgroups such as commissions, those responsible groups or

individuals can be given autonomy in certain procedures in order to save time and energy of the stakeholders.

5.2.2. Implications for Future Research

1. One ultimate aim of the school is to achieve a social and cultural change of a more democratic, pluralist, and egalitarian society. The study reveals that democratic and egalitarian values of the school are internalized by the stakeholders and protected within the borders of the school. Future research investigating the behaviors of the stakeholders at bigger contexts outside of school is needed to understand the phenomena of the individual and social transformation and cultural clash.

2. The study reveals the components of child-centered education in an alternative school. However, it does not investigate the evidence of effectiveness or the quality of instruction of it. A comparative study on the instructional process and learning outcome of different child-centered schools can reveal the worth of the different alternative methodologies. This will both inform the theory of learner centered education and guide the practical instructional guide the teachers need.

3. The study has strong focus on the issue of parental involvement in the school and classroom practices. However, it lacks any parent input from parents' perspectives. A future research is needed that reveals the perceptions of the parents on the matter, so that an objective and holistic approach that involves all stakeholders' experience and views can be reached and compared to each other.

4. The study revealed the difficulty of multi-aged practice in student workshops in terms of providing tailored instruction to the children of different age with different level of abilities and needs. A future research is needed to further investigate the effective multi-age practices.

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APPENDICES

A. METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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02 OCAK 2018

Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)
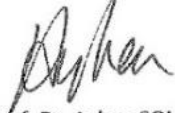
İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Doç.Dr. Hanife AKAR;

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız yüksek lisans öğrencisi Sebahat GÖK'ün " **Türkiye'de Yenilikçi Bir Okul Örneği: Alternatif Bir İlkokul Öğretim Süreçleri Üzerine Durum Çalışması"** başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay **2017-EGT-201** protokol numarası ile **02.01.2018-28.06.2018** tarihleri arasında geçerli olmak üzere verilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN

Başkan V

Prof. Dr. Ayhan SOL
Üye

Prof. Dr. Ayhan Gürbüz DEMİR
Üye

Doç. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI
Üye

Doç. Dr. Zana ÇITAK
Üye

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Pınar KAYGAN
Üye

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Emre SELÇUK
Üye

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B. SEMI-STRUCTURED TEACHER INTERVIEW FORM

Participants: Teachers

Duration: 1.5 hours

Research Questions Adressed:

1. What are the main components of alternative education in school?

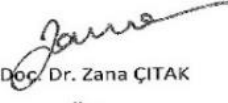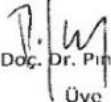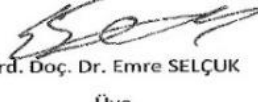2. How do teachers perceive alternative education in the context of their students' learning, teaching and professional development?

4. What are the challenges of implementing alternative education?

Instructions:

Hello. I'm Sebahat Gök. I would like to have an individual interview with you in order to examine your perspective and experiences on alternative education practices at your school for the study I am conducting for my master's thesis in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at METU. In this interview, my goal is to understand the characteristics of alternative education in practice by learning the experiences and perspectives of the teachers who are the practitioners of alternative education and to propose solutions that could contribute to the practice and the literature.

What you tell me during the interview is completely confidential. Any information that identifies you will be avoided when writing research results.

If I may, I would like to record the conversation later for data analysis purposes. Do you mind that?

Do you have any thoughts or questions before we begin?

Warm-up question:

1. How did you spend a day at school today?

Background questions:

2. Could you tell us a bit about your teaching history?

Probe: *Year, experience, graduation, school knowledge*

3. How did you learn about this school?

4. Could you tell us a little about the process of choosing to work at this school?

5. What kind of preparation and orientation did you go through when you started this school?

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Content, experience and opinion questions:

Theme I: The role of the teacher

6. Could you explain what makes school an alternative to mainstream schools in the context of your role in school?

Probes: *What do you do differently from teachers in mainstream schools? How does your role as a teacher differ? How do you think there is a difference in relationships with students, management and parents? How?*

Theme II: Training program

7. You follow the MoNE curriculum. What are the elements that make education content and program alternative?

Probes: *Workshop, social projects*

8. Can you tell us about the process of transforming the curriculum into the school curriculum?

Theme III. Education processes and teaching

9. Could you tell us what you consider important in your practices that make the teaching methods and activities used alternative?

Probe*: mixed age groups, personal learning plans, individualized learning, multidisciplinary teaching, alternative assessment*

9.1. What are your views and observations on the effects of these teaching methods and activities on student learning?

Probe: *Motivation, student reactions*

10. How is student achievement assessed?

Probe: *Approach, tools, processes*

Theme IV: Professional development of teachers

11. What is being done in terms of professional development in your school?

Probe: *In-service training, teacher village*

10.1: Where does the demand come from? How is it received?

How do you evaluate these professional development activities?

Theme V: Communication and cooperation with stakeholders

12. Please, could you you tell us about the relationship between the management and teachers?

Probe: *Role of management, cooperation, distribution of tasks*

12.1. How do you view your relationship with management?

13. Please, tell us about the communication and cooperation between teachers?

13.1. How does it contribute to your development as a teacher?

14. How do parents participate to the school?

Probe: *Reactions, Interests*

Theme V. Benefits and Challenges

15. What do you think are the strong and effective aspects of implementing and maintaining education in this school?

Probe: *Student learning, social benefit and contribution, teacher development*

16. What aspects of the implementation and maintenance of education in this school challenges you?

16.1. What are your solutions and suggestions?

C. SEMI-STRUCTURED SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW FORM

Participants: The school administrator

Duration: 1.5 hours

Research Questions Addressed:

1. What are the main components of alternative education in school?

3. How do administrators perceive alternative education in relation to school management and decision-making processes in the school?

4. What are the challenges of implementing alternative education?

Instructions:

Hello. I'm Sebahat Gök. I would like to have an individual interview with you in order to examine your perspective and experiences on alternative education practices at your school for the study I am conducting for my master's thesis in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at METU. In this interview, my goal is to understand the characteristics of alternative education in practice by learning the experiences and perspectives of the administrators who are the practitioners of alternative education and to propose solutions that could contribute to the practice and the literature.

What you tell me during the interview is completely confidential. Any information that identifies you will be avoided when writing research results.

If I may, I would like to record the conversation later for data analysis purposes. Do you mind that?

Please, indicate if you have any thoughts or questions before we begin?

Warm-up question:

1. How did you spend a day at school today?

Background questions:

2. Could you tell us a bit about your teaching and administrating history?

Probe: *Year, experience, graduation, school knowledge*

3. How did you learn about this school?

4. Could you tell us a little about the process of choosing to work at this school?

5. What kind of preparation and orientation did you go through when you started this school?

Content, experience and opinion questions:

Theme I: The role of the administrator

6. C What makes school an alternative to mainstream schools in the context of your role in school? Could you explain in detail, please.

Probes: *What do you do differently from the administrator in mainstream schools? How does your role as an administrator differ? How do you think there is a difference in relationships with students, management and parents? How?*

Theme II. Decision making process

7. How are the decisions given at the school?

7.1. How are the conflicts solved?

Theme III. Benefits and Challenges

8. What aspects of the implementation and maintenance of education in this school challenges you?

8.1. What are your solutions and suggestions?

3.1.3. How do administrators perceive alternative education in relation to school management and decision making processes in the school?

D. OBSERVATION FORM

Research Questions Addressed:

1. What are the characteristics of alternative education in school?

4. What are the challenges of implementing alternative education?

Instructions:

The classes and workshops will be observed to achieve the purpose of observation for a month. The researcher will take notes during and after the observation. Participants may request the termination of the observation at any time. The identity of the observed participants will be kept confidential. The aim of the observation is not to evaluate individuals or the school, but to reveal the characteristics of the learning environment.

The research data will be collected within the four dimensions of the school environment:

1. School environment: information about school and classroom's physical environment (physical capacity, use of space, etc.), psychological environment (verbal and non-verbal behaviors,)

2. Formal structure of the classroom: information about roles, responsibilities and relationships within the classroom

3. In-class interaction: The relationship among teachers-students and students-students.

4. In-class activities: In-class activities and structure and implementation of activities

E. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This study is carried out under the supervision of Associate Professor Dr Hanife Akar, who is the subject of the thesis study of Sebahat Gök, graduate student of the Department of Educational Programs and Teaching at METU Educational Sciences Department. This form is designed to inform you about the research conditions.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study an alternative educational institution in the context of Turkey and explore the experiences and perception of internal stakeholders.

How do we ask you to help us?

We ask that you answer the interview questions we have prepared for the research orally.

What you need to know about your participation:

If you give your consent, the interview will be recorded. The records will be used for the researcher to document the interviews and will not be shared with third parties. Information that will lead to the recognition of the names and identities of the participants will not be shared. You can end the call at any time during the call without giving any reason.

If you would like more information about this study, you can contact the graduate student sebahat.gok@metu.edu.tr and the dissertation supervisor, Associate Prof Dr Hanife Akar, hanif@metu.edu.tr.

I have read the above information and voluntarily participate in this study.

Name   **Surname**   **Date**   **Signature**

F. CODED DATA EXAMPLE

Experience in private schools *Teacher experience* *TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS*

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ücretli öğretmenlik devlette, ardından özel eğitim merkezi kısa iki haftalığına falan, daha sonra da özel bir kurumda çalıştım sırf okul öncesine özel olan, ve buraya tanışmam da şöyle oldu: ben en son çalıştığım iş yerinde eylül ayında başladım, ya da ekim ayında başladım ama aralık ayına kadar devam edebildim

Teacher's values *contradicting school values* *Teacher values*

çünkü aşırı derecede özel mantığı, özel okul mantığı, çocukların akşama kadar üstlerinin pislik içinde kalıp akşam ebeveyn geleceği zaman çocukları değiştirip saçlarını başlarını taradığımız bir kurumdu. bunları yapmak hem vicdani hem de ahlaki falan hiçbir şeyimle örtüşmüyordu. veya olmayan şeyleri oluyor gibi göstermek, olanın üstünü örtmek, başka şekilde

Misinforming parents *Teacher's perception of private school*

anlatmak falan, bunlar özel kurumlarda yaşadığım çok büyük sıkıntılardı. ve en son çalıştığım kurumda da iki buçuk üç ay falan çalışabildim, oradan da ben daha fazla buna tahammül etmeyeceğim. aynı zamanda çok yoğun bir yönetici baskısı altında, bir iktidar var ve

Oppressive school *management / strict hierarchy*

Verbal violence to teacher *from school management* *Teacher's perception of private school*

onun altındasınız. ve ne derse yapmak zorundasınız, yapamadığınız şeyleri bile göstermek zorundasınız ki ilişkiniz bozulmasın. azar yemeyin falan öğretmen olarak. bunlar benim hazmedemeyeceğim noktalara geldi ve ben istifa edeceğime ocak ayında ama çocukların zor durumda kalmaması için yeni bir öğretmen gelene kadar orada kalacağımı söyledim. ocağın sonu şubat gibi de kurumdan ayrıldı. sonra başka bir kurum bakmak yerine mebde çok daha rahat edeceğimi, çünkü iki yıllık ücretli öğretmenlik deneyimimde sınıfımın kapısını kapattığım zaman hiçkimsenin bir müdahelesi yoktu. muhattap olduğum kimse yoktu. anasınıfları o bakımdan biraz daha rahat mebden onu söyleyebilirim. kpssye hazırlandım ve

Not being able to be appointed by the state *Reasons for working at alternative school*

kpssden 78 puan falan aldım ama atanamadım. atanamayınca da karamsarlığa kapıldım, devlet de atanamıyor, özelde hiç yapmak istemiyorum, ne yapmalıyım derken buranın kuruluş aşamalarını, ilk sene açılamadığını falan bilivordum, takin ediyordum, bir bakım tanıdığın

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u uzu ogrunumumum um uu uununi, imm uunyun
sebahat: peki o başvuru sürecinde seni buraya çeken şey ne oldu?

anonymous teacher: başvuru sürecinde burada zaten çok farklı bir yapılanma olduğunun farkındaydım. çünkü üniversitede bizim kitaplardan okuduğumuz alternatif eğitim, videolarını izlediğimiz highschoollar?? reglolar falan gibi eğitim yaklaşımlarından birine bağlı kalmak bana hep çok riskli geldi. şey gibi aynı bir meb kitabını alıp da otuz kişilik sınıfa girip o kitaptan ders işlemekle tek bir eğitim yaklaşım üzerinden aynı gruba ve bütün okula hitap etmeye çalışmak benim için hangi eğitim yaklaşımı olursa

Eclectic alternative model *Teacher's perception of school's characteristics*

olsun çok riskli bir şey benim görüşüm. burada çeken şeyse alternatif eğitim. aslında tek bir modele değil, tek bir yaklaşıma değil, birkaçını birden deneyimleme imkanı veriyor olmasıydı ve hani şöyle bir iddiası yoktu: Biz montessori okuluyuz, biz regio okuluyuz falan gibi bir iddiası yoktu bu okulun. ben her zaman iddiası olmayan okulların emin adımlarla ilerlediğini, ve yaşayarak deneyim biriktirerek o süreci devam ettiğini

New school model in Turkey *Teacher's perception of school's characteristics*

düşünüyordum hep üniversite yıllarından beri de öyleydi. o yüzden alternatif eğitim benim için farklı ve türkiye'de hiç bir şekilde denenmemiş bir şeydi. benim için bir proje gibiydi aslında burası. bir proje var, gideceğim oraya, başlayacağım projeye, proje çok güzel olacak ya da bir yerde patlayacak falan gibiydi ama şu an devam eden bir süreç. böyle aslında. beni çeken şey buydu. bir de ekoloji ayağı belki beni en cezbeden ayaktı aslında. ekolojik olduğunu da savunan bir çok okula, kuruma gittim, orada da böyle stajların falan oldu ama hiç böyle

Ecological stance *Teacher's perception of school's characteristics*

hakikaten içselleştirememişti hiçbir sureci ama burada benim gördüğüm ve deneyimlediğim ciddi anlamda içselleştirmeye çalışıyorlar hem öğretmenler hem çocuklar hem ebeveynler

sebahat: buna biraz örnek verir misin

Internalization of ecological stance by the stakeholders *Ecological stance*

anonymous teacher: benim 28-29 yaşındayım ve şimdiye kadarki yaşantımda domates hangi mevsim ekilir, biber

TÜRKIYE'NİN MERKEZİNDE ALTERNATIF BIR İLKOKULUN AYAKTA KALIŞI: EBEVEYN DESTEKLİ BİR KOOPERATİF OKULU İLE İLGİLİ DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

GİRİŞ

Bu çalışma, Ankara ilinde bir ebeveyn işbirliğinin sahibi olduğu alternatif bir ilkokulda öğrenme deneyimlerinin nasıl gerçekleştiğini, okulun hangi bileşenlerinin onu alternatif kıldığı, alternatif öğrenme ortamlarının iç paydaşlar tarafından nasıl algılandığını ve alternatif eğitimi uygulamada hangi zorluklar ile yuzleşildiğini araştırmaya odaklanmaktadır. Çalışmanın temel amacı, demokratik ve yenilikçi bir çocuk merkezli bir okul sisteminin Türkiye bağlamında nasıl işlediğine dair kuram ve pratiği ortaya çıkarmaktır.

Yaygın eğitime alternatif yaklaşımlar dünya genelinde yüzyıldan daha eski olmasına rağmen, Türkiye'deki girişimlerin yeni olduğu ifade edilebilir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin ilk yıllarında, alternatif ilkokul modelleri oluşturulmuş olmasına rağmen, bunlar halk eğitiminin ana modelleri ile birleştirilmiş ya da kapatılmıştır. Köy enstitüleri (1940-1946), bu okulların öncülü olarak gelecekteki köy öğretmenlerini eğiterek, kırsal yerleşimleri kalkındırmayı amaçlayıp demokratik katılım ve öğrenci merkezli öğrenme özellikleri gösteren okullar olmuşlardır.(Altunya, 2014).

On yıldan daha uzun bir süre önce, Türkiye'de alternatif eğitim alanındaki kuramsal ve uygulamadaki eksiklikleri ele almak için 2005 yılında Uluslararası Alternatif Eğitim Sempozyumu düzenlenmiştir (Akdağ ve Korkmaz, 2008). Bu etkinliği daha sonra Başka Bir Okul Mümkün Derneği ve BBOM modelinin kurulması takip

etmiştir. Bu tür girişimlerin, merkeziyetçi (Akdağ ve Korkmaz, 2008) ve tektip (BBOM, n.d.) olarak adlandırdıkları yaygın eğitim sisteminden kaçışı hedefledikleri söylenebilir.

Dünyada birçok alternatif okul türü olmasına rağmen, ortak özellikleri bireysellik ve çeşitliliği vurgulamak, aile tipi küçük bir topluluk atmosferine sahip olmak, rekabete karşın işbirliğine dayalı çalışmaya değer vermek ve sosyal oluşuma katılım bilincini artırmayı amaçlamaktır (Nagata, 2006).

Bu çalışma için seçilen durum, çalışmada Anadolu Alternatif İlköğretim Okulu olarak adlandırılmış olan Ankara'da bir ebeveyn ilkokuludur. Okulun misyonu, çocukların kendilerini fark etmelerini sağlamak, katılımcı demokrasi ile yönetilmek, ekolojik olarak dengeli olmak ve ticari çıkarlardan uzak durmak olarak belirtilmiştir.

Problem Tanımı

Ülkenin ana eğitim sisteminin demokratik duruşu ve etkililiği sadece alternatif okullar arayan ebeveynler tarafından sorgulanamamaktadır. Her okul düzeyinde demokratik eğitim ve uygulama eksikliğini ortaya çıkaran çalışmalar bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmalar demokrasinin öğrenciler tarafından yanlış algılandığı, öğretmenler ve öğretim üyeleri tarafından demokratik olmayan uygulamaların yer aldığını ortaya koymuştur. (Kaldırım, 2015; Tufekcı ve Okutan, 2006; Demirtaş, 2004). Mevcut yaygın eğitim, etkililiği açısından da eleştirilmektedir. Türk eğitim sisteminin, öğrencileri bilgi çağı için gerekli becerilerle hazırlayıp hazırlamadığı, özellikle Uluslararası Öğrenci Değerlendirme Programı (PISA)'da Türkiye'nin 2015'teki performansından sonra ortaya çıkan bir diğer konudur. 2015 yılında, Türkiye'nin OECD ortalamasının zaten çok altında olan performansı daha da düşerek 70 ülke arasında 50'ye yerleşmiştir. PISA, öğrencilerin bilgi ve becerileri uygulama yeteneklerini ölçmektedir (OECD, 2016).

 2005'teki ulusal müfredat reformu, eğitim programı yaklaşımını davranışçı-bilişselciden yapılandırmacı-bilişsel yaklaşım ile değiştirerek bilgi çağı ile uyumlu hale gelmeyi amaçlamıştır. (MEB, 2017) Bunula birlikte, bu değişikliğin sınıf

uygulamasına yeterli derecede yansımadığı tartışılmıştır. (Fidan ve Duman, 2014; Yıldırım ve Dönmez, 2008; Dinç ve Doğan, 2010; Bozdoğan ve Altunçekiç, 2007). Tüm bu bulgular göz önüne alındığında yaygın eğitim sistemine alternatif bir çözüm gerektiği öne sürülebilir.

Çalışmanın Amacı

Bu çalışma yapılandırmacı-bilişsel yaklaşımı merkeze yerleştiren çocuk merkezli alternatif bir okulu incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu incelemenin, bu türk okulların Türkiye bağlamında nasıl işlediğini, demokratik ve yenilikçi bir sistemin nasıl uygulanacağını, tektip olarak algıladığı yaygın eğitim sisteminde demokratik ve çoğulcu bir mikrosistemi sürdürebilmenin güçlüğü ve bu güçlüklerle nasıl başa çıkıldığı konusunda bilgilendirme sağlaması amaçlanmıştır.

Çalışmanın Önemi

Bu çalışma, alternatif eğitimin öğrenme ve öğretme açısından uygulamada nasıl işlediği ve paydaşların bu deneyimleri nasıl algıladıklarını araştırmak yoluyla Türkiye bağlamında alternatif okul literatürüne katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, çalışma benzer bir model benimsemek isteyen okullar için veri sağlayabilir ve araştırılacak okula geri bildirimde bulunabilir. Kısacası, bu çalışma Türkiye bağlamında alternatif okul literatürünü bilgilendirmenin yanı sıra uygulamada katkıda bulunmayı da amaçlamaktadır.

Bulgular, okulu alternatif yapan temel özellikleri demokratik okul yönetimi, ifade özgürlüğü, topluluk duygusu, çocuk merkezli eğitim ve ekolojik duruş olarak ortaya koymuştur. Bulgular alternatif eğitimi uygulama zorlukları ile ilgili içgörüleri ebeveynlerin açık olmayan statüsü, karar verme sürecinde fikir birliği ilkesinin getirisi olarak zaman yönetimindeki verimsizlik, disiplin kurmada sorunlar, alternatif okul modelleri ve kaynaklarının eksikliği, kısıtlı mali kaynaklar ve ebeveynlerin akademik kaygıları ve bütünsel eğitim ikilemi olarak ortaya koymuştur. Sonuçlar pratik bağlamda ulusal öğretmen eğitimi, alternatif uygulamaların iyileştirilmesi, faydalı alternatif uygulamaların ana eğitime aktarılması, gelecek araştırmalar

bağlamında ise etkili alternatif öğretim araştırmaları, ebeveynlerin eğitimde rolü ve kültürel dönüşüm temaları ile tartışılmıştır.

YÖNTEM

Bu çalışma, açıklayıcı nitel tek vaka çalışması olarak tasarlanmıştır. Veriler, dersliklerin ve okulların gözlemlenmesi, öğretmenlerle görüşme (N = 9) ve okul yöneticisi (N=1) ile görüşme ve ortaya çıkan belgelerle toplanmıştır. Veriler tümevarım içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir.

Araştırma Soruları

1. Okulda uygulanan alternatif eğitimin temel özellikleri nelerdir?
2. Öğretmenler öğrenme, öğretme ve mesleki gelişim ile ilgili olarak alternatif eğitimi nasıl algılıyorlar?
3. Yöneticiler okuldaki yönetim ve okuldaki karar alma süreçleriyle ilgili olarak alternatif eğitimi nasıl algılıyorlar?
4. Alternatif eğitimi uygulamanın zorlukları nelerdir ve bu zorluklarla nasıl başa çıkılmaktadır?

Katılımcılar

Araştırmaya katılımcıları öğretmenler (*N* = 9) ve okul yöneticisinden (*N* = 1) oluşmaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında okulun tüm akademik personeli ile görüşülmüştür. Aşağıdaki tabloda katılımcı demografisinin ana hatları görülebilir:

Tablo 1

Katılımcılar

Öğretmen isimleri	Öğretmen rolleri	Okuldaki deneyim süresi	Ozgeçmiş
Berna	Anaokulu öğretmeni	3 yıl	7 yıl özel okullarda anaokulu öğretmenliği
Şeyma	Ingilizce öğretmeni	5 ay	Yeni mezun öğretmen
Aylin	Ilkokul sınıf öğretmeni	5 ay	Ozel okullarda 7 yıl sınıf öğretmenliği

Tablo 1 (cont'd)

Öğretmen isimleri	Öğretmen rolleri	Okuldaki deneyim süresi	Ozgeçmiş
Deniz	Ilkokul sınıf öğretmeni	2 yıl	Drama öğretmenliği deneyimi
Narin	Beden eğitimi öğretmeni	2 yıl	Iki yıl yüzme eğitmenliği, cankurtaranlık, yaz okulu öğretmenliği
Hülya	Yarı zamanlı ilkokul sınıf öğretmeni	5 ay	Eğitim gönüllülüğü ve dershane öğretmenliği
Ozge	Anaokulu öğretmeni	3 yıl	Ozel ve devlet okullarında öğretmenlik
Kemal	Ilkokul sınıf öğretmeni	5 ay	Eğitim gönüllülüğü
Esra	Psikolojik danışman	5 ay	Psikolojik danışmanlık ve özel eğitim çift diplomalı yeni mezun öğretmen
Meral	Okul müdürü	2 ay	Ozel okullarda yedi yıl Biyoloji öğretmenliği

Veri Toplama Yöntemleri

1. Gözlemler

Bu çalışma için gözlem, eğitim yılının ikinci çeyreğinde yapılmıştır. Saha çalışmasından önce, okul izni ve velilerden oluşan okul komitesi tarafından resmi izin alınmıştır. Tüm okul günleri, beş farklı seansta toplam 40 saat boyunca veri doyumuna ulaşılana dek gözlemlenmiştir. Bu süreçte, kahvaltı zamanları, ilköğretim sınıfları, öğle yemeği zamanı, atölye çalışmaları, öğretmenler odası ve okul bahçesindeki etkileşimler, okul parlamentosu, ortam tasarımı, kişiler arası etkileşim ve eğitsel etkinliklere odaklanılmıştır. Veri toplamadan önce uzman incelemesinden geçirilmiş bir gözlem kılavuzu oluşturulmuştur. Gözlem kılavuzu gözlem sırasında odaklanacak dört boyutu belirtmektedir: okul ortamı, okul yapısı, okuldaki etkileşimler ve okul etkinlikleri.

Araştırmacının rolü ve amacı, çalışma boyunca tüm katılımcılara açık olarak belirtilmiştir. Aktiviteleri çoğu zaman katılımcı olmadan gözlemlenirken, kahvaltı ve öğle yemeklerinde katılımcı olarak gözlem yapılmıştır.

2.Görüşmeler

Bu çalışma için öğretmenlerle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme, yöneticilerle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme ve öğretmenlerle yapılandırılmamış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Ortamda gözlem sırasında meydana gelen olayları aydınlatmak için sınıf içi gözlemlerden sonra yapılandırılmamış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Öğretmenler ve okul yöneticisi ile yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, sırasıyla 2. ve 3. araştırma sorusunu cevaplamayı amaçlamıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formları bir konu ve yöntem uzmanı tarafından gözden geçirilmiştir.

Tüm görüşmeler araştırmacı tarafından okul içinde yüz yüze gerçekleştirilmiştir. 60 ila 90 dakika arasında süren toplam 10 görüşme yapılmıştır. Tüm görüşmeler izin alınarak ses kaydına alınmış ve daha sonra araştırmacı tarafından veri analizi yapılmak üzere yazılı olarak deşifre edilmiştir.

3. Belge analizi

Belgeler, görüşmeler ve gözlemler için tamamlayıcı bir veri kaynağı olarak toplanmıştır. Ortaya çıkan resmi belgeler okul manifestosu, protokoller, program, programlar ve öğrenci eserleri gibi çalışma boyunca toplanan belgelerden oluşmaktadır.

Veri Analizi

Bu çalışma için tümevarımsal kodlama yöntemi seçilmiştir. Veri analizi, araştırılacak konuları belirleyen araştırma soruları tarafından yönlendirilmiştir. Transkriptler, araştırmacı tarafından temaları ve kategorileri tanımlamak için birkaç kez okunmuştur. Bütün transkriptler araştırmacı tarafından (SG) okunmuştur ve bir alt örnek tez danışmanı HA tarafından okunmuştur. Transkript SG tarafından kodlanmış ve HA ile görüşülerek revize edilmiştir. Bir kodlama çerçevesi geliştirilmiştir. Kodlama çerçevesi, analizin ilgi düzeyine odaklanmak için yeni kodlanmış transkriptlere dayanarak birkaç kez revize edilmiştir. Tüm bulgular doğrudan ham verilerin analizinden ortaya çıkmıştır.

BULGULAR

Sonuçlar dört bölüm halinde açıklanmıştır: Anadolu Alternatif İlköğretim Okulunda alternatif eğitimin özellikleri, öğretmenlerin okulda öğrenme ve öğretim sürecine ilişkin gili algıları, okul yöneticisinin okul yönetimi ve karar verme sürecine ilişkin algıları ve alternatif eğitim uygulamadaki zorluklar. Sonuçlar sırayla sunulmuştur.

Okuldaki Alternatif Eğitimin Özellikleri

Okuldaki alternatif eğitimin özellikleri beş ana tema ile açıklanmıştır: demokratik okul yönetimi, ifade özgürlüğü, topluluk duygusu, çocuk merkezli eğitim ve ekolojik duruş.

Demokratik okul yönetimi, okulun temel değerlerinden biridir ve iki ana ilke ortaya koymaktadır: oyların çoğunluğundan ziyade oy birliğine dayalı karar verme mekanizması ve yatay organizasyon yapısı. Bu değerlere ilişkin olarak okul yöneticisinin ana rolü ebeveynler ve öğretmen arasında köprü olmaktır. Yönetici, karar vermek için kendi inisiyatifini kullanmamaktadır. Aksine, paydaşlar tarafından verilen karara göre hareket eder. Çocuklar da dahil olmak üzere okulda herkes birbirine ismi ve 'sen' zamiri ile seslenmektedir. Oy birliği ile karar vermeye değer verilir. Haftada bir kez toplanan okul meclisinde bir anaokulu çocuğunun düşüncesi en büyük çocuklar ve yetişkinlerinki kadar değerli sayılır ve önerileri dikkate alınır.

İfade özgürlüğüne okulda büyük önem verilir. Hem çocuklar hem de öğretmenlerin ifade özgürlüğüne saygı duyulur. İfade özgürlüğünün dikkate değer bir özelliği, çocukların öğretmenlerini serbestçe eleştirebilmeleridir. Çocuklar öğretmenlerine kuralları ihlal ettikleri zaman hatırlatmaktadırlar ve öğretmenler bu eleştiriyi memnuniyetle kabul ederler. Örneğin, gözlemler sırasında öğrenciler öğretmenlerini sınıfta yüksek sesle konuşması konusunda uyarmışlardır. Öğretmenleri Deniz ise bütün sınıfa konuştuğundan sesini yükseltmek zorunda kaldığını *söyleyerek "Ama tamam, bir dahaki sefere konuştuğumda dikkatli olacağım"* şeklinde yanıt vermiştir.

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İfade özgürlüğü, öğretmenler arasında açık iletişim yoluyla da kendini göstermektedir. Anlaşmazlık, iletişimin doğal bir parçası olarak görülmektedir.

Topluluk duygusu okulun bir diğer önemli özelliğidir ve iletişim, işbirliği ve paydaşların birbirlerinin refahına nasıl değer verdiklerini göstermeleri yoluyla kendini göstermektedir. Aileler ile ilişkinin geleneksel ebeveyn-öğretmen rollerinin ötesine geçtiği görülmektedir. Çocuklar için ortak bir sorumluluk hissedildiği görülmektedir. Öğretmenler ve çocuklar arasındaki ilişki de dostane ilişkiler, karşılıklı bağlılık ve birbirlerine olan özen ile geleneksel öğretmen-öğrenci rolünün ötesinde olduğunu göstermektedir. Rekabete karşın işbirliği vurgusu hem sınıf içinde hem de öğretmenler arasında görülmektedir.

Çocuk merkezli eğitim okuldaki alternatif eğitimin önemli özelliklerinden biridir. Çocuk merkezli eğitim etkinlikleri çemberler, okul parlamentosu, atölye çalışmaları, bireyselleştirilmiş haftalık öğrenme planı ve alternatif değerlendirme ile ön plana çıkmaktadır. Ayrıca öz yönelimli öğrenme, okuldaki çocuk merkezli eğitimin ayırt edici bir diğer özelliğidir. Çocukların kendi öğrenme planlamalarını yapmaları ve kontrol etmeleri, öğrenilecek kaynakları arama, sorgulama yoluyla öğrenme ve çocuk özerkliği yoluyla öz yönelimli öğrenmenin gerçekleştirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

Ekolojik duruş okulun bir başka önemli özelliğidir. Bu ekolojik duyarlılık, okul yemeklerinde ve organik tuvalet kağıdı gibi ürünlerde ekolojik yiyeceklerin tüketilmesiyle uygulamaya konan eylemlerin yanı sıra çöp geri dönüşümü, sebze bahçesi ve komposto gibi çevrenin korunmasına odaklanan atölye çalışmaları ile ortaya çıkmaktadır.

2. Öğrenme ve Öğretime İlişkin Alternatif Eğitime Dair Öğretmen Algısı

Okul müfredatı, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın 2013 ilköğretim okul müfredatına dayanmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra okul, duygularını tanıma ve ifade etme, çatışma çözme, öfke yönetimi, başkalarına saygı ve paylaşma unsurları ile duyuşsal boyutta öğrenime de odaklanarak bütünsel bir eğitim yaklaşımına sahiptir.

Öğretmenler 2013 müfredatını esnek ve alternatif eğitimi kolaylaştırıcı bulmaktadır. MEB öğrenme çıktılarına göre haftalık çalışma planları ve öğretim materyalleri hazırlanmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, MEB öğrenme çıktıları öğretmenler tarafından ayıklanmaktadır, çünkü bireysel çalışma süresi ve öğleden sonra atölyeler ders saatlerini sınırlamaktadır. Özellikle, hayat bilgisi dersinin çoğu yaşayarak öğrenme ilkesi ile açıkça öğretilmeden örtük bir şekilde verilmektedir. Öğretmenler, MEB müfredatını okul programlarına dönüştürmekten özerk ve sorumlu olduklarını ifade etmektedir. Ders saatlerini ve planlamayı belirlemelerine yardımcı olacak bir müfredat uzmanı ya da kılavuzu yoktur. Öğretmenler bunun tatmin edici bir duygu olduğu kadar zorlayıcı olduğunu da ifade etmektedir. Örneğin Deniz yaşadığı zorluğu Deniz, "Bu planlar, yıllık planlar… Ne kadar iyi yaptığımı sorguluyorum çünkü uzman olmadığım bir şey yapıyorum" şeklinde ifade etmiştir.

Okul Yöneticisinin Okul Yönetimine İlişkin Algısı

Okul yöneticisi Meral, okuldaki yönetim yapısını hiyerarşik olmayan ve yatay bir örgütsel yapı olarak tanımlamaktadır. Bu yapıdaki rolü bir organizatör olmaktır. Ancak, yönetici olarak bazı durumlarda inisiyatif de almaktadır. Bu durumlar, okul seviyesinin dışındaki düzenlemeler nedeniyle okulun yapmak zorunda olduğu okul prosedürleridir veya hızlı kararlar gerektiren durumlardır. Buna ilişkin bir zorluk inisiyatif gerektiren bu kararların uzlaşma sağlanmadan alınmasıdır. Meral'a göre, bu yapının dezavantajı, kararın kendi inisiyatifine göre aldığında gerçekten inisiyatifine ihtiyaç duyup duymadığını sorgulayarak ikilemde kalması ve zihinsel çabaya neden olmasıdır.

Meral'in belirttiğine göre demokratik değerler, çocukların karşılıklı ilişkileri düzeyinde de görülmektedir. Öğrenciler kendi aralarındaki çatışmaları çözmeye teşvik edilmektedir. İki veya daha fazla çocuk, bir akran çatışmasını çözmek için Meral'e başvurduğunda, ne yapmaları gerektiğini söylemeden kendi aralarında bu çatışmayı çözmelerini ister.

Meral'in önemli bir görevi de öğretmenler ve kooperatif arasında bir köprü kurarak, iki gruba da eşit mesafede olmasıdır. Bunu iki nedenden ötürü zorlu bulduğunu ifade

etmektedir: Birincisi, bu, çok fazla iletişim gerektirmektedir. Gününün önemli bir kısmını iletişimi koordine etmeye ayırmaktadır. İkincisi, kooperatiflerdeki bazı ebeveynler okul süreçlerine daha fazla dahil olmak isterken öğretmenler daha uzak durmalarını istemektedir. İkisi arasında köprü görevi gören müdür için bu yönetilmesi gereken bir gerilim anlamına gelmektedir.

Alternatif Eğitimi Uygulamada Yaşanan Zorluklar

Veriler, alternatif eğitimin uygulanmasında karşılaşılan zorluk türleri olarak beş ana temayı ortaya koymuştur. Görüşme verileri, alternatif eğitimin uygulanmasındaki en büyük zorlukların ebeveynlerin okul işlerinde rolleriyle ilgili belirsiz durumları olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Ebeveynlerin hem okul işbirliği hem de öğretmen işverenleri olarak statüleri öğretmenler ve ebeveynler arasında güç mücadelesi yaratmaktadır. Veriler, ebeveynlerin okula işlerine kabul edilebilir katılım derecelerinin tanımlanmadığını veya kararlaştırılmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Öğretmenler, ebeveynlerin mesleki alanı olarak gördükleri eğitim sürecine katılmamasını isterken, tüm ebeveynlerin gerekli sınırı korumadığını düşünmektedir. Öğretmenler, okulun, ebeveynlerin eğitim süreçlerine müdahele olması nedeni ile özerklikten yoksun kaldığını ifade etmektedir.

Komisyon karar sürecinde geçirilen yoğun zaman, paydaşların bir diğer büyük şikayetidir. Deniz ve Berna, görüşmelerde yatay yapıdan memnun olsalar da bazen insanlara ne yapmaları gerektiğini söyleyecek bir patrona ihtiyaç duyduklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Bu yavaş karar verme sorununu çözmek için, bazı öğretmenler komitelerin profesyonelleşmesini ve onlara tam özerklik verilmesini önermektedir. Hülya ise bunun demokrasinin doğal bir sonucu olduğunu ifade etmiştir.

Disiplin problemi karşılaşılan diğer bir zorluktur. Öğretmenler bazı çocukların bazen diğer okullardaki gibi şiddetli davranışlar gösterdiğini ifade etmektedir. Bu sorunu çözmede etkili bir yol bulmakta güçlük çektiklerini dile getirmektedirler. Okulun temel değerlerinden biri, ödül ve ceza sistemine karşın 'pozitif disiplin' kullanmaktır.Bu, çocuğa ödül ve ceza vermek yerine davranışlarının doğal sonuçları ile yüzleştirmek anlamına gelmektedir. Ancak öğretmenler pozitif disiplinin etkisiz

olduğunu deneyimlemektedirler. Deneyimlerine göre, bir süre sonra istenmeyen bir davranış tekrarlandığını ifade etmektedirler. Okuldaki olumlu disiplin yaklaşımıyla ilgili diğer bir diğer sorun ise, bireyler arasında "ceza" veya "özgürlük" kavramları hakkında farklı anlayışlar olmasıdır. Çocuklar, hatalı davranışlarından dolayı cezalandırılmamaları gerektiğini bilmektedirler. Örneğin bir vakada, üçüncü sınıftaki bir çocuk öğretmenine şiddet göstermiştir. Okul, öğrenciyi bir haftalığına okuldan uzaklaştırmaya karar vermiştir. Çocuk, bu kararın okulun değerlerine aykırı bir ceza anlamına geldiğini söyleyerek karara itiraz etmiştir. Ancak, öğretmen için, bu bir ceza değil onun hatalı davranışının doğal sonucudur.

Diğer bir zorluk ise, öğretmenlerin rehber edinebileceği kullanabileceği Türkiye'de alternatif öğretim modelleri ve kaynaklarının eksikliğidir. Veriler Aralık 2017'de toplandığında, okul sadece üç yıllık bir deneyime sahipti. Öğretmenler ayrıca başka bir alternatif okulda daha önce öğretim deneyimine sahip değildi. Öğretmenler, öğretmen oryantasyon programının öğretim yöntemleri veya teknikleri konusunda kendilerine rehberlik etme konusunda pratik bir katkısı olmadığını belirtmektedirler. Bunun sonucu olarak öğretmenler öğretim sürecinde alternatif eğitimin ne olduğuna dair kişisel yargılarına dayanarak karar vermektedirler. Bazı öğretmenler Montessori ve Reggio gibi alternatif eğitim yöntemlerine başvursalar da çoğunlukla sınıflarında etkili olduğunu düşündükleri bir öğretim metodolojisi bulana kadar deneme yanılma yöntemini benimsemektedirler. Ayrıca Gözlem verileri okulda belirlenmiş, sistematik veya yapılandırılmış bir öğretim metodolojisi olmadığını açıkça göstermektedir. Öğretmenlerin öğretme şekli, öğretmenlerin kendi alternatif veya etkili öğretme anlayışına dayanan bireysel bir süreçtir.

Yaşanan bir diğer zorluk bütüncül eğitime karşı ebeveynlerin akademik kaygılarıdır. Şeyma ve Meral, bazı ebeveynlerin karşılaştıkları zor buldukları akademik kaygı ve beklentilere sahip olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Okulun diğer okullardan daha az akademik ders saati bulunmaktadır. Öğrencilerin sadece sabahları akademik dersleri vardır ve öğleden sonraları okulun bütünsel yaklaşımı ile uyumlu atölye çalışmalarına ayrılmıştır. Öğretmenler bunun akademik mükemmelliği feda etmek anlamına gelmek zorunda olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir.

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TARTIŞMA

Bu bölümde farklı alternatif okul modellerine karşı okulun modeli, öğretmen felsefesinin program geliştirme ve öğretim sürecinde etkisi, ebeveynlerin kontrolü ve öncü bir okul olmanın zorlukları temaları sırayla tartışılmıştır. Okul, batı alternatif okullarından ve erken ulusal modellerden nitelikler taşıması ile eklektik bir alternatif eğitim yaklaşımına sahiptir.

Alternatif eğitimin sürdürülebilirliğinin öğretmenlerin alternatif değerlerle donatılmasını gerektirdiği sonucuna varılabilir. Bulgular öğretmenlerin eğitim felsefesinin okulda çalışmaya başlamadan önce bile eşitlik, demokrasi ve bütüncül eğitim değerleri ile uyumlu olduğunu ortaya koydu. Öğretmenlerin öğretim tarzlarının okul değerleri ve özellikleri ile tutarlı olduğu saptanmıştır. Bu nedenle, alternatif eğitimin okulun değerlerine inanan öğretmenleri gerektirdiği söylenebilir. Ders programı ve öğretim süreçlerini tasarlarken, öğretmenlerin felsefesinin planlamalarını etkilediği ortaya çıkmıştır. Başka bir deyişle, bir öğretmenin felsefesi, müfredat ve öğretim süreçlerini şekillendirmektedir. Çocuğun özgürlük derecesine olan inanç ve sınır gereksinimi öğretmenden öğretmene farklılık göstermiş ve bu fark, sınıflar arasındaki uygulamaları da etkilemiştir.

Bulgular, ebeveynlerin aynı zamanda okulun sahipleri ve sermaye sahibi olmalarının çift statüye sahip olmalarına ve bunun okuldaki güç ilişkilerini etkilediğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu sonuç, İngiltere'deki ebeveyn kooperatif ücretsiz okul girişimleri ile ilgili literatür ile uyumludur (Firestone, 1975). Bazı veliler, öğretmenlerin sınıf içi uygulamalarına, okulun temel değerleri ile uyumlu ya da çatışan beklentilerle müdahale etmektedir. Öğretmenin, bu ebeveynlerin beklentileri karşısında direnç gösterip göstermemesi öğretmenden öğretmene farklılık göstermektedir. Bunula birlikte, tüm öğretmenler sınıf içi uygulamalarda öğretmenlerin tam özerkliğini istemektedir. Ancak literatür, bir dereceye kadar ebeveyn katılımının kooperatif demokratik okullarda gerçekleştiğini göstermektedir (Firestone, 1975) ve ebeveyn katılımı eğitime fayda sağlayacak bir şekilde kullanılabilir. (Herman ve Yeh, 1980). Bu nedenle, ebeveynlerin öğretim sürecinden tamamen hariç tutulmaları gerçekçi olmayan bir beklenti olabilir. Velilerin katılım

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derecesi, paydaşlar tarafından hem öğretmenlerin hem de ebeveynlerin memnun hissetmelerini sağlayacak şekilde belirlenmelidir.

Türkiye'deki benzersiz yapısıyla öncü bir alternatif okul olan okul, örnek alabileceği modellerin mevcut olmaması zorluğuyla karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. Okulun esnek alternatif yaklaşımı nedeniyle spesifik bir alternatif metodoloji mevcut değildir. Bu özgünlük öğretmenlere esneklik sağlarken, sistematik bir öğretim metodolojisi ve rehberliğini eksikliği öğretmenlerin alternatif öğretime etkili bir şekilde adaptasyonunda zorluklara neden olmaktadır.

ÖNERİLER

1. Öğretmenler, neredeyse hiçbir rehberlerinin olmadığı için alternatif eğitim sistemini anlayıp uyum sağlama konusunda zorluk çektiklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Bu duruma ilişkin olarak öğretmen eğitimi programları, öğretmen adaylarını müfredat geliştiricileri olarak geliştirerek bu yetersizliği giderebilir. İkincisi, okulun oryantasyon eğitimi, öğretmenlere uygulamalı öğretim rehberliği sağlamalıdır. Bu rehberlik, okul öğretmenlerinin mevcut birikmiş tecrübeleri sonucu sahip oldukları etkili stratejileri ve metodolojileri belgelendirme yoluyla bir araya getirilebilir.

2. BM'nin 2030 sürdürülebilir kalkınma gündemine (UN, 2014) göre, 2030'un en önemli hedefi, öğrencilere insan haklarını, barış ve şiddet içermeyen kültürleri, çoğulculuğu ve barış kültürünü teşvik eden eğitim sağlamaktır. Türkiye'deki üniversiteler, öğretmen adayı ve hizmet içi öğretmenleri 21. yüzyılın değerleri ile aynı hizaya getirecek donanıma sahip olmalıdır. Okulun demokratik, eşitlikçi ve çoğulcu yapısı, bu değerleri ulusal düzeyde yaymak için yerel bir model görevi görebilir. Bu model, ulusal eğitim fakülteleri için bu değerleri öğretmen eğitimine dahil ederken yardımcı olabilir.

3. Sonuçlar, pozitif disiplinin şiddet gibi yıkıcı davranışlarla baş etmede eksikliklere sahip olduğunu göstermiştir. Belirli kuralların eksikliği, kabul edilebilir davranışların sınırlarını bulanıklaştırmaktadır. Şiddet gibi yıkıcı davranışlar karşısında kesin yaptırımlar belirlenmelidir.

4. Çalışma, okulun demokratik ve eşitlikçi değerlerinin paydaşlar tarafından içselleştirildiğini ve okul sınırları içinde korunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bireysel ve sosyal dönüşüm ve kültürel çatışma olgusunu anlamak için, paydaşların okul dışındaki daha büyük bağlamlardaki davranışlarını araştıran araştırmalara ihtiyaç vardır.

5. Çalışmada, ebeveynlerin okul sürecine katılımına odaklanılmıştır. Ancak, ebeveynler katılımcı olarak bulunmamaktadır. Ebeveynlerin konuyla ilgili algılarını ortaya çıkaran bir araştırmaya ihtiyaç vardır, böylece tüm paydaşların deneyim ve görüşlerini içeren nesnel ve bütünsel bir yaklaşım elde edilebilir.

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<u>**TEZİN ADI**</u> / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English): THE SURVIVAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL IN CENTRAL TURKEY: THE CASE OF A PARENT CO-OP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

<u>**TEZİN TÜRÜ**</u> / <u>DEGREE</u>**:** **Yüksek Lisans** / Master ■   **Doktora** / PhD ☐

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