CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON THE IDEAL PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM COMMUNITY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

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Children's Perspectives on the Ideal Preschool Classroom Community:

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Tuğba Aladağ, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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ABSTRACT

Children's Perspectives on The Ideal Preschool Classroom Community:

An Ethnographic Case Study

This study aims to examine how young children construct their existing and ideal preschool classroom community through imagination and implementation by featuring them as co-researchers and including them as active participants in making changes for their classroom community. The study drives from children rights movement, the new sociology of childhood, and interpretive reproduction theory and critical pedagogy. An ethnographic case study was conducted in the preschool center of a public university in Turkey. Ten children aged 5-to-6 along with the classroom teacher participated in the study. Implementation was carried out in two daily procedures: (1) During the first half of the day, children constructed and implemented their ideal classroom community practices as co-researchers, and (2) during the second half of the day, they described and shared their ideal and existing classroom community practices and experiences via child participatory activities. The data included intensive and thick field notes of classroom observations, informal semi-structured child conferencing, and teacher journal reflection notes. The results expanded on the understanding of a child-centered preschool classroom community from children's perspective. This study offers relevant implications for methodological approaches including children as co-researchers as well as child participation and child-centered paradigm in early childhood education for practitioners.

ÖZET

Okul Öncesi Çocuklarının İdeal Sınıf Paydaşları Üzerine Görüşleri

Bu çalışma okul öncesi çocuklarının ortak araştırmacı olarak içinde bulundukları ve hayal ettikleri okul öncesi sınıfı paydaşları hakkındaki görüşlerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma çocuk hakları, çocukluk araştırmaları, eleştirel pedagoji ve ortak araştırmacı olarak çocuklar bakış açıları ile desteklenmiştir. Etnografik bir örnek olay incelemesi olarak tasarlanan araştırma devlet üniversitesine bağlı bir okul öncesi eğitim sınıfında beş altı yaş çocukları arasındaki on çocuk ve bir okul öncesi öğretmeninin araştırmacı olarak katılımı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada haftanın bir günü ikiye bölünerek incelenmiştir. Sabah kısmında çocuklar ortak araştırmacı olarak hayal ettikleri sınıfı oluşturmuştur. Öğleden sonra ise çocuk katılımı temelli aktiviteler ile çocukların hayal ettikleri ve içinde bulundukları sınıf paydaşları hakkındaki paylaşımları ve görüşleri toplanmıştır. Çocuk katılımı temelli araştırma teknikleri, çok-yöntemli Mozaik yaklaşım temel alınarak fotoğraf çekme, çizme, turlama ve harita oluşturma, çeşitli sanat çalışmaları tekniklerinden oluşturulmuştur. Ayrıca çalışmanın verileri sınıf gözlemleri, çocuk konferansları ve araştırmacı günlüklerinden oluşmaktadır. Tematik analizler sonucu, çocukların gözünden çocuk katılımının ön planda olduğu okul öncesi sınıfı paydaşları modeli ortaya çıkmaktadır. Çocukların hayal ettikleri sınıfın paydaşlarını etkileyen ve hayal ettikleri sınıfı pratikte oluştururken kurguladıkları etmenler ve bu etmenler arasındaki ilişkiler nitel araştırma perspektiflerine göre incelenmiş ve yorumlanmıştır. Çalışma, ayrıca çocukların bakış açısından bu etmenlerin sınıf ortamlarına pratik uygulanış önerilerine dair ve çocukların ortak araştırmacı olarak katılımına ilişkin öneriler sunmaktadır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 A personal narrative

I took many courses about child development during my undergraduate years. These courses, in theory, developed my understanding of children's rights and classroom practices. Throughout my studies, I have achieved a greater awareness that being nurtured and surrounded by a caring family has life-long positive effects on individuals' lives. Upon completion of my studies, I started to work as a teacher in a preschool. As a preschool teacher, I have always aimed to seek opportunities to create the same effect in my classrooms for my children. My teaching experience with young children has taught me that once a positive classroom climate is created through the feeling of a well-bounded community, children can get off to a good start in their education journey.

My first-year teaching experience in the field taught me that conflicts occur in the classroom under any circumstances and irrespective of any positive guidance. I have understood that conflicts are in the very nature of preschool classroom community and indeed opportunities for learning and negotiating. Therefore, it is important to note that, as I have learned, children can learn how to deal with these conflicts within a positive classroom community in a physically and emotionally secure environment. Conflicts that occur in a positive classroom community empower children to improve their social-emotional problem-solving skills and appreciate their individuality in a respective way.

Reflecting on my academic interest and professional experience, I started to think about how I can create a secure classroom environment for children. Some

strategies I used such as promoting cooperation, a sense of belonging, and acceptance for me and children seemed to foster a strong collaboration and solidarity among children in the classroom. However, I kept coming to questioning the decision-making process among children in my classrooms. Even if I was aware that children can make relevant contributions to decision-making process in theory, I was not confident about it in practice. At the same time, children were questioning some of my decisions. These differences between theory and practice challenged me to try something new.

Another point I have noticed is that not all strategies work for all children in the classroom. I have arrived to the conclusion that one size does not fit all. That made me to start questioning why all early childhood classrooms need to apply the same strategies even though we accept that all children are different and these differences among children increase in the course of cultural embodiment and time. Therefore, building a responsive classroom community that takes into account the individuality of children needs to reflect its members and requires a careful approach to each child.

This self-questioning process urged me to connect theory and practice in the classroom as a teacher and researcher. I have gained insights as to the ways in which how a preschool community should be established from different perspectives of theoretical and practical experiences. As I took my graduate courses while working as a preschool teacher, I was struck by the research gap in terms of giving voice to children about their needs, wants, desires, which made me curious about what preschool children would expect from and how they would imagine their idealized school community with its various components, such as curriculum, peers, teacher, physical environment and other accompanying factors. Along the way of questioning

these issues through my readings, my experience as a teacher in the classroom, thus my gradually more nuanced understandings, I decided to conduct my thesis research on children's perspectives on an ideal classroom community. This could only be possible by including children as co-researchers, enabling in various ways for their active participation and giving voice to them and sharing their voices in the form of a research study.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This paper offers a myriad of aims to the research field. The research aims to understand children's current and imagined classroom community with its integral components including teachers, school personnel, curriculum, physical design of schools, activities, and their peers. Thus, this study aims to introduce children's perspectives of ideal classroom community features and learning spaces in their imagination and explores the dynamics of when their imagined ideal preschool classroom community in theory becomes the implemented in practice.

Another aim of this research is to contribute to child-centered studies in education field by using *children as co-researchers* methodology and presenting child participatory methods. In this research, I sought to understand the extent of agency children would demonstrate as co-researchers to make choices, express ideas and implement relevant practices related to their classroom community with the intention that their views could contribute to the classroom community designs in the field of early childhood education. The study examined young children's competencies and participation in expressing their ideal preschool classroom community perspectives, and how they turn their imagined perspectives into real practice when provided with the freedom and the space in the classroom.

1.3 Significance of the study

The study is particularly significant considering its children as co-researchers methodology and the emphasis it makes on child participation to the construction of an idealized and implemented classroom community. In Turkey, the studies including children as co-researchers are meager. Therefore, this study is methodologically unique in a way that many numerous methods for children's active participation were used in this study rather than solely depending on interviews and observations. In this regard, visual techniques like photographs, drawing, child-led tours, map making, three-dimensional art activities, and dialogue photos were actively used to encourage children's involvement in the research process. Children as co-researchers methodology gives children greater power, which allows them to produce their knowledge and express their ideas as active and competent agents during the research process (James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998). Moreover, I as the teacher of the classroom and as the other researcher who conducted this study along with children by using participatory techniques can be deemed an important aspect of this study in that it may provide a guidance and offer an exemplary approach for teachers in early childhood classrooms.

This ethnographic case study examined how a preschool classroom community is imagined, understood, and experienced by children in a preschool classroom in the early childhood center of a state university. Through the shared experiences, interviews, and activities with children in our classroom, I have committed myself to my strong will to build a preschool classroom community based on children's perspectives and considering their individuality. Additionally, this study plays a significant role in understanding the relation and dynamics between

children's imagined classroom statements and their practices in the real construction of an ideal classroom environment.

This study may contribute to early childhood classroom environment designs by focusing on children's perspectives and ideas. Their ideas can substantially assist educators and curriculum planners to recognize what is important for children but generally overlooked by adults. In addition, children's perspective can promote innovative ideas in designing and building a better classroom community for curriculum planners and teachers.

1.4 Research questions

This thesis study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What opinions do children hold about their existing preschool classroom community?

- How do children perceive school community, educational activities, classroom teacher, and friends?
- What are children's views about the physical environment of the classroom community in terms of classroom design, playground, and other parts of school?
- How do children construct their relationships with peers, teachers, and school personnel in a preschool classroom community?

2. How do children perceive an ideal classroom community?

- How do children define an ideal physical design of preschool classroom community?

- How do children depict their perceptions of an ideal teacher, school personnel, peers, or friends in preschool community?
- How do children depict their ideal educational and social activities in a preschool classroom community?
- How do children practice an ideal classroom in the existing classroom community?

3. How do children implement their ideal classroom in practice?
    - How is the coherence between ideal classroom statements of children and their ideal classroom practices?

4. What are the implications for design and use of classroom spaces as they depend upon children's perspectives?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Classroom community

Classroom community is defined as an environment containing elements of democracy, agency, participation, and collaboration among its members such as teachers, students, families, principals, and other institutions (Farmer, Leonard, Spearman, Qian, & Rosenblith, 2016). Moreover, social and spatial factors are elements of community considered in defining and constructing the concept. In the study of Wisneski (2007) children and teacher defined classroom community with the statements such as “safety and comfort, helping others, inclusion, and being good democratic citizens.” Their statements indicate that both children and teachers define the classroom community by highlighting its integral characteristics and elements.

Democracy is a crucial element of a classroom community (Farmer et al., 2016). The classroom community needs to include voice of all children and teachers. On the other hand, democracy can be regarded as the ideal state in a classroom environment based on one’s imagination. Democratic classroom is seen as an idealized concept that <is hard to achieve. However, the study of Wisneski (2007) proposes that democratic classroom communities need to be in action rather than beliefs. This means that classroom communities need to take action and increase active participation of children and practitioners. The study claims that critical reflection and questioning needs to take place in democratic classroom communities rather than actions and behaviors. Another finding from the study is that teachers focus on teaching the “right” behaviors and children try to perform those “right” behaviors instead of making meaning of their environment during the interaction

process in a classroom community. This again highlights the importance of active participation of children in the way of creating a democratic classroom community.

Classroom community includes the elements of agency and active participation (Farmer et al., 2016). Classroom community is built on respecting the individuality of children and valuing and responding the needs of children at an individual basis (Greene & Mitcham, 2012). Therefore, active participation is enabled through valuing individuality of children in the classroom and making their voices heard. Active participation opens up opportunities to question democratic process and make part of the classroom community as an active meaning- and decision-maker (Wisneski, 2007).

Establishing cooperation and collaboration among the classroom community members provides children with the opportunity of making part of decision-making mechanisms that empower children's voice in preschool community (Farmer, et al., 2016). On the other hand, cooperation and collaboration among the members support children by developing their self-esteem, social skills, collaborative problem-solving skills, and sense of autonomy. In this way, children become more active, competent and independent participants and agents of their own lives.

In the concept of classroom community, emotional connections among citizens of classrooms (i.e., children and teachers) have crucial importance along with other elements. Emotional connections can be achieved via communication and trust-based relationship, sense of belonging, fulfillment of needs, and having an influence in the group (Whitinton & Mclnnes, 2017). Likewise, the teacher's role in establishing and/or facilitating emotional connections also plays an important role. A relevant study that examines emotional connections among classroom members suggests that children need to have more supportive and nurturing interaction with

their teachers to establish emotional connection (Botsoglou, Beazidoui, Kougioumlzidou & Vlachou, 2019). Thus, sustainable positive relationships with teachers within the democratic practices of the classroom where children are active participants and part of the decision-making processes can help children feel as a member of a classroom community.

Children value the sense of togetherness in the classroom community (Lash, 2008). In a study, Lash (2008) found that children construct the classroom community based on their shared activities, games, rules, routines, values, and concerns. Therefore, routines and rituals in the classroom practices promote both sense of togetherness and stability (Lash, 2008; Scully & Howell, 2008). Predictability of the classroom practices can promote relaxation and decrease anxiety among classroom members. On the other hand, classroom practices focused on togetherness foster the sense of belonging to the community and feeling accepted and valued by the community (Vasconcelos & Walsh, 2001). This is how membership as an element of classroom community is strengthened.

In the classroom community, teacher's role is of high importance in building the elements of the community and pursuing the community practices and routines. Wisneski (2007) pointed out that a teacher needs to be an active participant in supporting community elements. In the same way, the relationship between the teacher and children needs to be collaborative through mutual responsibility sharing in classroom practices (Wisneski, 2007). As a result, the classroom community elements are enhanced and solidified by this mutual relationship between children and teacher.

There are many studies focusing on the teacher as a member of the classroom. However, children as fundamentally integral members of the classroom,

have also an importance in understanding the concept of classroom community. In order to empower the engagement and active participation of children in classroom community, it is necessary to understand how child and childhood have been perceived throughout history.

2.2 The new sociology of childhood

What is child? What is childhood? These are difficult and subjective questions. The definition of childhood may differ from individual to individual. There are numerous definitions of child and childhood in such different disciplines as physical, emotional, and psychological subject areas. Even if a child is defined as the specimen of physiological immaturity of life span in biology, human beings are so complex that they are the subjects of different disciplines (James & Prout, 1997).

Gittins (2009) describes childhood as the transition period in the society, which is constructed differently from culture to culture and from time to time. Childhood construction also alters with regard to social status. In order to comprehend childhood construction fully, it is essential to analyze historical construction of childhood and how children were seen and why these ideas have changed.

The book, *Childhood in History* (Aries, 1962), is seen as one of the fundamental books in the area about children. In the art of medieval time of thirteenth century, childhood was not portrayed at all. Since the thirteenth century, the idea of childhood has gradually changed. Children were represented in art as miniature adults. Aries was criticized for his claim that only specific social groups of the society was highlighted in the art of child portrayals. Moreover, children's daily practices and perception of adults were not observed in art works.

In the sixteenth century, changes in discoveries as well as technological and scientific advancements in western culture led to changes in family and child rearing practices in the society. Children were portrayed in art as a symbol of innocence and sweetness (Aries, 1962). During that period, children were seen as immature and in need of care for education (Aries, 1962). That change in the conception of childhood is interpreted by Aries as a change of western society from extended families to nuclear families and as the emergence of age-graded schools (Aries, 1962).

With industrialization and urbanization of cities, child care and education became a vital issue in developing new careers and study areas (Woodhead, 2009). During that period, developmental psychology studies made substantial contributions to the field by studying children's development period and transition to adulthood (Woodhead, 2009). Even if many researchers criticize the approaches of developmental psychology studies for children as to their underestimation of children's capacities, Woodhead (2009) points out that these studies have contributed to children's thinking and competencies by observing their own way of life. Especially, Piaget's studies show that childhood period includes critical changes in physical size and maturity, relationships and identities, interests and activities, and perspectives and skills. On the other hand, Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the idea that children's competencies are built through social and historical practices (Woodhead, 2009).

Childhood has been seen a period for preparation to adulthood in different times and cultures (James & Prout, 1997). Therefore, children needed to be prepared to become adults who are considered as relevant thinkers and decision makers in the society. These perceptions of childhood in society led to the understanding of children as passive members of the classroom community in studies. However

relevant research was conducted with only teachers' viewpoints and observations rather than directly taking children's perspectives into consideration (Wikins, 2014; Scully & Howell, 2008; Whitington & Mclnnes, 2017; Lash, 2008; Wasconselos & Walsh, 2001).

Studies reveal that teachers wish to work with children who demonstrate engagement with activities, behave respectfully, obey rules, and show positive social behaviors (Wilkins, 2014). These elements can be interpreted as what teachers want from children in a community. On the other hand, based on teacher interviews, Stone (2000) stated that teachers need to have great knowledge of child development and curriculum to create classroom community. Teachers also need to be good role models and leaders for children in the process of community building (Stone, 2000). As understood from such research-based viewpoints, children as individuals of the classroom neither take part in nor are led to creating a classroom community.

Scully and Howell (2008) found that it is important for children to have special events, traditions, rituals and shared memory in creating positive classroom community. Wasconselos and Walsh (2001) refer to the same findings in their study as classroom community grows stronger by creating rituals and group memory. Rituals promote children's active participation and engagement in the classroom. Moreover, having a shared memory with a group of children in a classroom increases a sense of classroom community.

Whitington and Mclnnes (2017) highlighted that positive relationships among the members enhance the sense of classroom community. Lash's (2008) study conducted with teachers' shows that children value having the feeling of belonging and establishing trustful relationships in the classroom. Names of children, children's personal space, and sense of being as a member of the classroom community

increase children's sense of belonging and membership. Similarly, establishing trustful relationships with their peers and teachers is also effective in classroom community building (Lash, 2008; Whitington & Mclnnes, 2017).

In a few studies, teachers emphasized the significance of role modeling for children in creating classroom community (Stone, 2000; Whitington & Mclnnes, 2017). They underlined the need for a teacher as a role model to help children gain social skills teach them how to behave in the classroom community and offer support during this process. In that way, better classroom community can be created successfully. However, it is worth noting that teachers' perspectives on role modeling with regard to how to behave in a classroom depict a view underestimating children's power in the classroom community.

As understood from perspectives of teacher and observations of children in the classrooms, rules are important elements of a classroom community (Lash, 2008). Rules arrange the classroom climate to be more positive and predictable. When children know the rules of the classroom, they more effectively handle difficult situations and decrease conflict in the classroom atmosphere (Lash, 2008; Wasconselos and Walsh, 2001). Rules, therefore, can promote stability in the classroom community for children and teachers.

Lash (2008) conducted a study which entailed interviews with teachers, observation of and informal interviews with children. The study shows that in building a strong community, it is important for children to understand and construct knowledge about their classroom community. It is a widely held view that emphasizing and creating community elements with children can support children's internalization of the community. It is also thought that children's peer culture and relationships saliently affect the classroom community. Even if teachers think that

they have a clear understanding about the classroom community elements, children and their ways of constructing peer culture are also likely to have a strong effect on the understanding of the classroom community. While this study could mostly be interpreted from teachers' perspectives, it can be seen that children's power in a classroom community is undeniable.

In the aforementioned studies, children were passive participants of the research studies about their classroom community. Teachers described classroom community for children by focusing on how a member should behave. However, the findings of Lash's (2008) study show that children are first and foremost a crucial part of the classroom community. In order to add children's voices to the classroom community understanding, it is important to consider childhood perception of new sociology of childhood and children's rights movement.

From the postmodern perspective, the traditional image of child is re-conceptualized and reconstructed. The new sociology of childhood focuses on social position of childhood in the society (James & Prout, 1997). Childhood is a social structure that is a permanent part of the society (Corsaro, 2015; James & Prout, 1997). Its members continuously change and renew. Therefore, childhood is a social construction that is created, reproduced, and accepted by its members in society over time.

Beyond the traditional view, James, Jenks and Prout (2007) offer four sociological perspectives on childhood: (1) tribal childhood, (2) minority childhood, (3) socially constructed childhood, and (4) social structural childhood. The tribal child is the form in which children are studied within an area including only children. The minority group child is studied as minority in the same way that women and people of different color are studied. The meaning of socially constructed childhood

can be examined by considering the context in which children grow up. Lastly, socially structural child view presents that children are universally recognized as a fundamental part of every society, and thus they deserve rights. Even though the structure differs from culture to culture and from time to time, children form their own uniforms and those uniforms of children represent all characteristics of society.

The present study is based on the social structural child view and draws upon the underpinnings of this view. In this view, children are seen as active agents in their own lives (James & Prout, 1997). Children are beings that have their own way of social construction. They are not regarded as future adults and are considered to have capabilities and strengths in shaping their own childhoods. The child is seen as a competent meaning-maker of his/her own life (James & Prout, 1997). Voices of children are given emphasis as citizens and members of their own social groups.

Childhood studies suggest that children construct their own lives. Yet, there is not only one childhood construction in the world. Childhood construction changes from culture to culture and from time to time. The concepts and beliefs about what children can do change in different times and cultural contexts. Therefore, it is believed that childhood and children's needs are socially constructed.

Childhood studies argue that children's relationships and cultures are worth studying in their own ways (James & Prout, 1997). Children are constructors of knowledge and culture. The key contribution of childhood studies is that children have their own agency, and they are not empty slates. In addition, their development is not biologically and psychologically determined; however, it generates with social construction (Smith, 2011).

However, childhood studies have some criticisms as well. Woodhead (2009) criticizes that the childhood studies are under the control of adults. Although the

childhood studies are conducted around child-centered frameworks and children's rights and agency, it is a sensitive issue due to the relationship between the researched and the researcher in terms of power relationships, which are under the impact of political, social and moral levels. Woodhead (2009) also criticizes that childhood studies are based on western culture, thus culturally-biased. Childhood studies based on western culture determine how competence and maturity of children are related to their ages. With globalization, childhood studies are applied to different cultures; as a result, different findings are found (Woodhead, 2009).

As far as childhood studies are concerned, the school nature and the image of a child is also closely related. According to the postmodern view of a competent child, those children are highly connected with school atmosphere, which can also be impersonal. This view also emphasizes academic performance, child-centered approach, and democracy (Moss & Fielding, 2011). Children are the subjects of education. Therefore, how and by whom the schools are designed are important issues for the conception of a child and childhood.

2.3 Interpretive reprodcution perspective

Childhood construction, as a marginalized subgroup in society, has changed historically. Children are marginalized as they are the world's most disadvantaged group and attaining and acting on their rights become gradually problematic (Wall, 2018). Therefore, they become a marginalized subgroup that has difficulty in having their rights to be heard in the society. Children were first seen as future adults who are dependent and in need of protection. Increasing interest in the subgroups in society such as women has brought childhood and children subjects to the focus of the researchers. Then, the increase in constructive and interpretive theoretical

perspectives in sociology resulted in explaining childhood as a social construction. Children and adults started to take an active role in the social construction of childhood and reproduce their culture, which both children and adults experience.

The definition of socialization comprises not only adaptation and internalization but also appropriation, reinvention and reproduction from a sociological perspective. Corsaro (2015) suggested explaining childhood construction from a sociological perspective as in interpretive reproduction in which children are creative and innovative participants in the society and make changes in cultural reproduction and in the adult world as well as in their peer culture. Children do not only internalize social and cultural aspects of society, but they also reproduce active cultural and societal changes.

Corsaro (2015) realizes that children are not only active in family and school centers, but they also have an active role in other social institutions such as communal, economic, cultural, religious, and political areas. In each generation, peer culture is reproduced in its own social structure. Corsaro's (2015) study on the realization of peer culture among children presents how childhood can be a unique part of life. Childhood is a social construction; hence, children's activities contribute to their own socialization and to the society as a whole. From this regard, children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of studying in their own environment (James & Prout, 1997).

Interpretive reproduction has two key elements, namely the importance of language and cultural routines and the reproductive nature of children's evolving membership in their culture (Corsaro, 2015). Social life routines and culture are transmitted via language that has social, cultural, and local encodes. On the other hand, children's participation to cultural routines is the key element in interpretive

reproduction framework. This participation provides the shared understanding of belonging to a social group through which sociocultural knowledge can be produced and interpreted. Therefore, it is easy to observe that children experience complex, improbable, and problematic sociocultural knowledge by participating in their secure social group and environment.

In interpretive reproduction, children experience three types of creative embracement process. Children embrace knowledge and information from the adult world in a creative way. In that sense, children participate and produce knowledge and information by taking part in a series of peer culture. Eventually, they start making contributions to the reproduction and development of the adult world. These processes happen both at the moment and over time (Corsaro, 2015).

The present study is based on Corsaro's interpretive reproduction framework with a focus on children's participation in production and reproduction rather than children's internalization of the adult world. The focal point is children's participation in imaginative creation of school and their construction of school rather than the current school environment, designed and imposed by adults. In this respect, children's participation in a series of activities were analyzed for this study.

2.4 Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy questions how practices and standards of education occurs in progress. Based on this pedagogy, knowledge is considered as "a cultural prejudice" while truth is regarded as "An ideology" (Mac Naughton, 2005). In that regard, early childhood education standards formed by powerful pioneers in this field in western culture are accepted as "the truth" (Mac Naughton, 2005). The truth of a child is important for practitioners with regard to the ways how to construct relationships and

practices in an early childhood education center. Children outside the normal standards regarded by the truth of powerful ideology take place in a different education practice such as special education.

The advancements in technology and science provide children's lives with unique perspectives to consider themselves as competent and active decision makers of their own lives (Kincheloe, 1997). However, these differences in social understanding are not supported by school systems which operate on tight schedules and routines and attributes children a passive role in decision-making processes. Children search for meaning-making in a school environment which is away from the realities of changing time (Kincheloe, 1997). Therefore, it is proposed that traditional education in early childhood education is replaced by child-centered education based on the truths of western culture standards.

Critical pedagogy discusses the role of school in social and cultural life. The schools under the normal conditions support unequal and competitive relationships in the society. The knowledge provided by the schools is neither neutral nor valid in that sense. According to Foucault, knowledge is produced deeply during deep social construction of power relationships (as cited in Cohen, 2008). Power is incorporated into every part of the society.

Early childhood education standards have been created as developmentally appropriate practices based on child-centered education, which describes the understanding that "child is constructed as liberated and free to pursue his/her own interests and to suit himself when he is free to choose" (Landgford, 2010, p,117). The purpose of child-centered education serves to provide children with an atmosphere to be independent. Thanks to children's rights movement and the new

sociological progresses in childhood framework, child-centered education has become widespread over time.

There are three main critics of the critical pedagogy on early childhood education (Landgford, 2010). The first one is that the independent atmosphere of classroom results in masculine environment for male children as a result of decreasing the power of female teachers. The second criticism is that independent child perspective is highly difficult to integrate into education environment in reality. Even if the teacher power as a fluid concept does not exist in the environment, children might act upon other children in the classroom environment, which brings about another critic on the absence of powerful social relationships. Nevertheless, child-centered education supports the individual child and conflict resolution rather than supporting communal relationships and togetherness in the groups.

In order to make critic about child-centered education, researchers have studied free play time when children have a chance to be free and independent. Ryan (2005) proposes that children are free and independent in choosing and planning what they want separately from adult power in child-centered education. Child-centered education only focuses on power relations between teacher and children. However, social relationships in early childhood education are much more complex than the child-centered education perspective. Power in the society is a fluid concept that does not necessarily have a negative connotation all the time. Power exists in the classroom culture as the result of transmission of children's traditional codes, social norms and values without the teacher authority. Children's social activities in the playground does not take place in a neutral and equal environment—not away from power dynamics, either. Child-centered education has its own challenges due to the power relationships in social lives of children.

In the Kessler and Hauser's (2005) study on free play in kindergarten, children's play observations were analyzed regarding critical pedagogy. When the teacher is not the authority in reality, children take the teacher's role to act upon other friends, which brings the questions about the power that is a natural occurrence as the result of unbalanced relations. Children develop communal relationships with each other without their teacher in free play time such as turn-taking. Free play provides children with experiencing agency as well as social relationship related to power and authority in the classroom. Children build a classroom culture by establishing friendship and communal relationship by using creative ways of interaction and strategies. Critical pedagogy in early childhood classrooms provides more space for children to show agency and resistance in addition to free experience of gender roles and social relationships. However, if the teacher does not raise awareness and provide new possibilities for classroom culture, these relationships cannot be strengthened. Gender roles might be sharpened while power relations might be more unbalanced.

Critical pedagogy suggests that a teacher needs to be an active observer and documenter in the classroom (Ryan, 2005; Kessler & Hauser, 2005). Teachers need to understand how their classroom understanding and practices are represented in their classroom in producing cultural standards of normality (Mac Naughton, 2005). For this reason, a teacher needs to establish a school environment to provide children with opportunities to be critical thinkers in the society (Mclaren, 2011).

The design of this study has some common points with the perspective of critical pedagogy. Firstly, children are active critical thinkers of their current classroom environment. The study also is designed by being fostered with child-centered frameworks. Since children are both co-researchers and participants of this

study, it presents a viewpoint out of universal early childhood education standards. Secondly, teacher power in the classroom community changes direction from usual teaching practices to being active observer and documenter. Briefly, as critical pedagogy argued, this study focuses on power relations in early childhood education classroom.

2.5 Children's right movements

Childhood perception in history has started to be deconstructed with the new sociology of childhood. Childhood has a political ground that impacts the policies and is impacted by the policies. Politically, the 1989 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was accepted to consider young children as citizens. This has helped to change the dominant image of childhood and has brought a new perspective to children's rights. The 54 article in Convention is divided into three parts. The first one is the provision rights of children such as health, education, social security, physical care, play etc. The second one is the protection rights such as keeping children safe from abuse, discrimination, injustice. The third one is the participation rights in which children have a voice in matters affecting them, have access to information, and are able to express their opinions.

The new sociology of childhood has promoted the growth of awareness in children's agency. However, the most innovative effect of the convention is to give children a participation right. It demonstrates that children have a right to participate actively in social construction (Smith, 2011). The most important emphasis is on the participatory rights of children, which allows changes in childhood studies and children's education. In childhood studies, it influences the ways of how to study

"with" children instead of just studying "on" children. The study with children gives insights into how children construct their childhood in their own places and ways.

When it comes to regulations, Article 12 of the UNCRC addresses children's participation rights. It accedes to the point that children have the right to participate in the situations affecting them by expressing their own ideas freely (United Nations, 2009). The agreement classifies the proceedings regarding children's participation into five parts: preparation, the hearing, and the assessment of the capacity of the child, feedback, and complaints, remedies and redress. In the first step, children need to be informed about their rights. In the second step, children need to express their views and need to be treated with respect. In the third step, when children express their views accordingly, they need to be taken seriously in situations affecting them. In the fourth step, children need to be informed about their involvement with the decision-making process. The last part is that children need to have spaces or people to express their complaints when needed.

The studies conducted with children's active participation need to consider children participation parts. A child is first informed about their rights as an active citizen. The environment is arranged to provide a space for children's expression of views. These views are taken seriously by implementing or discussing it. Their awareness of their views is included in decision-making process. In the fifth level of participation, children need to have an authority to complain about things with which they are challenged. Therefore, it can be said that the studies promote children's participation rights to empower their voices.

The new sociology of childhood and children's rights movements improve children's position and value in the society. That is how childhood and children have started to be important participants in studies. In this study, children's perspective,

participation and voice are emphasized. Firstly, children's active participation is observed by expressing themselves in decision-making process about the design and implementation of this study. Secondly, children express their perspectives about their current and ideal classroom community. Lastly, in order to emphasis their voice, change and rearrangements in the classroom community are undertaken.

2.6 Current studies on children as member of classroom community

The aforementioned progress in terms of political and sociological background has also affected children's role in research in classroom community. Children have started to take place in research in creating positive classroom community as an important member. The study of Botsoglou, Beazidoui, Kougioumlzidou, and Vlachou (2019) showed that children provide reliable and significant information about classroom community. In this study, children and teachers were asked about the classroom community at the same time. The results of certain studies showed that the perceptions of children and teachers concerning the classroom community differed (Botsoglou, et al., 2019; Alaca, Rocca & Maggi, 2017; Jung 2015; Farmer, Leonard, Spearman, Qian & Rosenblith, 2016; Kangas, 2010).

As a result of these findings, the teachers' perception of children as classroom members has changed. A study conducted by Bulut Ozsezer and Iflazoğlu Saban (2016) found that the teacher gave emphasis on children by appreciating the importance of children's voices, democratic classroom atmosphere and respect for children's opinions and themselves. The teacher's role in listening was emphasized by referring to listening in both ways since the teacher also needed to listen to children. The number of studies has increased over time in order to empower voice and participation of children as members of the classroom community. In order to

understand children's active participation in the classroom community, it is important to look at the research with children about classroom communities.

There are also studies that used child-participatory activities in data collection such as mosaic approach (Botsoglou, et al., 2019; Alaca, Rocca & Maggi, 2017; Jung, 2015), drawing (Farmer, Leonard, Spearman, Qian & Rosenblith, 2016), writing a story (Kangas, 2010). In these studies, children are active participants in raising their voice about classroom community. They show that young children at the age of five are able to reflect on their classroom community experiences and express their understanding through participatory activities (Botsoglou, et al, 2019). Children emphasize the classroom community features of socioemotional well-being, rules, collaboration, and active participation.

Children also emphasize physical well-being of the classroom community (Kangas, 2010). They value having a large and comfortable physical environment since it allows more mobility around the classroom. They emphasize having personal places in the classroom in addition to secret places. Children value a secret place to stay alone as needed to make the environment relaxing (Botsogtou, et al., 2019). They also stated that more equipment is needed for that purpose. In addition, they want to have playgrounds where they can be physically active. These findings show that children value their physical well-being and comfort in their environment.

When it comes to the rules, children are aware of the importance of rules in the classroom community. Children would point out the need for rules to be followed in the classroom (Botsoglou, et al., 2019). Studies with both children and teachers showed that rules are an essential part of the classroom community from both perspectives.

Children stated that the classroom community is constructed on positive relationships. Relationships with peers and teachers are significant in maintaining positive classroom community (Farmer, et al., 2016; Kangas, 2010). Alaca, Rocca, and Maggi (2017) found that children construct their communities based on their relationships. In the respective study, children considered special people, close friends, and family members as their community (Jung, 2015). Children also stated that they would like to have more interaction with their teacher, especially during play time (Botsogtou, et al., 2019).

Another element that children value about is to be an active participant in the classroom community. Children appreciate curriculum activities related to their interest and promoting their active participation (Kangas, 2010). They want to have special arrangements in learning environments to create unique ways and active participation.

Children also emphasized classroom community based on innovative and imaginary-oriented environment (Kangas, 2010) since these environments support children's curiosity and creative mind. Children do not only want to receive information from the teacher, but they also want to be active in learning by having innovative learning environments.

Children highlight the collaboration feature of classroom community by mentioning collaborative activities and using a collective language. When children describe their classroom community, they use collective language (Farmer, et al., 2016). In their drawings, children draw other children working together. Therefore, children are aware of the importance of togetherness in classroom community.

All of these studies reveal that children are capable of being active participants in the process of decision-making and assessment process of their

environment. They are highly aware of the community concept and the elements of community. They are also able to express their understandings and reflections through participatory activities.

2.7 Children as co-researchers

Childhood construction has changed with time and culture in history. Modern perspectives view childhood as a universal process, which is isolated from the existing environment. In a research on children's perspective, the data about children's lives were taken from teachers, observations, or families. Children were considered as the objects of the research and their lives were interpreted by adult researchers (Alderson, 2008). On the other hand, postmodern perspective deconstructs childhood perception by interpreting childhood with the existing environment in consideration of time and culture. Consequently, the interest has changed from 'research on children' to 'research with children' (James & Prout, 1997).

In the research with children's perspectives, the data is taken from children themselves as the subject of research. This perspective is supported with the new sociology of childhood and children's rights perspectives as well. Children are seen as co-constructors of knowledge, identity, and culture (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2013). Children produce knowledge in their own way and contribute actively to the community they live in. Especially, Article 12 under UNCRC show respect for the views of children by agreeing to the fact that children have a right to "participate in all matters of relevance to them," including research (United Nations, 2009). Moreover, General Comment No: 7 (United Nations, 2005) expanded on the rights of

children to be involved in decision making, which affects their own lives, and to express their views.

Children are included in the research not only as research participants but also as co-researchers throughout all the stages of the research process; designing research questions, data collection, analyzing and reporting, and dissemination (Lundy, McEvoy, & Byrne, 2011). There are different ways of conducting research with children (Alderson, 2008). Firstly, children are actively involved and contribute to the research through school projects of classes. Another way is that children get involved with the research that is designed and conducted by adults. This type of research gives children space to experience research process with the help of adults during the stages of planning, collecting data, analyzing, and reporting evidence. Another kind of research is that children are the researchers who initiate and conduct research at all stages. This study is a type of research which adults initiate first, and then children and adults decide on the process of the research together. The core of the study is designed by adults; however, the process of data collection is structured together with the researcher and children to some extent. In this stage, children are the main initiators and conductors of the research process. It means that this present study is between the second and third types of research with children in that there are steps where adults decide first, children initiate and conduct the process, adults and children decide on the research design together. The approach of children as researchers affects the research process in a way that the views of children are taken seriously by the researchers who design and implement the research. According to the research, children can also make valid decisions based on their interpretation of the evidence in their environment (Murray, 2016). While it is important to make

valid decisions during the research process by adults, children can give decisions based on their environment as well.

When the research with children studies is considered, there is an increase with regard to time and quality (Lundy et al., 2011). In the study of Bradbury-Jones and Taylor (2015), children were co-researchers. Based on their study, the researchers found that children and adults can work as a team in the research process. In the study of Kinash and Hoffman (2008), it is stated that children need to be respected as critical thinkers and producers of knowledge. The study conducted with children as co-researchers revealed that it is crucial to consider children's interest and skills in the research. Moreover, materials and activities used in the process are required to be appropriate for children's social emotional and cognitive development. It is also necessary to provide multiple methods to validate children's expressive understanding of the process. The methods used multiple times in multiple activities are better for generating accurate representations of children's understandings (Green, 2017). In this study, different activities, which are appropriate for children's interests and developmental stage, were used multiple times to produce children's representations of understanding and ideas.

On the question of space, the studies of design of the environments and playgrounds are conducted with children as researcher, too. The study of Pearson and Howe (2017) showed that children have valid and valuable views about their playgrounds and these views are different from adults. Therefore, it is essential to listen to the voices of children in research in order to understand children's decisions about their environment they live in. Moreover, Clark (2010) took one step further in children as researchers' method by involving children in the research process and

allowing them to make decisions about their environment with the help of designers.

Heinrich Joerdens (2014) also conducted a study by using children as co-researchers in examining children's perspectives in a classroom community. Children participated in different steps of the research process in informal ways through participatory activities and informal consultation strategies. The findings suggest that children value positive relationships with friends and teachers, the importance of rules to be followed, routines in increasing participation, rituals in increasing active participation, feeling of belonging to a group, and remarkable moments in their lives.

In children as co-researchers' studies, UNCRC has suggested four concepts to take into consideration: space, voice, audience, and influence (Lundy et al., 2011). Firstly, space is of high importance for children to express themselves during the research. Children can express themselves better in a familiar atmosphere. Secondly, children should be able to express their views freely. Some strategies can be used during the process in order to facilitate giving voice to them. Thirdly, the audience component is crucial in a way that children need to be listened to. Lastly, the impact concept is important in order to ensure serious consideration and implementation of children's views.

When children increase their participation and influence on research process, adults need to be careful about their roles. Green (2017) has suggested that adults need to promote children's contributions and active participation in order to give space for children's ideas and questions during the process rather than directing how study should be done.

Children as co-researchers have several benefits for both the researcher adult and children themselves. Firstly, it increases children's confidence and empower them in their potential to influence their environment (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015). Children's critical thinking skills are also supported during the process. Consequently, children and adults can notice children's potential to change or impact the policy and implementations (Lundy et al., 2011). On the other hand, adults can also change the perspective of childhood and shift the power of children in practice. Lastly, children as co-researchers improve the research quality by combining data from different perspectives of children regarding their understanding (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor (2015).

Nonetheless, children as co-researchers' studies pose some challenges. Firstly, children may lack necessary competencies to become co-researchers. However, Bradbury-Jones and Taylor (2015) emphasize this by stating that children as young as five years old have the ability to participate fully in the research. Secondly, a comprehensive training program is needed to carry out the study. Bradbury-Jones and Taylor (2015) suggest that it is necessary to match children's development and interests with the research program. Thirdly, power dynamics need to be addressed properly. The same paper suggests that children as researchers needs to be in a position of influencing the process of the research. However, in their study, Lundy et al. (2011) has suggested that not all children can equally engage with all parts of research meaningfully.

In the case of adults, in children as co-researchers research process, there is little emphasis on adults' views and experience about what they learn (Alderson, 2008). Another point to consider is that there is a limited number of studies in Turkey in children as co-researchers design. This indicates that there is little

emphasis on children's participation in creating a classroom community.

Some research designs are directly related with children as co-researchers in the steps of research, namely research questions design, data collection, interpretation, and dissemination. In order to extend the studies on children as co-researchers, this study is based on "children as co-researchers" methodology with children aged between 5 and 6 years old. "Children as co-researchers" can be viewed as a research method and interpretive perspective tool for empowering children's sense of agency and the role of co-construction while they document, practice, and reflect upon their ideal classroom community mediated by their participatory activities and practices of social classroom context.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research process

The research process was a crucial part of this qualitative study. Introducing and explaining the research process is significant for understanding of the design of the study. During the research process, many changes and reflections were undergone both by children and researcher. Moreover, I had two roles in this study as the teacher and the researcher. It was a challenging process to establish a balance between being the researcher and the teacher of the classroom. I tried to reflect my emotions, thoughts, and challenges in the reflective journals.

3.1.1 Children as co-researcher

Children were co-researchers in this study. They were involved in designing research, data collection, interpretation, and implications of the research process. I decided to study the "ideal classroom community from children's perspectives" at first. I prepared participatory activities in order to attract children’s attention and to raise their voices with the help of these activities. However, I did not plan anything on the ideal classroom construction in practice, which was regularly implemented half of the day in the mornings. They were independent decision-makers of their own ideal classroom day. Children were both active participants and researchers for this part of the study.

On ideal classroom days, we arranged classroom meetings in the mornings. Children planned their ideal classroom day without any adult intervention. These plans were implemented sometimes collectively as the whole class or as some

specific groups of children, or individually. Not all children were supposed to engage with the same thing or activity as their friends did, which brought diversity to our ideal classroom community.

In order to build the capacity to engage with research issues, I explained to children my research questions and asked them "What can we do to learn children's ideal classroom?" I explained my prepared activities to them to collect data. I prepared a board in the classroom to show the process of the research by supporting the visuals of the weekly activities, which took children's attention. They expressed their ideas about the activities and gave suggestions for activities. Children also followed the process of research. Moreover, I asked children in every ideal classroom meeting "How can we learn children's ideal classroom?" This question was effective in building engagement in the research issues of children as co-researchers.

They experienced the freedom of the ideal classroom during the first weeks. After the third week, they started to build things and to experience practices about their ideal classroom community by recording to the voice recorder, writing to my notebook, and by dancing in front of the camera in order to show their ideal classroom. They expressed themselves in various ways in order to generate data as researchers. Moreover, the activities that are supported with visual and sensory materials were effective in engaging children in the researcher process.

The research topic and main questions were determined by the adult researcher. In the introduction of the research, I explained the research concepts and the question on which I was curious. Children showed interest in this question, and they started to think about the question. During the ideal classroom day, children asked their own questions such as "Can children do anything they want? What does

the ideal classroom day mean? What do children decide on?", and "Can we apply our decisions in our existing classroom?" These questions were effective in the process to address their way of the ideal classroom day construction.

Children were active researchers in deciding on data collection methods. I designed the methods of the data collection based on the mosaic approach at the beginning of the research. However, children wanted to add or change some methods in data collection. Firstly, in the morning phase of the research, children were the main researchers in data collection. I provided them with the voice recorder and the camera and they determined how to use them. Children had the freedom to use the voice recorder anytime they wanted. They used it when they wanted to say something about the research or the ideal classroom day. Sometimes, they wanted to record their problem solution meetings in order to help me collect data about their solutions. Secondly, they wanted to write in my notebook. They wrote some letters or drew some shapes to my notebook about their ideal classroom. Thirdly, they built their ideal classroom with the art materials in the classroom. They practiced their ideal classroom and showed it to the camera which became their ways of data collection methods in the morning phase. In the afternoons, children offered some changes in data collection tools. They did not want to make group discussions about the ideal classroom. Instead, they wanted to do the block activity to design their ideal classroom. Furthermore, they decided on their data collection tools for two weeks (the ninth and the tenth weeks) as paper-pencil and three-dimensional mapping of their ideal classroom.

For the data collection methods, I prepared the methods and activities that every child's voice could be heard. The activities were familiar and attractive for children and appropriate for their developmental skills and capabilities. Children

were active participants in using materials and cameras and which photographs they would talk about.

Children were engaged in interpreting their own ideal classroom community during the research process through ideal classroom assessment meetings. We discussed the ideal classroom day with questions such as “How was our day? What were the good and the difficult sides, likes or dislikes? What are the reasons underlying these things?” Children interpreted their ideal classroom considering their experiences. Moreover, they interpreted their activities as a group or individual. For example, they explained their works as they wished to have secret places in their classroom, and they wanted to build these places. Then, they explained why they wished to have these spaces.

Children offered suggestions on their ideal classroom by using the data collection tools (i.e., activities) and classroom assessment meetings. Our activities for the data collection were systematically designed in time, and children designed and created their own ideal classroom through the end of the tenth week. There were clear ideas of children on “what should be in their ideal classroom” through the end of the research process.

3.1.2 Teacher as researcher

Being the teacher and the researcher at the same time were challenging. I have worked as the teacher of this classroom for three years. Five of children were my students for three years. The other five were for one month. In that one month, children and I had a process to know each other. The dominant culture was the classroom culture that we established from the past years. The other five children

tried to adapt to that culture and were also a change for the dynamics of the classroom culture.

My role as the teacher in the classroom was composed of arranging the project meetings, giving children space to express themselves, monitoring them and calming them down during the conflicts, and participating in their activities.

The most important role of being a teacher in this study was being flexible and preparing the activities. During the ideal classroom days, children expressed their ideas about their wishes to work on in the classroom. As a teacher, I was supposed to prepare the class for the activities, and help children in their research. On the ideal classroom days, children's plans and daily schedules were open to change where I did not have any preparation for the activities. Therefore, I was supposed to be flexible to adapt to new situations in the learning environment. When children were active participants, I was also an active teacher in designing and preparing activities in the classroom community.

There were advantages and disadvantages of being the teacher and the researcher at the same time. I tried to reflect on my emotions in reflective journals. When I analyzed the reflective journals, I noticed that there were constant changes in my emotions as the teacher of the classroom. In the beginning, I was nervous about the conflicts and behaviors which I considered dangerous. My perspectives of being a teacher as the protector and the guider were challenged through the process.

> "I noticed that I am more nervous than the other days as a teacher, which might be because of changing orders that I am used to, and because of the things out of my control."

After the sixth week, I started reflecting on my emotions as the teacher in a more positive way. I was used to adapting to the flexible atmosphere of the ideal classroom days. These ideal classroom days were spent with heavy workloads.

However, I felt satisfied as a teacher while helping and creating an environment in which children were active participants.

> "I started to feel more relaxed. I am busier than the other days. Children need more help and guidance on ideal classroom days. My day was more effective, and it is good to feel that the day was planned by children's decisions. When I spend my day directed by children's wishes, I feel more satisfied".

Throughout the research process, there was a space for children to criticize my teacher roles. They criticized the daily routines, which I thought as effective in children's development. These processes challenged me and my emotions and provided new perspectives on the educational environment as a teacher.

> "I noticed as a teacher that children expressed their thoughts about the classroom boards as the loss of time for play, and told that it took too much time. I felt confused about it. I think that it is appropriate for developmental areas of children to prepare boards. However, I plan to increase the participation of children in these activities. Even if an activity is very effective, children are also supposed to be willing to make the activity effective from their perspectives. Instead of only my decision or developmental appropriate practices, children and I need to give a mutual decision about our routines."

Throughout the research process, my role as the teacher gradually decreased whereas my role as the researcher increased. Decline in my teacher role occured in the decision-making process, solving conflicts and monitoring.

I was confused about being the teacher and the researcher in some activities. As a teacher I have always been careful of avoiding intervention into children's activities. However, in the clay activity of the fifth week, I acted as the researcher to collect data from children instead of being the teacher guiding the activity. I decided to give more materials in the project plan, and then I paired children in order to collect data. However, as the teacher, generally, I would give children space to produce as they wanted.

3.1.3 The role of the researcher

Being the researcher in the classroom of the young is difficult. There were some unbalanced moments during the ideal classroom process. Throughout the process, my role as the researcher gradually became stronger in asking guiding questions, listening to children's perspectives, observing them, and being an active participant in the classroom.

As the researcher, the most important part of my role was to listen to children. In the morning, I listened to their thoughts and ideas about the classroom, and I also observed their behaviors and practices. I took notes and put the voice recorder to the places that were close to them. I asked questions by using the voice recorder to understand their practices and behaviors.

My other role was being an active participant in the ideal classroom day. Children wanted to play and make their projects with me. They asked me about ideas and suggestions on their projects.

In the afternoon, on the ideal classroom day, during and after the activities, I was in the role of the interviewer. I asked guided questions in an informal way, and children shared their ideas with me.

3.1.4 Researcher-child interaction

There was already an existing positive relationship between me and children based on trust when the study began. Children loved being in the classroom. Every morning, most of them came with their happy faces. Their mothers would tell me that children wished to come to school even on holidays.

A week before the study started, I explained to children that there would be research for 3 months in our classroom. I explained all the details of the study. They

told me that they would help me with the study. They were mostly excited and interested in being decision makers of the day.

Childre were interested in and helped me with the process of data collection. Some of them wanted to write my observation notebook. They wrote letters, drew shapes, and made some drawings. They were also willing to get the voice recorder, so as to talk about their feelings, sing their songs and express about what they did.

3.1.5 Methods process

In reflective journals, I focused on my reflections with regard to methodology. There were many changes in the implementation of data collection methods during the study. These changes appeared as the result of the nature of the study and the dynamics of the classroom.

Firstly, data collection activities were designed to take children's attention. All children were involved in the study. During the first week of the concept map, children did not want to get involved in this process. The concept map was not an interesting activity for them. Thus they refused to participate in, and wanted to play instead. In order to attract their attention, I was supposed to bring more concrete and attractive materials to the classroom.

> "The data collection activity of the week was the concept map. However, that activity was challenged by children. Children got bored while waiting for their turns so this activity did not attract their attention. I need to change the nature of my activities and to turn them into more concrete and fun" (Reflective journal, the first day)

During the informal conferences, I faced some challenges. After children completed their activities, they explained their activities where I recorded them. During this period, they had difficulty in focusing their attention on explanation as their friends played in the playground. At the same time, when a conflict came out in the

classroom, I had to pause the conference to help conflict resolution. Therefore, child-conferencing in an informal way was not an easy process throughout.

During the child-touring activity, I decided to tour with children one by one in the classroom. Then, I noticed that when children were two or more, I had difficulty in hearing their voice. Some children took the management of touring. On the other hand, when we had the tour in play time, as a teacher I had difficulty in observing the other children, which consequently resulted in many conflicts. Besides, children sometimes wanted to take me out of the classroom (other classrooms, corridor or garden), and this was not secure for the other children. Therefore, I decided to implement touring with children one by one during the rest time.

I added the block building activity into the plan, instead of group discussions. From my experiences in the concept map, I re-formed this activity. Children were asked to build a classroom with block. I also added these ideas into the plan for group discussion, which made this activity more effective for data collection. Children were very active participants in this activity.

3.2 The design of the study

This study was designed as a qualitative research study. Qualitative research "… begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive /theoretical frameworks that inform the research problem of the study addressing the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social and human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquire and collect data in natural settings sensitive to people and places under study, and data analysis that is both indicative and deductive, and establishes patterns or themes …" (Creswell, 2013, p.44). Qualitative studies are carried out to understand a specific situation,

case, or phenomenon in depth in participants' natural settings. Individuals' perspectives and experiences are socially constructed. Qualitative study is a social inquiry searching for individuals' interpretation and making sense of their own lives from their own natural settings (Greig, Taylor & MacKay, 2007). This study, likewise, is an attemtp at reacing in depth understanding of children's experiences and perspectives in their natural settings.

It is an ethnographic study that is focused on a group of people in a particular setting by observing, interviewing and spending considerable time in the group in order to analyze the shared patterns of the groups (Creswell, 2013). The ethnographic study is carried out by determining a site and observing the group to collect data. It is important issue in ethnography to have extended time among members of the group in order to understand cultural sharing patterns (Cresswell, 2013). Cultural sharing patterns are values, beliefs, behaviors, language. Ethnography describe and interprete relationships among these patterns.

This study is an ethnographic study by focusing on a classroom culture in an early childhood institution by observing, describing, and trying to understand the cultural patterns of the classroom members. This study focuses on children's behaviors, beliefs and values about ideal and existing classroom community. The members of the classroom were together for a long time to have shared and learned cultural patterns. Moreover, the researcher needs to spend considerable time with the group being studied. I spent time with children as the teacher of the classroom. In this study, the observational field notes were used in order to identify cultural patterns in the classroom community.

The study is also partly a case study. Creswell (2013) defines the case study as "an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time

through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context". Case study included a particular place, a specific group and some activities and exploration of these three factors (Bogdan & Biklen 2007).

There are some reasons why this is a case study. Firstly, it was carried out in a specific classroom of the researcher's own and specific group of children. The study was included specific case of existing and ideal classroom community by collecting detailed and multiple sources of information such as observations, child-participatory activities and researcher dairy and informal child conferences. Secondly, children had a trustful relationship with the teacher, and they were in their own natural settings. Moreover, they had experiences with the activities that were done before the study. Therefore, this specific classroom had a bounded system.The focus was not just on one or two variables. The whole complex system was analyzed.

As a result, the study comprises both qualitative research designs: case study and ethnography. Therefore, it is an ethnographic case study. The study is designed in a specific preschool classroom with a specific activies by examing complex relationships throughout process of the research.

3.3 Data collection tools

In this study, the data were collected through several instruments: Field notes, semi-structured interviews with children on their child participatory activities, group interviews, and the research journal. The data collection started one and a half months later after the beginning of the semester. Five of children were in my class for three years. Five of children were new in our classroom for the 2018-2019 education year. We had already built trust in relationships with five of them, and I built trustful

relations with the other children as well. I was the participant observer/teacher in the classroom.

The child-participatory activities were child conference, group discussions, cameras, magic carpet, tours, drawing, creative art activities, and three dimensional map making. The study was carried out for three months in a small scale classroom. Children were five-to-six years old and they participated in the activities. Cameras as instruments prepared children to be aware of their classroom environment. Cameras were given children as group, and they took photos of "the places they like and the places they want to change". In this study, it was planned to use disposable cameras with children. However, disposable cameras did not work in this study. They were challenged while using cameras, and there were 12 poses in it. Moreover, they finished them quickly while trying. As the result, I made changes on the plan, and I gave them my phone to take photos. This method was also effective. Then, the photographs were used as the part of the conversation, and questions were asked discussing the meaning of the photographs. Children chose the photos on which they wanted to talk about.

The photography method is used with older children to express complex issues in studies. Recently, this method has started to be used with younger children in understanding how they make sense of their environment. Studies show that photography is an effective tool for younger children to communicate their experiences (Alaca, Rocca & Maggi, 2017). The studies show that the photography method is effective in creating a safe environment for discussion and reflection for young children (Pholoho & Nithi, 2013). Moreover, children can become creative and thoughtful while selecting images.

The camera is considered as a creative, attractive and interesting instrument for children (Einarsdottor, 2005). Children like taking photographs, and while doing it, they do not lose their attention easily. Taking photos increases self-esteem and children's interest in the study. Children take control of cameras, and even if cameras get damaged, it is not a concern of expensive equipment (Clark, 2005). Moreover, giving children cameras is effective in empowering them to express their voice and in decreasing power imbalance between the researcher and children. This methodology aims to make children involved in two parts of the research project: Data collection and analysis, as supporting the view that children are primary sources of information about their own lives (Alderson, 2000).

Cameras are used with tours technique in many studies. Tours and cameras were used together in this study as well. The pairs of children and the researcher took cameras and walked around the classroom with the guidance of children. Audio-recording was used in this technique. This technique is important for observing child agenda through walking with children. It is a participatory technique used in other studies to obtain children's local knowledge about their immediate environment. Young children are suitable for this technique because it requires physicality and mobility. Children take the roles of natural explorers and knowledgeable guides (Clark, 2005). This technique helps decrease the power imbalance between the researcher and children.

Magic carpet is used as a part of the mosaic approach in the study of "space to play" project as the first time (Clark, 2005). It is designed to expand children's perspectives about environment. Its aim is developing understanding of differences and similarities of places or situations available in the world. It is also effective as conversation starter in studies with children. Children sit on a special carpet called

"Magic carpet" and watch the slides of different contexts (Clark, 2005). In this study, the images of different schools were presented on the slides and with hard-copy images. These preschools were a forest school, a public school, a small country school, a private school, and boutique schools. These schools were chosen to show different possibilities of school concept to children in order to expand their imagination. These activities took children's attention and raised their awareness about the classroom.

Drawing is used as conversation starter. Drawing is effective method to reveal children's emotions and knowledge (Bowker, 2007). Drawing is used to encourage children to reveal experiences and ideas important to them. Drawing is an open-ended way to give children the opportunity to express their thoughts and perspectives. Moreover, many children find more comfortable using their hands in transfering their ideas about discussions (Cameron, 2005). Drawing is a fun and attractive activity and a child-centered technique. In drawing, the focus is on what children draw and what children tell during the process of drawing (Dockett & Perry, 2005). Drawing was a familiar activity for children, and during the drawing sessions, children took time to think and reflect about the topics. Therefore, drawing activities were recorded as videos to see how children think and communicate with each other about the subjects throughout the session.

Drawing technique was used in two different ways. The first one focused on children having one piece of paper, and drawing "the classroom they would like to have". The second one is that children were asked to draw "existing classroom" on the half of the paper and to draw "ideal classroom" on the other half of the paper. This method is used in Dockett and Perry's (2005) study, and it was found that it is

appropriate for young children to reflect on two different dimensions of the classroom environment.

Building blocks activity was used to collect data about classroom community. Children offered this activity instead of group discussion that I planned. Children wanted to work with bloks to show their ideal classroom community. Children worked as pairs to build the classrooms with blocks.

Clay art activity was used to express themselves through art. Clay activity is a hands-on activity. Many children find using their hands in expressing their ideas more comfortable (Cameron, 2005). Moreover, children were familiar with the clay activities, and it was expected that they would produce a product that they would be proud of, and would offer new conversations about the subjects. It is also a developmentally appropriate and fun activity for this age group. In this study, they started to build things with clay. However, they shaped wild animals that were the theme of the week. After they made their animals, I paired them and gave them some materials to build a classroom. When they were grouped as pairs, they started to talk about their classroom features.

Three-dimensional map-making was the last technique of data collection. It is a participatory technique that involves materials from the other techniques where children brought them together (Clark, 2005). Children can bring materials together from drawings, photographs, tours, art materials to create a school environment that they would like to be part of. It is another way of expressing their feelings and ideas about the imagined school environment. It is an important technique to come up with new discussion areas for children's perspectives.

Mapping method is used with photographs and drawings of children to represent their perspectives about institutions. Children can use the other objects of

their own works and the photos of their friends. This way of collecting information reveals what is important for children from their perspectives. Map making was videotaped, and children expressed their ideas with a three-dimensional map of the classroom community.

3.3.1 Child conferencing

Child conference is the formal way of the mosaic approach which focuses on asking children open-ended questions. These conferences are important because they reveal what children want the researcher to know, and they guide the researcher about research questions. In child conferencing, flexibility gives children and researchers opportunity in data collection. Child conferencing does not necessarily include one child. Rather, a few children can come together and share their answers to questions. In child conferencing, choosing site is important and the site needs to be familiar to children. In this research, child conferencing took place in children's classroom. I informed them regarding when to terminate the process at any time.

Einarsdottir (2005) notes that indirect and conversational approaches of interviews with young children are more preferable than the structured interviews. On the other hand, Dockett and Perry (2005) note that conversations with children tend to move away from the subject of the research. Therefore, in conferences, children's drawings, photographs, art activity products, dialogue photos were used to keep their interest in subjects, start conversations, and uncover their ideas about the imagined classroom community. The questions included "What can you tell me about this photo?" and "What do you want to change or keep the same in this photo?". Conference do not begin with "why" questions, because children can refuse

these kinds of questions (Clark, 2010). Instead of "why?", "tell me about" questions were used to invite children to conversations.

Below is the list of general child conferencing questions that were used in this study.

1. Tell me about your classroom.
2. Tell me about things that you like the most in your classroom.
3. Tell me about things that you don't like being here.
4. Tell me about your teacher.
5. Tell me about what your teacher should do.
6. Tell me about your favorite place.
7. Tell me about your friends.

3.3.2 Ideal preschool community plan

1. Week

The first week was to introduce the research topic to children, and make their own researcher cards. Then, children put on their researcher cards. The schedule of the research study was discussed to inform children about the research parts. Children and the researcher began to make a concept map. The concept map method was an important part of th study to obtain the answers for the research questions. During the first week of the study, after the school touring, the researcher wrote ‘classroom' into the middle of the cardboard, and then asked children questions such as “What is in our classroom?” and “What do you want to have in our classroom?”.

2. Week

Children and the researcher started school touring and taking photographs. Children toured in the school as groups of two or three. During the touring session, the

researcher asked children the following questions: “Where do you want to show me?”, “Tell me about your favorite place in the classroom.”, “Tell me about what you dislike in the classroom.”, “Tell me about for what reasons you use this place/thing.”. A few days later in the same week, the photographs were used in child conferencing. This part of the study was to find out children's perspectives on what changes they wanted to do in their school environment. The photograph method was used to help children talk more about the topic. The telephone cameras were given to children to take photos of the school that they mostly wanted to change. This phase included asking questions, such as “Tell me about this place.”, “Tell me about your reason to take this photo.”, “Tell me about the things that you want to change in it.”, “Tell me about what you would like to change.”

3. Week

The magic carpet instrument was used to show that children might have expanded their perspectives about the possibility of different schools in the world since the beginning of the study. The researcher asked children questions such as"Are there different schools in the world?”, “What are they like?”. After the magic carpet, the researcher and they made a group discussion which focused on questions including “Tell me about which schools you like the most.”, “Which school you do not like?”.

4. Week

Children imagined their classroom community through drawing, which enabled them to have enough time to think about. They were given an A3 paper and drew their imagined classroom. Their drawings were presented on the wall where they had the chance to make additions and changes throughout the study. The drawing process was videotaped and followed by informal child conferencing at individual or group basis.

5. Week

Children were engaged with clay art activity and the process was videotaped. They were asked questions such as “tell me about your classroom.”, “tell me about the toys you want.” and “tell me about your favorite things in the classroom.”

6. Week

This week, the drawing art activity was implemented with a few changes. A4 papers were divided into half. Children drew their existing classroom on one part of the paper and drew the classroom they would like to have in the other half of the paper. This method was implemented in the sixth week so that they had more knowledge and focus to share their reflections on the topic of imagined school community.The drawing process was videotaped.

7. Week

Building blocks activity was carried out. The block activity was a request from children to build their classroom. They worked in pairs to build their classrooms. The building blocks activity was videotaped.

8. Week

Three-dimensional map-making was the activity for the eighth week. A card box was used to establish a three-dimensional school community. Materials such as pencils, papers, clay, play-dough, scissors and glue were all on the table, and children prepared parts of their imagined school community together using these materials.

9. Week

Children decided on the activity of the week to present their ideal classrooms. They chose to make a paper-pencil activity to express their perspectives. They drew and cut their ideal classroom parts and sticked them on a large paper which they regarded as their classrooms.

10. Week

Children decided on the activity of the week to present their ideal classrooms. They chose to work with card-boxes to build a three-dimensional classroom by using different materials. Each child wanted to work individually.

3.4 Description of the research setting and participants

3.4.1 Participants

Data for this research were collected in a preschool classroom located within a state university in İstanbul. The preschool includes classes with children aged between one and six. All age groups attend the school full day. The classes have one teacher, and the medium of instruction is Turkish. The preschool serves for a socio-economically diverse population with almost 80 children. Diversity is largely economically based, and the parents are predominantly working class, professionals, and university-affiliated families.

The school has three buildings, one of them is for one-year-olds. The main building is for younger ages from 2 to 4 years old. In the other building, there are three classes for 4-to-5 and 5-to-6 year-olds. There are administration rooms in the main building. Gym and main building have their gardens protected with a wire fence. Garden of the gym building has two floors as tartan and grass floor. On the grass floor, there are garden playgrounds facilities as slide, swing, climbing wall, ferris wheel. At the entrance of the building, children's lockers are located. In clasrooms, there are posters on the walls and two desks. Two toilet rooms are designed and arranged for children. There is a kitchen and three classrooms. Two of the classroom are for 4-year-olds while the other one is for 5-years-olds.

Children have previous early childhood education background for three years in this classroom. I have been together with half of children for three years. Other half of children were also in the same precshool. The philosphy of the preschool aims to give more space to children in decision making processes. Teachers try to design activities based on children's interest and skills. Children have more than three hours free play time in the curriculum. Thus, children in this study were already active participants in the classroom community.

3.4.2 Education program of the preschool

The education program of the preschool is inspired from both High/Scope and play-based curriculum approaches. The High/Scope is based on children's choice and decision in planning of learning environments where the child is regarded as an active learner of the environment. Children make plans for their own learning. The aim of children's active learning supports all development areas (i.ei, social, emotional, cognitive, language, phsyical). Children are encouraged to make choices and take responsibility and their playtime and free choice are valued and supported. Teachers write their own activities based on aims of the week. There are themes and projects throughout the year. At the end of the year, children have collective project exhibitions where they display their work. The program also draws upon play-based curriculum where children have at least 3 hours free play time during the day.

Children arrive at school around 9:00 am. They have free play time until breakfast. Then, they continue with daily routines, activities of the day, garden time, lunch and rest time, and similar order is followed in the afternoon.

The classroom where I conducted this study consisted of 10 5-to-6 year-old children at the beginning of the year. However, in the 14th week, one child left the

classroom because of the transportation problems. Five of children had been the student of this school since they were two years old. Five children in the classroom had been with the same teacher since they were two years old. Four children attended this class from one of the last year's classrooms, which means that children from the last year's classroom were combined into this year's classroom. However, children were all familiar with school procedures, building staff, and school regulations.

The classroom was large enough to give children ample space to play and work. There were six learning centers as blocks, housing, literacy, art, book and quiet. Children used all these centers equally during the day.

Figure 1 shows art center, literacy center and discovering table in the classroom. The art center had papers, color pens, hands-on materials (rope, straws, paper plates, and cups, glue, scissors etc..). The literacy center had boxes. There were numbers, letters, literacy games, letter games, ÇEP books, pens, and a notebook. ÇEP books is a special progeam that focuses on fostering academic school readiness by supporting children's academic, physical, social-emotional and literacy development areas. Every day before the rest time, 3 or 4 pages of ÇEP would be practiced. The discovery center was a table that was used for arranging relevant materials about the theme of the week. These materials could be visuals, real artifacts, toys or sensory materials.



Fig. 1 Art, discovery and literacy center

Figure 2 shows the housing center that had four parts as kitchen, clothes cabinet, cupboard with shelves and mirrored cabinet. Mirrored cabinet had a real keyboard, and sometimes children brought desks and used the area to work with the computer. In the kitchen, there were plastic plates, cups, fruits, and basket. In the clothes cabinet, there was a scarf, shirt, dress, and bag. The housing center had limited materials, and looked like having less materials than the other classroom centers. Also, there were classroom rules poster on the wall. The classroom rules were created with children by including their offers, designs, and drawings. On the other wall, there were posters of the numbers from 1 to 20.



Fig. 2 Housing center

Figure 3 shows the family center in the classroom. The family center had the photos of the parents, children, and infantile periods of children. Children used the center to look at their families when they missed them and would talk about their siblings and photos of their infantile periods with their friends during the day. The family center was between literacy and block center, and located under the window.



Fig. 3 Family center

Figure 4 shows the block center on the right corner of the classroom. There were different sizes of the blocks, wood and plastic blocks. In this center were railroad woods, colorful pipes, plastic animals, plastic cars, a construction hat and some cups. There were wood chairs on the side and posters on shapes on the wall. Children generally would use the center more actively than others. There were some specific games that children would play on the corner such as zoo, construction, and animal farm.



Fig. 4 Block center

Figure 5 shows the entrance of the classroom. In this center were baskets for garbage and carton, a computer center with a chair and a clock on the wall, visuals of the responsible children who were in charge of helping teacher at a daily basis. There were cups, boxes and toothbrush boxes for children on the wall. The computer and the table were used actively by the teacher. Thus, this was more of a teacher-centered area of the classroom.



Fig. 5 Computer area

Figure 6 shows the quiet center where the posters on emotions, days, voice, and the weather, and a pin-board were displayed. The quiet center had different kinds of legos, puzzles, abacus, small blocks. Children would use this center mostly during the rest time. They would also exhibit their works on the pin-board by themselves.



Fig. 6 Quiet center

During the project, the classroom themes were friends in our living world (living things, pollution, protection of the world), human body, and animals (insects, wild, sea and farm animals). I prepared our classroom plans by asking children what they wondered about the topic. We created a concept map of their knowledge and their curiosities. Then I prepared the plan based on this concept map. Children prepared and presented their presentations in the classroom about pollution and animals on different continents. I prepared our discovery center by bringing visuals or real materials based on the theme of the week every week.

Table 1. The General Daily Schedule of the Preschool Class

08:30-9:00 a.m.	Arrival time (Children play in classroom centers.)
09:00-09:30 a.m.	Breakfast time
09:30-09:45 a. m.	Meeting time (It is a circle time that children and teacher talk about weather, days, children's emotions or thoughts on the day)
09:45-10:05	Circle time (Activities around weekly themes)
10:05-10:15 a. m.	Planing time
10:15-10:50 a. m	Free Choice time
10:50-11:00 a. m.	Reflective time
11:00-11-50 a.m.	Outdoor time
12:00-12:30 p.m.	Meal time
12:30- 12:45 p.m.	Academic work time
12:45- 14:45 p.m.	Rest time
14:45- 15:30 p.m	Snack time
15:30-15:45 p.m	Music and Movement time
15:45-16.10 p.m	Key Experiences
16:10-16:30 p.m	Free Choice Time
16:30-17:15p.m.	Outdoor Time/Leaving Time

Daily routines (Table 1) might change on some days. There are some projects in the classroom. Once a month, they made presentations. Considering children's interests, children and the teacher decide on their presentation topics. Parents and children prepared their presentations at home, and children presented to their friends in the classroom. Moreover, the classroom has a cookie day once a month. The parents of children come, and on the cookie day, one of the parents prepares cookies with children. There is a theater day once a month. They improvise on the stage. Besides, there are categorically organized days in a week. Monday is the toy day, and they bring their toys from their houses to play in the classroom. Tuesday is the "show and tell" day. They bring something from their houses to present to their friends in the classroom. Wednesday is the book or magazine day. Friday is the

middle day. They bring riddles and ask them to their friends in the classroom. The other special days are the pyjamas party and movie days. The activities on these days happen once a month.

Hidden curriculum refers to social and spatial relations, cultural patterns, rules (written or verbal), values, expectations and rituals comprising an institution (Zalar, 2006). An institution's hidden curriculum comprises everything a child learns in preschool that is not planned or intended. The institution of this study had the hidden curriculum of mostly child-centered practices. The decisions about curriculum and interactional climate with children were geared towards the children's best interest. Children and teacher set rules together. However, all children expected to follow the daily schedule. Overall, it might be said that the institution tends to give childen priority in all areas to some extent.

3.5 Consideration of possible ethical issues

Since this study was conducted with young children, and the researcher was the teacher of the classroom, ethical considerations were strictly followed. Firstly, the school administration was informed about the aims of the research projects, data collection tools and logistics of the study. I prepared a document explaining my study. I sent this document to the education coordinator and the administration of the preschool by taking the consent of my advisor. After the consents of the education coordinator and the administrator were taken, they sent this document to the education commission of the preschool that is the early childhood education department of the University.

In order to take the approval of the Ethics Community of Boğaziçi University, I prepared a report on my study by explaining the theoretical framework,

the methodology and the ethical considerations briefly. The consent forms for the parents of each child were prepared. These forms were presented to the Ethics Committee. The official approval of the Ethics Committee (Appendix A) was taken before the study started. The consent forms for the parents (Appendix B/C) of each child covered information about the purposes, methods and ethical considerations of the study. They were informed about the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any time they wanted without any statement of excuse. Parents were also informed about the video and audio recordings as well as deletion of these records after transcriptions.

All the field notes, video records, and audio records were kept in a locked folder in the private computer of the researcher. Only the thesis advisor looked through the process of the research. Names of children and school name were kept confidential throughout the process. The pseudo names were used for the participants.

Cresswell (2013) suggests that for young children, consent forms are supposed to be taken from parents and schools. However, in this study, children's consents were taken verbally. Moreover, before starting every activity, children were asked if they wanted to participate. At the beginning of the study, I explained them about the purpose and the method of the study. I informed them about what I was going to do with those records and activities. They wanted to help me with excitement.

I prepared a cardboard for the classrooom to show steps and the time frame of the ideal classroom project, which helped children follow steps actively. In addition, they had information on what would be the topic or activity in the following week. All children in the classroom took part in the activities.

Reflexivity monitors the researcher's own position as the researcher as well as the research process itself (Creswell, 2013). I tried to be careful about being reflexive about my role during the study. In order to keep thinking about my role critically, I kept research journals, wrote after every activity, and reflected on my role, the context, and my roles and effects on them. I tried to understand the context by considering from a broad perspective, and forced myself to consider from an outsider's perspective. It was difficult for me to consider from the perspective of an outside observer. I was the teacher of the classroom and I tried to get the benefit of this position by trying to understand relationship connections better. I was lucky that I had a chance to identify differences between a normal classroom day and an ideal classroom day. I tried to support the positive sides of being the teacher and the researcher at the same time. I asked for suggestions from my colleagues in this preschool about my roles as the teacher and the researcher. It was difficult not to give directions to them. Sometimes, when I gave directions or intervened, I wrote about those moments in my journal and tried to reflect critically on them in terms of what I could change in my reactions and practices.

Qualitative researchers try to understand the participants and the context deeply by obtaining detailed meanings (Creswell, 2013). While doing that, they ask themselves the important question "did we get it right?". Qualitative studies use the terms of validity to identify the trustworthiness of their findings. In this study, some strategies were used for trustworthiness. I used different kinds of data collection strategies to increase credibility. Triangulation is collecting data from different participants and individuals and using different methods and types of data (Creswell, 2013). In this study, triangulation was carried out by using different methods based on different theories in the literature: The new sociology of childhood, child

participation studies, and critical pedagogy. The methods were rich with the activities providing children participation, and imagination of their actual practices in constructing ideal classroom environments. Data types were observations, informal interviews, voice and video recordings, and personal journals. All of these methods enhanced the trustworthiness and supported the credibility of the findings. I took my advisor's feedback regularly and discussed with fellow researchers in the field in order to have member checking in interpretation and the data collection process. I kept the research journals in order to clarify the researcher's bias. I wrote rich and detailed descriptions of the project process.

As a teacher, I had trust based, secure and warm relations with children. They were excited to help me with the project. They constantly asked about the ideal classroom days. I was open to their ideas and valued their perspectives. Children were also open for me to further improve the project. They took the voice recorder and talked to it by themselves.

3.6 Theoretical background of the methodology

3.6.1 Children as participant and co-researcher in research

It is children's right to be involved in spaces related to children in decision-making processes (UNCRC, 1989). If participation is the crucial part of the preschool environment, how participation is handled in research studies? With children's rights movement, the childhood studies shift to more child-centered methodologies placing children's voices to the center as the social actor in the center of the research process. Christensen (2004) suggests that the increase in the involvement of children in the research process increases the quality of children's research studies. Woodhead

(2009) suggests that listening to children's voices is directly related to children's experiences and perspectives.

In this study children's participation included the formal ways such as taking their consent, being transparent about research purposes. They were informed about the fact that they could withdraw from the research at any time they wanted, and they did not have to participate in it. However, they showed great interest in the research, and all of them made part of the process.

To what extent children are active in their surroundings is highly related to children's participation level. Shier (2001) suggests that participation has five levels: (1) Adults need to hear children's statements. (2) Children need encouragement in expressing their ideas. (3) Children's ideas require to be taken serious by adults. (4) Adults need children being involved in the decision-making process. (5) Children take responsibility for sharing power and control in decision-making process. Each level increases children participation.

In this study, the fifth level of participation based on Shier's participation was considered and applied. Children were decision makers and had a direct influence on the research process. This level was also related to children as co-researcher. As mentioned before, this study involved the methodology of children as co-researchers. They were involved in designing of the research process as well as interpretations.

As suggested by UNCRC, voice is an important concept in children as co-researchers methodology. In this study, children had many opportunities to express their voices. They were engaged both with the diversity of the activities and the practices in order to express themselves. Field observations also were made in order to capture their voices in constructing ideal classrooms. Thus, children raised their voices through movements, decisions, and actions.

As suggested by UNCRC, the familiar space was used for children to make them feel comfortable. The space was their own classroom, and the teacher was also the researcher. Thus, the people (i.e., the teacher and peers) and the setting were familiar to children.

As suggested by UNCRC, children's ideas were listened. This study involved multiple ways of listening children not only with ears but also through observations, senses or eyes (Rinaldi, 2006). They expressed themselves in many different ways by talking to a voice recorder or camera. Some of them expressed themselves by writing on the researcher's notebook. As researchers, they used many different methods to be listened during the research process.

Children as co-researchers methodology needs to have an influence on the research process. In this study, children were involved in different parts of the research, such as designing research questions, deciding on data collection tools, interpretation, and implications. They came up with ideas regarding what they could do in their ideal classrooms as the decision-makers and the researchers of the study. We decided on data collection tools together. First, I brought them some activities, and during the process they changed some of them and added new tools. They interpreted their works of the ideal classroom in the findings and offered suggestions for ideal classroom spaces for the implications.

3.6.2 Mosaic approach

In order to obtain children's perspectives, it is necessary to develop creative and meaningful methods (Lundy, McEvoy & Byrne, 2011). Obtaining children's perspectives cannot be rushed; on the contrary, it needs to be creative and meaningful and to have extended time to give children the space to express their

views and experiences. The mosaic approach, developed by Clark (2005), uses multiple methods in order to increase the participation of children and to get more information from their lives. . Developed in the UK by researchers Alison Clark and Peter Moss, the Mosaic approach is a multi-method framework composed of listening to young children and gathering their perspectives. Children are seen as active co-constructors of the meaning. This framework focuses on listening to children in a respectful and genuine way. Participatory methods are developed in order to integrate children's voices into decision making processes about their early learning environments. In the mosaic approach, the multiple methodologies provide children with inclusive opportunities, and especially photography is an important part of this framework.

Multiple participatory tools used in this framework invite children to express themselves about their lives. These methods are not based on speaking and writing, but enable children to express themselves comfortably. Tools include observation, cameras, and bookmaking, tours, map-making, magic carpet, interviews with children, parents and educators. The important point is the fact that "participatory research tools enable children to play an active role in the research process" (Clark, 2005). In this study, participatory research tools based on children's best interests and the context of the research were selected.

The mosaic approach is multi-method in order to represent different voices of children. It is a participatory approach that treats children as experts and active agents in their lives, and also a reflexive approach including children's, parents', practitioners' reflections on meaning. It focuses on children's life experiences and is also embedded in practice. It is adaptable to be applied in different early childhood institutions (Clark, 2005).

The mosaic approach has three stages in the research process. The first one is that children and adults collect documents. Collecting documents can be carried out in many different ways by addressing the best ways to take children's perspectives and participation. Observation, child conferencing, cameras, drawing, mapping, tours are the methods and can be expanded through children's best interests and the context of the research. Bringing pieces together makes a meaningful whole. The second stage is the interpretation of the information for dialogue, reflection, and interpretation. The third stage is deciding on continuity and change. In the last part, based on data interpretation, a decision is given on which one is important for children, continuity or change.

In this study, these three stages were applied based on children's decisions. In data collection, children and I decided on different participatory activities in order to construct and represent their understanding of the ideal classroom. I used tools of observation, child-conferencing, cameras, drawing, mapping, and tours. Children decided on using drawing, making three-dimensional mapping, and using blocks. They offered and made changes in some activities during the process..

In the second stage of this study, interpretation of the data was carried out by children and the teacher together. As co-researcher, children interpreted ideal classroom features through the participatory activities and the evlautaion meetings on the ideal classroom days. In the third stage, children were active participants. Their ideas and suggestions were taken into consideration by making changes in our existing classroom community. Based on children's decisions, some practices were continued or changed.

Overall, the methodology of the current study was based on children's active participation and their being co-researchers by taking children's rights, the new

sociology of childhood, and the mosaic approach as the fundemental conceptual and methodological basis. Such a methodology enabled to understand children's perspectives and experiences by engaging meaningful and creative activities. Besides, this methodology was chosen to empower children in decision making and help them influence their ideal classroom environment.

3.7 Data analysis

Creswell (2013) suggests that in order to make data analysis, it is necessary to read data many times for developing an in-depth understanding. There are steps in data analysis such s preparing and organizing the data, exploring the data, describing and developing themes from the data, representing and reporting the findings (Creswell, 2013). I started by preparing and organizing the data for analysis. After every ideal classroom day, I organized my data in folders with the dates on them. The voice recorders, video recorders, artworks and reflection notes were in different folders. In this part of the research, I went unnoticed about the size of the data, because I had not initiated the transcription process. After the research ended, I started to transcribe the data immediately. The size of the data was highly large which resulted in a month of labor-intensive transcription. While transcribing, I left space for taking notes and writing codes. I transcribed every word that children talked. However, I fixed the sentences that children always repeated. I did not write words that children repeated and said differently.

After the transcription period, I started reading my data over and over again. At first, while reading, I did not take notes to have a general understanding of the data. While reading for the second time, I started writing words to begin thematic analysis so as to reach an understanding of the concepts and relationships between themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). I started by naming the parts of the data. Bogdan

& Biklen (2007) suggest some specific codes in reading data in order to analyze the sections of the data. The setting codes were used to name a specific place. I used setting codes to name the contexts that children used, such as a corridor or garden. The situation codes were used in this study to name the works of children in the ideal classroom. The perspective codes were used to name my emotions in reflection notes. The subjective way of thinking on people and objects was used to name children's ideas about their classroom. The process codes were used to code the process changes in the ideal classroom project. The activity codes were used to name activities that children and I did, such as hands-on or exploratory activities. The strategy codes were used to name children's social conflict solution strategies. The relationships and social structure codes were used to name their relationships with me and peers. The method codes were used to name things related to the methods. Such a detailed classification helped me analyze the data critically and led me to make decisions about coding the data.

While coding the data manually, I used colorful pens and stickers and plenty of notebooks to write codes. I divided the data into two parts. First, I analyzed the afternoon parts of the days that I planned as child participation activities and children's informal interviews. In the second part of the days, I wrote all the codes to my notebook. I tried to search for similar codes to combine them to decrease the code numbers. There were more than 50 codes. After clustering them, the codes decreased to around 25 codes. When I realized that codes represented all the classroom community parts conceptually, I categorized the themes as formal, informal and physical spaces of the classroom community (Clark, 2010). I placed the themes under these categories which formed the basic structure of the study findings.

I started reviewing the first parts of the ideal classroom days. After I established the structure of the second part of the days, the review became easier to understand the connections between codes. I began interpreting findings of children's imagined ideas critically in the second part of the day and their actual practices in the first parts of the day under three categories by using their active participation, agency and decision making concepts.

During this process, I shared my codes with fellow researchers in my graduate program in order to get their suggestions about the emerging codes and themes. I visited my advisor every week to share my progress with analysis, and we discussed the codes and themes in detail. The meetings with fellow researchers and my advisor helped me analyze the data from different perspectives. Consequently, the meticulous data analysis processes resulted in the findings which are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The present study aims to understand children's perspectives of existing and ideal classroom construction. Data were analyzed the documents with two different perspective as existing and ideal spaces of classroom community. Figure 7 shows that there are many factors affecting children's construction of classroom community.

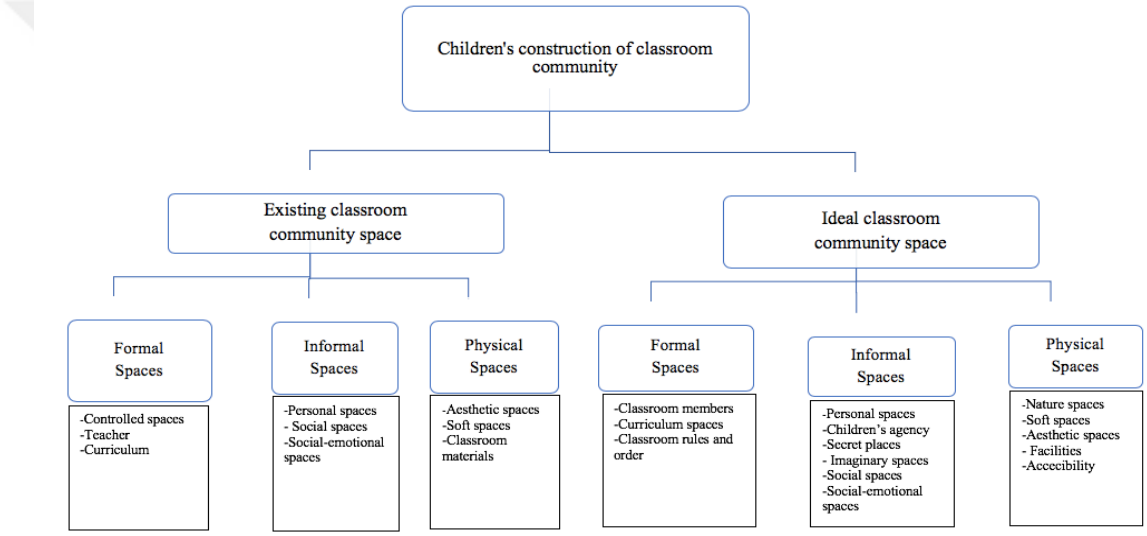


Fig. 7 Themes of children's construction of classroom community

4.1 Existing space

This chapter gives a detailed account of how young children involved in this study and chose to document their current spaces during their changes in thinking of ideal classroom day. This chapter, at the same time, demonstrates children's own expressions and discourse about their current spaces and examines questions of how they constructed existing classroom community and what themes were raised.

Listening to children's voices with the use of research tools showed important spaces in their classroom environment. Ideal classroom day project revealed children's views on formal classroom space of teaching and learning, informal classroom space of personal spaces and physical classroom environment of materials, toys and specific places.

4.1.1 Official classroom spaces

Official classroom category emerged to have three themes which are formed based on teaching and learning spaces of classroom community. These themes are "controlled spaces", "teacher in the classroom" and "curriculum spaces". Official spaces were identified by analyzing children's views according to adults and children involved together in the process. However, this section focuses more on the domination of teachers rather than that of children.

4.1.1.1 Controlled spaces

When children tours and children photo interviews were coded, it was seen that classroom rules and routines of existing classroom were mentioned. Controlled spaces included computer area, classroom routines, rest time, locked rooms, and meal time.

Children seemed to regard classroom routines important to express when introducing classroom space. They took me to the places of classroom that were related to their routines. I noticed that they associated places and routines of the classroom. Ayhan's moments on "When we are on rest time, we lay on cushions and the teacher reads us books from the book shelve"- alluded to the association between a space and the expected behavior there.

In the classroom, computer area was visited by children less than other areas in the classroom. In the computer areas, there was not much to discover or attract their attention. However, it was obvious that children avoided using that place. They sometimes put their things that they found in the classroom or their works as gifts for me. They pointed out those areas as adult-centered. However, they also expressed that they wanted to use there too.

> Arda: This is a computer. We listen to music and watch cartoons and that is it.
> Researcher: Who uses this place?
> Arda: The teacher
> Researcher: ….
> Arda: I want to use it too.

Children expressed that some places were in the use of adults only, yet when they had opportunity to access those areas, they refused to do so. Such places drew their attention. However, they avoided discovering those places even if they got a chance. They were aware of the fact that those places were out of teacher power as well and were used by school personnel.

In the child-led tours, one of them showed the locker room of the personnel.

> Esma: This is the dressing room. We change our clothes like that. (Showing her t-shirt)
> Researcher: Is it your dressing room?
> Esma: The dressing room is used by adults.
> Researcher: Do you use it too?
> Esma: (shaking her head) because, it is not allowed.
> Researcher: Why do you think?
> Esma: We do not know.
> Okan: Because something can happen.
> Researcher: What can happen?
> Esma: I am not going to enter.

Rest time was constructed as controlled spaces by children where their agency and participation were under the control of adults in the rest time. They critiqued about rest time and expressed their views by expelling spaces regarding rest time. A few children took photos of the voice board and its whisper part. They said they do not

like whispering in the rest time. Whisper voice decreased the quality of their play in the rest time.

> Okan: I cannot stand talking with whisper voice. I want to talk with my normal voice.

Meal times were the spaces that children needed to adopt some rules. They were expected to sit, talk in manner, not touch other friends and not bring toys to the table. These rules were determined by the teacher. Children showed their participation in conversations, and they took responsibility in preparing their food. I noticed that they felt more controlled in these spaces by looking at other children's reactions in leaving the table without taking permission. It was obvious that children felt to be an active individual when they left the table once they were full and they did not need to ask the teacher.

They had conversation about leaving the table on an ideal classroom day.

> Ayça: Tuğba, can I leave?
> Researcher. It is your decision. Today is ideal classroom day.
> Ayça: If you are full, you can leave.
> Ekin: Tuğba can we leave without being full.
> Ayhan: Did you see I leave without asking (Ayhan takes his plate and goes to the kitchen)

4.1.1.2 Teacher in the classroom

In the category of official classroom space, teaching and learning spaces are the central points. Children gave attention to the teacher in the classroom in different research tools by pointing out different roles of teacher. I decided to name the theme as teacher in the classroom instead of adult, because children did not mention other adults in the school. Children defined teacher in the classroom in the role of a caregiver, helper, and decision maker, a person arranging classroom rules, watching children, being nice and positive and being a playmate.

During the data gathering process, I noticed that there were many things in the classroom that were not negotiated with children. I asked myself how we want children to adopt their classroom and felt unity. They did not even decide on the places of materials in the classroom. Especially after the conversation between Ayhan and Yaman, I started to look at the existing classroom with a more critical eye about the things that I decided without asking children. They were talking about the classroom name yet did not even have the right to choose the name of their classroom.

Ayhan: This is walnut tree classroom.
Researcher: Why is your classroom's name walnut tree?
Ayhan: Because we can understand that it is our class by this way.
Researcher: Why is it walnut tree?
Ayhan: Because we wanted to become a walnut.
Researcher: Who decided that?
Ayhan: Our teacher.
Researcher: Would you want to decide?
Ayhan: Let's go to the garden.
Yaman: I would not choose walnut. I would choose banana.
Researcher: You wanted to be a banana.
Yaman: Yes, I love banana a lot.

One of the many roles of the teachers was to monitor the classroom order. However, there was an important point that there was a border line in monitoring the order. The border line was teacher intervention to friendship culture. Children expressed their views on teacher's intervention to friendship culture. Friendship culture was a space towards which they showed full participation and agency. When they talked about their friends in the playground, they complained about teacher's intervention to their plays.

Ayhan: This is the umbrella of Arda.
Researcher: Who is Arda?
Ayhan: Arda sometimes plays with us.
Researcher. How do you feel about it?
Ayhan: Actually, we are happy to play with friends that we love. However, he wants to join us, and we refuse him. Our teacher says: "Take him to play

with you".
Researcher. Your teacher wants you to take him to your play,
Ayhan. She wants us to play with him too.
Researcher: You like hearing this.
Ayhan: (shakes his head, meaning no, runs away from me immediately).

In my teaching experiences, I understood that playing with children was crucial for their social-emotional development. While creating an atmosphere of unity in the classroom community, playing with children as a teacher was a central point. When teachers attended to children's games, all classroom came together in one play. Therefore, I gave special attention to playing with children. In the study, they expressed their views about their teacher's role of playing with them and expressed their likes to play with the teacher one-to-one as well as with all children.

Ayhan: Once, I played with my teacher alone. I liked it too.

4.1.1.3 Curriculum spaces

Curriculum spaces involved children's views on their learning and teaching spaces in the existing classroom. Even if children gave more importance to the places used for playing, there were some spaces that they highlighted for formal learning and teaching. Curriculum spaces were subcategorized as hands-on learning spaces, real life learning spaces, active learning spaces. These places were actively used with guidance of the teacher in the daily schedule of the curriculum. It was noticeable that children associated learning and teaching with places that they use with the teacher more actively.

4.1.1.4 Hands-on learning spaces

Hands-on learning occurred in the art center and the table. Children frequently talked about the tables of the classroom to express usages of hands-on activities in learning

and teaching concept. They expressed their views of how they use classroom tables including their works on table such as painting, working with beads, playing with play-dough.

> Researcher: You took a photo of the table
> Ekin: I like tables because I draw good pictures here, and I draw pictures for my mom. I work here. I work with beads here.

4.1.1.5 Direct-teaching learning spaces

Direct-teaching learning spaces mean that learning happens in a routine and learning is teacher-centered. Children needed to participate but they had little effect on how to organize or express themselves. They focused on classroom boards. Classroom boards were used actively in the daily schedule, especially in routines. Boards were teacher-directed, and the usage of these spaces were essential. I tried to locate the boards according to children's size. However, I was unable to locate the emotion board because of the classroom design. I located them on top of the quiet center on the wall.

Emotion boards, days and weather boards were used in the morning routine. The days board was explained; "These are the days. This is the toy day. This is show and tell day, this is the book day, and this is ideal classroom project day". Children explained how boards are used in the classroom in detail.

Some children took photos of emotions board. I used emotion board actively for helping children to express their emotions in the social-emotional space. There were different views of children about the emotion boards. Some of them liked expressing their feelings to their friends. Some of them disliked using the emotion board because; it took their time and they got bored while waiting for their turn to talk. Ekin said "We want to touch it". It meant that they were unable to be an active participant. Even if classroom had direct-teaching places, they needed to be an active

participant by touching, changing, affecting the material.

> Ekin: I do not like emotions board because, it takes your time, and we have less time to play inside and outside. We get bored when we wait for our turn.

One of them took photos of the boards and expressed them the places that she disliked. The reason for that was that she could not read writings. Thus, she disliked them. I did not notice that writings can be a challenge for children. As an early childhood education teacher, I was thinking about preparing more writing spaces to help children's development of academic readiness. However, children wanted to understand their environment. Writing is challenging for them. As a teacher, I noticed to read and point out writings to them to help them understand and get familiar with writings. As a matter of fact, while this situation was also closely connected with the teacher, children had negative views on these spaces too.

4.1.1.6 Active learning spaces

Active learning spaces mean that children actively participate in these places in learning. These spaces were discovery center, curiosity board, literacy center, and book center. These centers were the places that children are free to use whenever they want. They made contributions to these places by giving voice.

Many children took photos of the curiosity board. Curiosity board was for writing of children’s questions and wonders. They liked seeing their questions there and when we searched for their questions, they became very happy with it. Curiosity boards made children active participants in the classroom by raising children’s voice.

> Okan: I like this board. Because I like things that surprise me. I get surprised when I see these questions. We are going to search for these questions and we like searching.

Literacy center was mentioned by children in data. All of them in the child-led tours took the researcher to the literacy center and showed ÇEP books and told that they

loved studying them. In the literacy center, children mentioned letters and numbers. They expressed that they learn them.

Moreover, they also mentioned the book center and expressed their emotions about reading books and showed their favorite books. I noticed that children showed their and their friends' books.

In data, discovery center was the first thing that they showed and took photos of. They took the researcher to the discovery center and talked about the usages of it by saying; "We examine the materials on it". They explained and introduced the materials on the discovery center in detail to the researcher.

Children pointed out to the importance of visuals in teaching and learning by their views of discovery center.

> Researcher: What about this photo?
> Miray: I like the discovery center. I look at animals there when I come. I like it too much.

Every child in the study mentioned the book center. They expressed their views of their love for books. They said that they like reading books, looking at their pictures. Book center was based on more individual usages. They did not mention other children when they talk about the books. They talked about their favorite books and books that they brought from their home. They mentioned that there were their favorite books and books that they did not like. One child said that he did not like small books and another one said that she did not like thick books and another one did not like thin books.

> Okan: I like the blue book in the book center. This book is very thick, and it lasts in the rest time. There are animals' pictures in this book.
>
> Researcher: You took a picture of this book?
>
> Miray: I took a picture of it because its pages are very bad. So, I do not like it.
> Researcher: You took a picture of the book center?

> Miray: I like animal books here, and I like my own books in here. I like bringing my books to the classroom.

One of them took a photo of the guess box in the classroom. Guess box was used in the activities to encourage children to guess what is inside the box. They liked using it with me and among each other. Guess box was used both by children and the teacher. Guess box provided activities to be more fun and stimulated children's curiosity. This process took the activity away from direct teaching. Therefore, they were active in their own learning.

> Ayhan: This is a guess box. Sometimes, our teacher asks us riddles. Sometimes, we ask each other riddles. We sometimes know them, and we sometimes do not know them.

4.1.1.7 Real-life learning spaces

Real-life learning space means that children preferred to have real materials in their existing classroom. In the photo interviews with children, it was highlighted by children that they liked engaging with real materials in the classroom. They took a photo of the keyboard in the housing center and they said that they liked playing with it because it was real. Children took a photo of the computer as a real material to help them in searching.

> Researcher: You took keyboard's photo?
> Arda: I am doing my job here. I write things on the computer for my mom. I like that it is real. It is better with a chair.

4.1.2 Informal spaces

Children mentioned their environment in informal spaces that children's interactions, friendships, values and emotions take place. They built different relationships with their physical environment, with materials, centers, and friends or with themselves.

4.1.2.1 Personal spaces: Self identity

Mosaic approach found out that children gave value to classroom spaces as they established interaction with themselves, their friends and other adults, and ownership of some materials and places of the classroom. They documented things that they had interaction with in the classroom such as their works, friends, their art works, and their materials from home. In this study, they mostly highlighted their toys and books that they brought to classroom and introduced to the researcher and took their photos. They on each tour stopped to take specific photographs of their toys, materials or works in child-led tours, photo interviews and concept map activity.

> Researcher: what is the thing that you like about your lockers?
> Esma: I love showing my umbrella to my friends and my toys.

Children gave priority to taking pictures of their favorite toys that they brought from home. It seems that they gave particular significance to their own self-portraits in the existing classroom environment.

> Researcher: Can you take photos of your favorite things in the classroom?
> Barış: I will firstly take photos of my toys, then my puppet and the quiet center.

They highlighted their works in the classroom and they told me with pride. Exhibitions of children's works in the classroom made them to feel competent and like an active constructor of the classroom community.

> Ayhan: I took a picture of the literacy center because there is my spaceship there. I like that it is there.
> Ekin: We can exhibit everything here. I like hanging my drawings here and I like that everyone sees my works.
> Ayhan: These are our drawings. Once, we drew with our teacher. For example, I drew this one. I did these kinds of things. Other drawings belong to my friends. They did all of them.

They mentioned their water cups and toothbrushes in the classroom in concept map activity.

Another point in self-identity theme of the study was that children showed their babyhood photos and talk about how cute they were. Their names were written on the charts and also pointed out by children.

> Miray: There are pictures here. This is my family. ….. This is me when I was little. (Smiling)
> Barış: I took this photo because my babyhood photo is there.

Children also mentioned the mirror in the classroom to look at themselves. In the concept map activity, they said that they are in the classroom also and wanted to see their own pictures, works and properties in their classroom community.

> Barış: There is a mirror here. We look at ourselves.

4.1.2.2 Personal spaces: Family members

Children of each of the tours stopped to take a photograph of the family center in the classroom. They spent a few minutes to introduce their family members to the researcher, and talked about their siblings, parents' jobs, and the parents and siblings of their friends. It was significant for them to have a family place. I did not notice children's perception of their family pictures in using actively. It was seen that they did not care about this place. However, in children's world, this was normally not the case. They gave special care for this place.

One of them in the tour took me to another class to introduce me to his friend's younger brother. Yaman especially introduced me to his brother and added that he was in the neighborhood classroom. It seems significant for them to have a family member in the classroom.

> Ayhan: Can you come Selim? I am going to introduce you to someone.
> Ayhan: He is Selim. He is the sibling of Yaman.
> (They take the researcher to Selim's classroom)
> Ayhan: This is Selim's classroom.

4.1.2.3 Social spaces: Friends

Children valued their friends in the existing classroom. They chose their close friends according to their play. Play was a strong distinguishing activity in the classroom while children are making friends. Play also occurred with their mutual interest areas. Friends who acted as playmates had mutual interest areas. They defined their friendship according to their friends' interest areas. Interest areas were important for them to choose friends.

The conversation between the researcher, Ayhan and Barış in the garden about their friends;

> Researcher: Who are your friends?
> Barış: Mert is here.
> Researcher: How is Mert as friend?
> Barış: Mert like dinosaurs.
> Barış: She is Beliz. But, she is from another classroom.
> Researcher: Is she your friend or not?
> Ayhan: Eeee we like boys more. But we like her too.
> Researcher: Hımm you like boys more
> Barış: Yes, look at us. (Showing his boy friends in the playground)
> Ayhan: Because I like animals a lot.
> Researcher: Boys like animals a lot?
> Ayhan: Some girls also like animals.
> Researcher: You like friends who love animals?
> Ayhan: Yes.

To some extent, children paid attention to gender while making friends. For many years in our classroom, there have been friend groups that dominantly had males. This group had the same interest areas in the play, and they all played together. They did not categorize their friends according to their gender. However, due to the domination of males in the groups, they said: "It is a male game." to some girls except Miray. Miray was a permanent part of their group. They did not question her gender. As a matter of fact, they respected their friendship more in time and their interests' areas while making friends.

4.1.2.4 Social spaces: Places

Social activities and plays had great importance for children in the activities to express themselves. Block center was a popular social place which involves many play practices. There were special plays of children that they associated with block centers. They only played these games in that center. Another important point was that their friend groups were connected with children who played in the block center. Block center was mostly preferred by males and a girl

> Researcher: What is your favorite place in the classroom?
> Ayhan: Block center is mine and my friends' favorite place.

Children drew attention to the housing center as a social place through research tools and used that place for playing, housing and cooking. This place was in the second place in popularity. Two specific children used it continuously.

> Researcher: What is your favorite place in the classroom?
> Arda: The housing center. We build houses there. Then we cross the house.
> Ayhan: I play in housing center with my girl and boy friends, and we do English activities there.

There were different views of children about the housing center. All children agreed on the block center holding an important social place for them. However, not all of them agreed about the housing center. In the housing center, there were some gender issues. Boys specifically mentioned the gender of their friends when they talked about them. The girls expressed that they did not like the gender roles in the housing center. Moreover, many children mentioned that they dislike that place since it is old.

> Researcher: What about this picture?
> Miray: I do not like the housing center. I do not like being a cooker. I do not like playing in the housing center.

Children mentioned the carpet as a social place to play with their friends and played

on the carpet actively. The carpet had different patterns, and they liked playing with those patterns. They played car games together.

> Researcher: What is your favorite place?
> Barış: I like the carpet.

Some children mentioned the seats between housing and block center. They mentioned them as their roles in their games. It was an important social place for children in the classroom. They used that space actively by adding them to their plays in housing and block center. They also used under the seats and sometimes they went under the seats, and they played these kinds of plays.

> Ayhan: We sit on these seats. Sometimes, we lay down on them while playing games. Sometimes, we hide under them.

Quiet center was mentioned less than the others as a social place. Quiet center had a nature of individual plays. However, they brought materials from the other centers and made their games social games. It seemed that they constructed their own environments actively.

> Barış: I like playing in the quiet center. We drink tea there with the kitchen tools quietly.

4.1.2.5 Social emotional spaces

It was the first time that I noticed that children have special places to relax. They took photos of the family center in the classroom. Together with their views on their families, some of them added that family center was also used by them as feeling good space.

> Ayça: When I miss my parents, I go there and look at our picture. I use that place to feel good.

In the existing classroom, we used solution meeting to solve our problems. In the data, they reflected about that space and had different views on it. Some of them liked that space to have a voice in solving problems. Some of them did not like it. Solution meetings took their time from play. They generally used that place when they had a challenging time in terms of their emotional states. Therefore, that space was not reflected as a relaxing area. In the photo interview, one child expressed her views about solution chairs.

> Miray: I do not like solution desks. Because I don't like it. I do not like solutions.

I had been with some of children in this classroom for a long time. In that process, we had experienced challenging behaviors. I tried to redirect the challenging behaviors. When children attempted to bite or hit, I told them to hit or bite the soft materials in the classroom. Okan took photos of stuffed materials in the housing center. He said that he used stuffed toys in the classroom for relaxation space. As a matter of fact, I was not aware of children's construction of space according to their social-emotional needs.

> Okan: I like stuffed toys because I can squeeze them when I get angry with something.

4.1.3. Physical dimensions of the classroom

Children's views about their physical environment was the focus of this category. They gave information about color and beauty, classroom materials, lights, electricity, well-kept and soft spaces in the existing classroom.

4.1.3.1 Aesthetic spaces

Children attached great importance to the color of their physical classroom community. There were different views about color choices. However, all of them agreed that they liked light colors in the classroom. Ayça talked about the discovery center in the photo interview.

> Ayça: I like these table because it has green color and it looks like grass. I like analyzing animals on the table.

Children also gave special attention to the lighting of the classroom and regarded about lights in their learning environments. In our classroom, there were two tables. One of them was in front of the windows, and it was green. The other one was in front of the art center. It was not as high as the green one. The color of the table was orange. Ayça and Mert took a photo of that specific table and they labeled it as the disliked one.

> Ayça: I do not like this table because of its color and lighting. I get sad when I make my activity in this table.

Children mostly documented photos of the places that were old and dirty in child- led tours and photo interviews. In our classroom, there were places that were decayed. Mostly, wood cabinets got old in the centers. They expressed that they did not like old places, and that such places bother them.

> Researcher: Is there any place that you do not like?
> Okan: For example, this one (literacy center). It is old and from the past.
> Researcher: What do you mean?
> Okan: It is so old. It is dusty
> Researcher: This place bothers you because of the dust and its being old.
> Okan: Yes.
> Researcher: How would you like it to be?
> Okan: Beautiful and tidy.

> Barış took a photo of the dust in the classroom near the garbage can.

Barış: I do not like dirt.

They documented classroom materials that were broken.

Okan: I like saz (a musical instrument). I would like to hear the sound of it, but it is broken. I do not like it.

4.1.3.2 Lights, electricity and windows

In our existing classroom, there were cables by the side of the computer table. Those cables could be seen, and they looked very messy. According to children's views, cables were dangerous for children. They could be affected by that scene in the classroom.

They took photos of the cables, electric on/off switch in the classroom.

Okan: I do not like turning off the lights. I am afraid of darkness.
Barış: I do not like the sound of electricity which goes like cızzz. I feel sad when it is broken.
Researcher: Is there any place that you do not like?
Barış: I do not like dirt. I do not like cables. Electricity can shock us.

One of them took a photo of the classroom windows. He criticized the place of the windows in the classroom. Classroom windows were higher than their height and they could not see outside. Another point was that there were children who had asthma, so these statements could be because of that. They might have difficulty in breathing. Therefore, they disliked the location of the windows. They wanted to see the outside when they look at the windows.

4.1.3.3 Classroom materials

Children documented their views about the materials of the classroom. They focused on materials in the centers by mentioning the features of those materials based on their age appropriateness and open-ended features. They took photos of the materials that were not appropriate for their ages and did not play with those materials in the

existing classroom. They were active critical thinkers of their classroom community. There were abacus toys in the quiet center and some of them said that they were not appropriate for their age group.

> Researcher: what about this photo?
> Arda: I do not like these kinds of toys. They are not appropriate for us because they are baby toys.

Children also thought critically about the features of materials, which indicated their being open-ended or not. They gave more value to the toys that are manipulative. It could be possible that these kinds of materials stimulate children's thinking and they create different things every time they play.

> Okan: I like this box in the block center because I make beautiful towers with them. First, I think in my mind and then I make it.

There were agreements and disagreements about the classroom toys. All of them agreed on block center's toys and liked them. It was because they were open-ended materials. However, in quiet center, there were different views. Some of them liked Lego toys and manipulative toys to create new materials and could change them according to their thinking. Some of them did not like Legos and manipulative toys in quiet center. It could be because that they were tough and unchangeable.

Okan took a photo of yellow manipulative toy in the queue center and he explained the photo that he took.

> Okan: There are goats and pigs on the toy. I play farmer game with them. I like manipulative toys a lot.

Yaman expressed his views about manipulative toys of the quiet center.

> Yaman: I do not like this toy because I cannot make different things with it.

They also made criticisms about empty places in the classroom. One of them took a photo of the housing center and criticized it for being empty.

> Okan: There is only one cloth here. I can't think of playing here. I get bored here a lot.

4.1.3.4 Soft spaces

Children expressed their views about soft spaces. Many of them highlighted soft places in the classroom in child-led tours, photo interviews and concept map activity and mentioned cushions and carpet. In our classroom, they played with cushions on the carpet. However, it was new for me to see the importance of these places for them. Soft spaces could make them feel at home and they might like sitting on something soft rather than rough ground.

Yaman told about cushions on the seats.

> Yaman: I like sitting on cushions. They are soft and they do not hurt us.
> Yaman: I like our cushions. We lie down on them. We play on them and tumble down over them.

4.2 Ideal classroom spaces

This chapter involves both abstract and concrete concepts. It is the abstract nature of thinking about ideal spaces which makes it a difficult topic to study with young children. This chapter is based on producing the idea of what they would like and practical practices of what they did. This gave children the opportunity to express themselves in the context of adult controlled spaces of classroom environments. However, there were some challenges of this concept when studying with young children. Children could express ideas that never be accomplished. Another point was that practitioner could see that something could be different. This concept required to reflect of practitioners and children's own circumstances.

4.2.1 Formal spaces

Formal space can be defined as children's views on their ideal learning and teaching that are under control of formal systems of the classroom. Children's views and practices on these areas were separated into classroom members, curriculum spaces and classroom rules and orders.

4.2.1.1 Classroom members

In the formal setting of the classroom community, classroom members took a significant role in children's views. They documented their views on teacher's role in the classroom, children and the relationships between the teacher and children.

4.2.1.1.1 Teacher in classroom

From children's point of view, the teacher had many roles in the classroom. These roles could be sub-themed as teaching role, watching role, helping, playing, and leader role.

4.2.1.1.1.1 Teacher as watching children

Children gave some statements about the role of the teacher in the classroom as putting teacher to observe them. In their drawings, they frequently located the teacher as watching them from outside of the playground. In the fourth week activity of drawing, they drew me in the garden.

> Miray: There are Ekin and Ayça. Tuğba also watches us.

In the drawing activity of ninth week, Yaman drew a school and children played in the garden.

> Researcher: Does this school have a teacher?
> Yaman: No, hımm yes, it has. Teacher watches children from classroom.

I observed them mostly in the garden. From these conversations, they were comfortable about the role of the teachers. They did not express it by their feelings of discomfort. It could be said that teacher's watching them could give them a feeling of security.

4.2.1.1.1.2 Teacher as a playing partner

In the findings, children stated that in their ideal classroom, they wanted to be active while playing games with their teacher. In most activities, they expressed that in their classroom, their teacher joined them when they played games. In child led tours, they expressed their views about playing with the teacher. One of children shared his ideas about playing. They were very welcoming towards their teacher when they played games.

> Ayhan: I am really very happy to play together.
> Researcher: you like playing together.
> Ayhan: Yes.
> Researcher: What do you think about children who play alone?
> Ayhan: I played alone once, and I felt happy. Then, I played with my teacher once, and I liked it too.
> Researcher: Does your teacher play with you?
> Ayhan: Sometimes.
> Researcher: Do you want your teacher to play with you more?
> Ayhan: Yes.

In the magic carpet, when they saw a country classroom, they shared that children need to play with their teachers.

> Yaman: Children need to play with their teacher…

In activity drawing activity, Okan explained his ideal classroom's friends and play. He emphasized his wish of playing with his teacher. Okan was associated playing with the teacher with playing play-book. Play-book was based on some rules and

writings in it. When we played "play-book" with children, it was better because I read writings and I helped them to arrange the rules of books in the group. Okan loved the power of the teacher in the play to set up the rules.

> Okan: These are two friends. They play in the classroom. They draw, they play "play-book" with their teacher (it is a game book in the classroom).
> Researcher: They play with their teacher.
> Okan: Yes. They are so excited, and they play “karavancılık”. It is better and more fun to play with teacher.

In the clay activity, Ayhan and Ayça made a classroom and they shared their ideas about children’s works in the classroom. To play with the teacher was more fun for them. It was also important to highlight that Ayhan said “together” when he talked about playing with the teacher. It could be because when the teacher is in the play, all children are included in the play and all of the members of the classroom play together. It could be more exciting and fun for children. In the games, teacher had a role to include all children.

> Researcher: What do children do in the class to have fun?
> Ayhan: Of course, they play games. They play with their teacher all together. Today is ideal classroom day, because of that they play together.

In the clay activity, Yaman explained their works to the researcher. There was an interesting explanation in the conversation.

> Yaman: …… children play by themselves. When they play alone, garden time starts, and they all go out. They play in the garden. Then, their teacher comes. When the teacher comes, all of them play together. The teacher also wants to play, and the teacher plays with them.

Yaman pointed out playing with the teacher, togetherness, and also his desire to play with the teacher. When the teacher was excited to play with children, it could be more precious for children. They may want the teacher to show interest in playing with them.

In the drawing activity, Okan stickled his drawings to the classroom map, he

explained their play and friends. I asked him “why does the teacher come to school?” He said, “The teacher wants to play with children”. Moreover, in the ninth week of drawing activity, children drew the teacher in their ideal classroom as playing with children role.

> Ayhan: Tuğba, look, this is our teacher.
> Researcher: What is your teacher doing in the classroom right now?
> Ayhan: Of course, our teacher is playing with children.

Overall, children wanted to see their teacher get involved in the play in the classroom. For some of them, playing with the teacher brought order to play. They could express themselves more when they are alone rather than among their friends. Also, the teacher provided different possibilities to play. Children enjoyed playing with their teacher. However, it contradicted with children’s wish to be private and being away from adult’s perspectives. In the play, children could feel more equal to teacher in terms of power relations. They wanted to play with their teacher to create a more democratic learning environment by decreasing adult perspective of the teacher being a playmate for them.

In the ideal classroom day, there were reflection of children’s wishing of playing with teacher in practice. Firstly, they invited teacher to their plays many times and made plans to play with me in the ideal classroom meeting in the morning. Moreover, they also tried to play with teacher in random occasions during the day. In the garden, I was talking with children about the garden. Okan came and started to play with me with the intention of engaging me to his play.

In the garden, I was talking with Esma about the garden.

> Researcher: You mean you want to take your shoes out.
> Esma: Yes, but this place is dirty. (Okan comes and wants to say something)
> Researcher: Can I listen to Okan, Esma? (Esma shakes her head)
> Okan: Glululu, little fish came.
> Researcher: Hello fish, how cute you are!
> Okan: Yes, but fishers catch my family. What is going to happen?

Researcher: Aauuuu your family was caught by fishers? But they will be rescued.
Okan: Guluu
(Play continues like this)

In the seventh week of ideal classroom day, Okan planned his ideal day offering to play with the teacher. He planned it and after ideal classroom day started, he reminded me his request and I told him it was my time to play with him. We played with the play-book together. Play-book was a book which includes games with rules and is played with dice. There were writings in it. I read them the writings. Other children also came, and they watched the game. Then a problem came up and I left the play.

As we see, children's ideal classroom wishes, and their practices were consistent. Playing with the teacher was a strong part of the ideal classroom community from their perspective.

4.2.1.1.1.3 Teacher as assisstance

It was highlighted in the activities that teacher has a role of assisting them. Helping had different meanings. One point of assisting them meant that children wanted help from the teacher in things that they were not capable of physically. They sought for their teacher's help in issues like taking something from high above, fixing their clothes or cutting or sticking things.

Another point in seeking for teacher's assistance was to solve social-emotional problems. They wanted the teacher to settle the conflict in the classroom and to protect them from problems caused by those from the other classes.

In the drawing activity, they expressed teacher's role of helping in the classroom.

Researcher (puppet): Does the teacher only teach things?
Ayça: Nooo, they do things.

Researcher (puppet): What do they do?
Ayça: They spread jam on bread, they take our cloths from our lockers.

Moreover, children wanted assistance from their teacher in providing learning materials that they wanted in their classroom environment. They also wanted help from the teacher to go with their agenda, their wish, and interest.

In drawings activity, Miray drew her ideal teacher.

Researcher: What does your teacher do in your classroom?
Miray: She does what we want.
Miray: When we want to watch caterpillar, she opens it, when we want a cat, she finds cat, when we want a goat, and she finds a goat for us.

In the three-dimensional map making activity, Arda designed technological materials for the classroom such as TV, air conditioning, washing machine, lights. He explained their usages and he said that only teachers could use them.

Arda: Only the teacher turns on them.
Researcher: Children?
Arda: If children do it very fast, they can explode.
Researcher: Is it dangerous for children?
Arda: Yes, it is dangerous.

This conversation made me realize that even if children designed their environment by themselves, they put some limitations for themselves. In their ideal classroom, there were dangerous places that only adults could use, just like in the existing classroom.

In the ideal classroom day, we made an agreement on the rules of the ideal classroom at the beginning of the study. They mostly wanted teachers' assistance roles in the agreement. Those roles were based on helping them when they get hurt, protecting them from their social problems, and helping them with challenging physical activities. These rules were;

Okan: When we fall in the garden, you can help us.

> Ayhan: Tuğba, I have an idea, sometimes, children from other classes push me and I fall. Help me when that happens.
> Esma: When we cannot get on something, help us get on it.
> Okan: When our toys and umbrella are top of our lockers, we cannot reach them, so help us to take them.

These decisions were related with physical help from the teacher. They wanted support from their teacher about the things that are difficult for them to do physically.

Other decisions of children about teacher's helping roles were;

> Ekin: When we take our toys to the garden and other kids want them from us, you should help us.
> Esma: Help us when we share our toys.
> Ekin: Help us when someone shouts at us.
> Mert: Help me when someone sits on my chair.

These were the decisions of them for ideal classroom day about teacher's roles. These roles were related to protection of teacher in social-emotional challenges. They wanted the teacher to protect their rights in the playground. In the socio-emotional issues, they wanted support of the teacher to feel secure.

In the ideal classroom day, teacher helped children by offering some solutions when they experienced a difficult solution meeting. I think that children also needed to take part in social emotional conflicts, because when they spent all their time by discussing, they started to feel incompetent in settling the conflict, which could make them run away from solutions. Thus, in ideal classroom day, there were times that I offered them some solutions.

In ideal classroom day, teacher had the role of helping children with their plan preparations. The teacher searched for the materials and printed them. I was very active during ideal classroom day to prepare their activities.

As we see, teacher as assistance role in the ideal classroom was crucial for their perspectives. They wanted assistance from the teacher in things that they are not capable of physically, and in social-emotional conflicts. These showed that they are aware of their own capabilities and limits.

4.2.1.1.1.4 Teacher as being a care-giver

Children shared their ideas about teacher's emotional mood in the classroom and wanted their teacher to be positive and happy. This view could stem from their desire to trust their teacher. When the teacher expressed his/her feelings of being upset, sad or angry, they could have trouble in feeling secure in the classroom socio-emotionally.

Okan: I wrote here that I do not want my teacher to get upset.

In three-dimensional classroom map-making, Barış designed masks for the classroom. He explained his designs to have fun in the classroom, and most importantly, to have fun with the teacher.

> Barış: I designed masks. There are no masks in this classroom. Thus, I am going to design animal masks. Children will use them to make others laugh. They love making their teacher laugh.
> Researcher: Why?
> Barış: Their teacher loves these masks. Their teacher needs to laugh. Otherwise, children get upset.

Children wanted to have a positive environment in the classroom and were also aware that the teacher had a central role in establishing a positive environment. They wanted to interact with the teacher in a positive way, in which the teacher had a care-giver role. However, as a teacher, I did not hide my emotions from children. In the morning routines and during the day, I had always explained children my emotional mood. I thought that if I wanted to hear about children's emotions and want them to

be open to me, I needed to be open as well. On the other hand, I needed to be a model to children in expressing my emotions. However, it was seen that children wanted to see the positive side of their teacher. It could be because of their desire to feel secure about the emotions of their teacher.

In the ideal classroom, children had experiences with teacher in positive ways. When they were engaged with something in their own way, they checked their teacher for positive emotions. They came to my side and gave hug or told me that they loved me. Then, they went back to their games. In the ninth week of ideal classroom week, Ayça and Arda painted watercolor together at the table.

> Arda: Tuğba I love you so much (he is painting watercolor)
> Researcher: I love you too.
> Ayça: Tuğba look I am painting it (she smiles)
> (I smile back to her too)

After this conversation, children continued to work on painting on the table. There were this kind of conversations. They wanted their classroom environment to be safe and trustful atmosphere by the help of the teacher during the day.

4.2.1.1.1.5 Teacher as teaching Role

Children established a strong connection between curriculum activities and teacher's teaching role. In the ideal classroom environments, they defined their teacher in the role of teaching. There were many conversations about teacher for teaching role in the classroom. In drawing activity, at the starting of the activity, researcher entered to classroom with a puppet. Puppet talked to them about their classroom. They helped the puppet by explaining the classroom environment.

> Researcher (puppet): Who else is in the classroom?
> Okan: There are friends and teachers in the classroom.
> Researcher (puppet): Who is the teacher?
> Okan: The teacher teaches us things.

Researcher (puppet): What is the teacher going to teach?
Okan: For example, the teacher teaches how dolphins swim.

Children gave different views on teacher's role of teaching, which made me question myself. They mixed the ideal and existing teacher roles in their minds. I noticed that in the conversation between me and Ekin. In the activity of three-dimensional classroom map making, Ekin pointed out something very important. Ekin designed pens for the classroom.

Researcher: You designed pens?
Ekin: Children use pens for painting and working. They do it because they miss their moms and their teacher wants it from them.
Researcher: Does their teacher want them to study?
Ekin: Sometimes, the teacher thinks of making an activity. Then she says, “I think, I shouldn’t do it, Children can do it”.
Researcher: For example, which activities does she want children to do?
Ekin: For example, designing the houses.

This conversation made me realize that children need explanations for the background of activities. When the teacher only brought an activity to the classroom and made no explanations, some children thought that the teacher wanted to do that activity. When the teacher designs an activity, he/she may need to explain why that activity will take place, and in what ways that activity will develop children's skills. This could help children understand that those activities are for them, not for the teacher himself/ herself.

In the ideal classroom day, children did not do any practices for the teacher in teaching role. They asked for assistance in preparing learning environments. It is seen that children’s views of the teacher in teaching role in their ideal classroom was not coherent with their ideal classroom practices. In reality, they did not want their teacher to be in direct teaching role instead of providing guidance and assistance in preparing learning spaces in the classroom community.

4.2.1.1.1.6 Teacher as monitoring the classroom order

Children provided information about the teachers as ruling and ordering role in their ideal classroom. They expressed that children have the role of managing the classroom activities and their orderings. In designing classroom with boxes, Okan shared his ideas about his classroom.

> Researcher: What does the teacher do in this class?
> Okan: The teacher buys surprises and toys for children.
> Researcher: Why do you think the teacher comes to school?
> Okan: The teacher wants to manage children
> Researcher: How?
> Okan: Children want to line up, and the teacher holds their hands when they cross the street when the cars are passing.
> Researcher: Hımm does the teacher only come to school to manage children?
> Okan: Nooo, the teacher comes to have fun.

This conversation with Okan showed that in his ideal classroom, he thought that the teacher comes to school to have fun. However, when he explained what the teacher does in a practical way, he stayed connected to the realities of the existing classroom. He highlighted the role of the teachers mostly as monitoring the classroom rules and maintaining order.

Another point was they documented about teacher's role in the ideal classroom was being the final decision maker of children's practices. In designing a classroom with boxes, Miray shared her ideas about her classroom. She focused on the role of her teacher's giving permission.

> Researcher: What do children do with their teachers in this classroom?
> Miray: They go to the zoo. They bring flowers to their teacher. They climb on the Turkish flag what their teacher gives permission.
> Researcher: Do they need permission?
> Miray: Yes.
> Researcher: They need permission.
> Miray: It is their teacher.
> Researcher: Does the teacher gives permission to do things?
> Miray: Yes, monster school is written here.

Children also expressed negative sides of teacher's role of ordering the classroom environment. In child-led tours, they expressed their views on the intervention of the teacher in their play. Ayhan talked about one of his friends in the class that they did not want to include in their games. However, their teacher wanted them to take him to their play.

> Researcher: What would you want to hear from your teacher?
> Ayhan: She can tell "We are in ideal classroom day." Aaa it's raining.
> Researcher: You would like to hear "You are in ideal classroom day and you can play with anyone you want."?
> Ayhan: Yes. (He runs and goes away from the researcher)

It was an important conversation between the researcher as a teacher and the child. Ayhan was not comfortable in expressing his views about the teacher to his teacher. However, it was obvious that they want less intervention to their games from their teacher.

In the ideal classroom day, I as a teacher took the role of monitoring children by intervening them about the usages of the classroom environment. When they tried to experience something dangerous, I intervened in it. At the first day of ideal classroom day, Okan got on the book center. I intervened, and I said: "It is dangerous, it is very thin, and it can be broken". Then, he agreed and played in the other side of the classroom.

In the first day of ideal classroom practice, the teacher also intervened in solution meeting. Children were exploring face paints in the housing center (in front of the mirror). Ekin, Ayça and Esma were using the area. Yaman tried to get involved in the area, but the others did not allow it. Yaman called them to the solution meeting. They did not want to listen to Yaman. Then, I intervened in it by showing ideal classroom agreement, the decision of sharing in the classroom. They came to the solution meeting. However, they were angry to be disrupted and forced to do something. During the meeting, they were not very eager to listen to Yaman.

> Ayça: I called.
> Esma: I called.
> Ayça: What happened? Tell us. I am very tired. My little one (she talks with an accent)
> Esma: What are you doing? ….
> Ayça: I am not a cat; I am a mom. (Esma and Ayça talk with each other)
> Esma: What are we going to do, Yaman?

After these conversations, they started talking. I felt that they were protesting silently to be forced to come to the solution meeting in the ideal classroom that is a day for children's decision.

Dimensions of intervention can be discussed in this part. As we see, children needed intervention from the teacher to some extent. However, in the playground, children did not want intervention in their relationships and games. Intervention needed to be more positive such as protecting the physical environment, monitoring classroom order and rules. Children understood the differences between the two kinds of intervention. In the social field, children were forced to establish a relationship with some children that they did not want to deal with, which makes children passive in their relationships by the teacher. However, in the physical intervention and classroom rules, teacher could explain the rules behind that. Therefore, children could be more likely active individuals in the environment.

4.2.1.1.2 Children in the classroom

In the classroom community, children saw themselves as significant individuals of the environment. Children's views about themselves came from their wishes for the ideal classroom and the roles that they took on the ideal classroom day practice. Children defined themselves as being and active learners, being independent and responsible, and being a decision maker.

4.2.1.1.2.1 Being an active learner

Being active means that children want to take responsibility in the classroom by showing full participation in the activities. They wanted to be active in planning the learning spaces including activities and themes. In our existing classroom, I asked them questions about what they want to search for about the topic. Children loved making their own questions as an activity in the classroom and showed more participation. They also wanted to continue on this frame by being active in questioning, practicing and searching in the learning spaces.

Another point is that they wanted to be active in observing their environment. They expressed children as curious beings in the learning process of their environment. In the activity of designing the classroom with boxes, Barış shared his ideas about his classroom.

> Barış: Children ask many questions to the teacher. They are very curious. They are curious in the garden. It is poured concrete in the garden. They wonder about it. They are curious about glass, games.

They wanted to be active learners in the usage of learning spaces in the classroom. In our existing classroom, emotion board was on top of the quiet center. This made it difficult for them to use the board actively. Thus, teacher put their pins to the board.

In the existing classroom, they criticized it. In their ideal classroom, they offered solution to this problem by offering to be active by pegging pins to emotion board.

Children expressed their views about being active in the classroom environment. In the photo interviews, Ekin highlighted the usages of boards in the classroom. She explained that children did not love making emotions board in the morning routine, and because of that they were not active.

> Ekin: I would like to feel them and touch them. We want to peg. (There are clothes-peg on the board for every child).

As we see, children wanted to see themselves as active individuals in the ideal classroom community. In the ideal classroom practice, they showed full participation to the learning activities by bringing curiosities to ideal classroom curriculum and being active searchers and constructors of the activity. They were active learners in the ideal classroom day. As we see, children's wishes to be active learners and their actual practices were coherent.

4.2.1.1.2.2 Being independent and responsible

Being independent means that children want to take responsibility in the classroom community by being independent from adult perspective. Being independent and responsible were much related. They wanted to take more responsibility in their ideal classroom and also wanted to be independent when they engage with these activities.

Children shared their ideas about being more independent in the classroom community. In many areas in the classroom, they wanted to act independently. Independence was mostly related to time. Time was not under the control of children in the classroom environment. They wanted control over the schedule and time in the classroom.

In photo interviews, Ekin talked about the art center in the classroom.

> Ekin: … I would like to use these materials anytime I want.

In photo interviews, Ayhan shared his ideas about rest time. He took photos of the cushions in the classroom.

> Ayhan: I would like to have cushions in my dream classroom. But just a few. Because, I do not like laying down. Yaman, Mert and Barış like laying down. But we don't. Anyone who wants to lay down, they can; but anyone who doesn't, they do not.

Ayhan criticized the classroom routines and that every child needed to do same thing at the same time. He expressed that children's needs were different. Children wanted a classroom that meets their needs individually. Children wanted to be independent from schedules and wanted space for choice based on their own needs.

Moreover, children focused mostly on being responsible in the classroom while engaging in the activities that are related with their own interests and real-life skills. They wanted to do their own thing by themselves.

In the drawing activity, Barış drew a classroom without teacher and personnel.

> Barış: There are no teachers and classroom helpers. Children cook their own meals by themselves. The classroom is colorful like that. They cook, do ironing, they cook meat and lentil soup.

Having no teacher and personnel in the classroom situation was repeated many times with different children in different activities. That was a strong demonstration of their wishes to be independent and responsible in the classroom community.

In the clay activity, Miray explained her ideas for the ideal classroom.

> Miray: There is a duck here. Their foods are candy, meat-ball and chocolate. There is bush to clean classroom. Children do cleaning by themselves; they do everything by themselves.
> Okan: They put ornaments by themselves. They prepare their own presentations. They take toys by taking permission from one another.

Miray: and they cook by themselves. Then, they clean the dirt by themselves. Then, they throw away the garbage.

In her conversation, it was important to think that in clay activity there were toothbrushes as materials. Therefore, they could say cleaning that much. However, the important point was that they wanted responsibility in their ideal classroom to do things by themselves. In the existing classroom, they sometimes cleaned under the tables after an activity involving sensory materials such as soil or flour. They liked using cleaning materials and wanted to do it all the time. It was restricted to dirty activities in the existing classroom. However, it was obvious that children wanted to be engaged with these kinds of activities more.

In the ideal classroom day, from the beginning of the project, children started to take responsibility about classroom engagements. At some point, in the existing classroom, they took responsibility about classroom engagements. In the meal time, they poured their own water. These kinds of behaviors continued in the ideal classroom but, the differences were on the spot of informing the teacher about it and getting consent from the teacher to act about behavior. For example, when a child's spoon falls, they inform teacher and after the teacher gives approval to take a new one from kitchen, they go and get one. In the ideal classroom day, they did not inform the teacher about things and they acted on behavior all the time.

At the first day of ideal classroom day, they were in the meal time in the afternoon.

Okan: Ayhan's spoon fell under table.
Ayhan: Then, I will go to take a spoon.
Researcher: I will get more food.
Ayça: I will get more yogurt and rice. I am going to come with you Tuğba.

This was an important conversation that they did not inform their teacher about. They used to ask for consent from their teacher for years. Ayça's last sentence showed that they wanted to be active individuals like Tuğba by breaking power relationships between teacher and children.

In clay activity, Okan and Miray used pipes as children, he explained his classroom.

> Miray: Children prepare presentations by themselves. There are animal pictures here. They explain the animals that they do not know. They prepare presentations by themselves. They prepare dirty water and clean water presentations.
> Researcher: If one child gets hurt, what happens?
> Okan: They help their friends themselves. They ask "Are you okay? Do you need anything?" They take chair and put it in front of the fridge. They get on high. They call for first aid hospital. (It means first aid-box)

This conversation showed their needs to be responsible in their environments. Hurting could be very risky without adults, but children did not think that way. However, these statements had a contradiction with the result of ideal classroom day. In the ideal classroom agreement, they wanted help from teacher in hurting incidents. Therefore, hurting was a sensitive issue for them. They imagined as taking responsibility but, in the actual experience, they needed adults to care for them emotionally.

On the other hand, there were practices about which children's imagination and the actual practice were coherent. They wanted to take more responsibility in their ideal classroom. Actually, they took responsibility in the preparation of activities in ideal classroom day and prepared their learning space on the table and then they tidied up on their own.

> "Ayhan brought plastic bag to the table for making water color. Then he went to sink to bring water. He prepared the table and started painting with watercolor".
> "Ayhan took the pitcher to fill water. Ayça came and took the pitcher from

> Ayhan. She said: "Let's go get water together". They went to fill the pitcher together".
>
> "In ideal classroom day, beads fell. Esma took responsibility to collect them without telling the teacher or her friends". (Eighth day, Field notes)
>
> "In the ninth week of the ideal classroom day, Ayça prepared the table for watercolor activity and then she tidied up her table". (Ninth day, Field notes)
>
> "Ayça tidied up watercolor place"
> Researcher: Ayça bravo to you. You decided to do watercolor and you did it and now you tidied up your working area. Great for you.

There were many examples of children's taking responsibility in ideal classroom day. In the existing classroom, generally I gave them directions to prepare for activities, and they helped me. However, I did not experience their taking responsibility without someone telling them to tidy up. It shows that teacher directions made it difficult for children to take responsibility in learning environments.

4.2.1.1.2.3 Children as decision makers

Children wanted to be a part of the decision-making process in their ideal classroom. Decision making process included classroom procedures, toys and materials in the classroom.

In the photo interview, Barış shared his ideas about decision making. He was talking about the dirt in his classroom. He said that they would take care of the dirt problem with other children in his ideal classroom.

> Barış: I can decide on what to do about the dirt in our ideal classroom. In my ideal class, there will be ideal classroom day and children will decide.

Barış proposed that in his ideal classroom children would be the decision makers of the classroom. They were active individuals of classroom community and

also wanted to be active in the decision-making process that was the space that children least take place in the classroom community.

In the photo interviews, Miray expressed her ideas about the quiet center in the classroom. She said that she did not like any toys in the quiet center.

> Miray: I do not like the quiet center. I like the block center more. I want to have the right to choose the toys in centers.

It is an interesting point that Miray focused on, which is choosing the toys in their ideal classroom. They wanted to create their own learning environment. We can see it from children's home toys. They brought them to classroom, they loved it. As time passes, children's interests changed, however, classroom materials were the same for years. Especially at this center, children were in the same environment for four years. Classroom materials were not that different from each other.

As we see, they highlighted to be decision makers in the classroom community in terms of choosing the classroom materials and deciding on the classroom decisions by themselves.

In the sixth week of ideal classroom day, I asked them what they wanted to decide in the classroom. Only three children gave answers to my question. Children's answers were about deciding about play and time of the play. However, other six children did not give any answers to my question. As a matter of fact, that children wanted to be in the decision-making process, however in reality they were not aware of what decision they gave during the day both at home and school.

> Miray: Play.
> Researcher: What is the thing that you want to decide?
> Miray: I want to decide when I am going to play.

They were active decision makers of the ideal classroom. They made decisions about what to do and when to do during the day. Together with the ideal classroom

process, they became more competent in deciding what to do and deciding what they are curious about. They were already competent about what to play in the existing classroom community. However, they were not competent about deciding on their curiosity and carrying it to the classroom community. At the first days of ideal classroom, they wanted to play and discover materials. After a while, children started to express their curiosities, and how to search about them. They became more competent decision makers.

In the third week of ideal classroom day, children assessed their days.

Ayhan: I liked making decisions today.

4.2.1.1.3 Teacher-child relationship

In the ideal classroom, there were children's descriptions of ideal teacher-child relationship. Teacher-child relationship was also explained based on actual practices of children and teacher in the ideal classroom day. In this study, children described their views as categorized under three theme power, participation and listening.

4.2.1.1.3.1 Power relationships

Power was a significant issue between children and teacher in the classroom community. In the existing classroom, I tried to decrease power inequalities between children and me by playing with them, listening to them, arranging meetings for decision making process about classroom, by avoiding direct teaching experiences by featuring active learning experiences. However, I must say that there were some boundaries that I care about. They needed to inform me about the things that are out of classroom such as going to restroom, kitchen. I explained them by referencing security issues. They needed to be in circle when we are in the activity time. If they

did not want to participate, they had a choice to listen and observe. They could not be go to centers in the circle time. I believed the power of circle time routine in creating and sustaining togetherness and positive atmosphere of classroom community.

Children documented that there was not power relationship between the teacher and children. They described the teacher in ideal classroom as a member of the classroom like themselves. Power relationship needed to be balanced between teacher and children. They described the teacher in classroom as an equal member. Teacher needed to be with children in learning and playing. Ayhan expressed his ideas about teacher's role in the classroom as being together with children and being active.

> Ayhan: Children play with their teacher all together, and this is ideal classroom day, so they play together. This is ideal classroom day.
> Yaman: …. The teacher also wants to play, and she played.

Children decreased the power relation between the teacher and children by defining the relationship by doing the same activities and being together. In the drawing activity, Yaman drew the teacher and his friends.

> Yaman: There is a pool here. We will swim in the pool.
> Researcher: What does your teacher do?
> Yaman: You watch and then you will swim with us.
> Researcher: Your teacher does same thing with you?
> Yaman: Yes, we like doing the same thing with our teacher.
> Researcher: What does your teacher do with children?
> Yaman: No, she will slide down to slide with us.

Moreover, children wanted their teacher to feel the same excitement and curiosity like themselves in the activities that they are both involved. The conversations with Yaman about his ideal teacher showed us what children wanted their teacher to have willingness to play with children.

> Yaman: There is the teacher here. They all play together. The teacher is also curious about basketball. She did not play and see any basketball. Thus, she plays with children to learn.

Children addressed their relationship with the teacher by focusing on permission giving. There were two different ideas about it. Some of them did not want to take permission from their teacher and they want to be totally independent in their ideal classroom. They saw the teacher as preventing children from taking responsibility and wanted to have more responsibility in their classroom.

> Miray: There is no teacher in this classroom.
> Researcher: What do children do without the teacher?
> Miray: They cook themselves; they eat ice-cream by themselves. They find treasure by themselves.
> Researcher: Hımm if the teacher is in the classroom, what would happen?
> Miray: They cannot do anything, because the teacher does not let children go anywhere.
> Researcher: You did not do anything because the teacher did not give permission?
> Miray: Yes.

On the other hand, children wanted a teacher who did not intervene in their decisions. They only wanted to let the teacher know what they do. It can be said that they want to have a secure and trustful relationship. By this way, they could be active participants in the classroom by engaging with things they want by letting their teacher know. In the block activity, Yaman and Ayça built their classroom. The conversation gave a definition for a mutual relationship between them and the teacher in the ideal classroom. The teacher offered some choices to them and they had the right to accept and reject it. On the other hand, they wanted their teacher to trust them and give responsibility.

> Yaman: Teacher wants to do an activity. Children accept it and do the activity.
> Yaman: and the teacher said, “You can jump to the pool without me, you are all grown”. Children can do things without asking. For example, if they want to love animals, they can. If children want to go out, they can.

Yaman: and they found a penguin in the woods. They bring it to the classroom and their teacher accepts it.

In the ideal classroom, they also engaged in decreasing power relationship between teacher and children in their classroom community. In the first ideal classroom day, they were in snack time. Yaman sat in the teacher seat. They were talking about their teacher.

Ayhan: Okan, we call her Tuğba, not the teacher.
Ayça: Yaman, I am going to tell you something. We call her Tuğba, because, do you know that she is also a student like us. Tuğba is also a teacher.

This conversation presents children's views on how they wanted to see their teacher as in the same status with children. They loved calling their teacher's name instead of calling him/her "teacher". In our existing classroom, they had a choice to call my name or call me as "teacher". Some of them used my name, some of them called me teacher. However, in the ideal classroom day, all of them called me by my name. The reason for that could be that they and I were in the same status in the ideal classroom day.

In the eighth week of ideal classroom day, in the meal time, they started asking me questions about my childhood.

Ekin: Tuğba, you are a child, right?
Researcher: Yes, I have parents, too. I am the child of them.
Ekin: No, you were a child like us.
Ayhan: We mean when you are younger, you were small like us.
Researcher: Yes, I was a child, too.
Ayça: Did they call you "my child"?
Barış: My child (he smiles).
Researcher. Everyone was once a child.
Yaman: Yes.
Barış: Ersin was a child who spoke English (Ersin is our English teacher).

Children questioned teacher's childhood. They wanted to know that their teacher's size was not like that all the time. Their teacher was a child in the past. They wanted to reduce the power relations between the adults and them by such questions.

As we see, children wanted to decrease the power relationship between the teacher and them by using some strategies in ideal classroom day and in their imaginations. In power relationship, it could be seen that they wanted to be equal in the decision-making process and decrease the effect of physical appearance of being an adult by digging teacher's being child as they are.

4.2.1.1.3.2 Participation

Participation theme includes how children and the teacher participate in the activities and decision-making process during ideal classroom day. Decision making process is a mutual process that include two participants such as the teacher and children in the classroom community.

In the decision-making process of ideal classroom day in the first day, they and the teacher decided on things related to the classroom schedule. In the meal time, they asked what to do next during the day.

> Researcher: When will we go to the garden? Will we do Çep or go outside? Some children want to do Çep, some want to go outside (children say their choice verbally). How can we solve it?
> Ayça: Garden
> Researcher: I hear you. How can we solve it?
> Okan: Aa I found it. Hands up anyone who wants to do Çep?
> Researcher: But I can't watch two groups at the same time.
> Okan: No, at the classroom. I mean, at the classroom, you ask for anyone who wants to do ÇEP and anyone who wants to go outside to raise their hand, but, in turn.
> Researcher: You mean we should go with the top-rated choice?
> Ayça: I am going to say something. We should do the thing that top rated.
> Ekin: I am going to say something. Let's do a little bit Çep and a little bit garden time.
> Researcher: What do you think about Ekin's idea?
> Ayça: Yes.
> Miray: Okay.
> (Others also approve with their heads)
> Researcher: How much will we work on Çep?
> Esma: Two pages.
> Researcher: Then will we go out? (Children shake their heads.)
> Researcher: Do we need voting?

All of them: No.
Ayhan: I like Ekin’s idea so much. I approve it.

As we see, they and the teacher took part in the decision-making process together. The teacher mostly led children about what to decide. The teacher offered choices to them, and then they decided what to do. They were active participants in the decision-making process.

In the eighth week of the ideal classroom day, they decided on what to do in the following weeks.

Researcher: In order to learn children's ideal classroom, my planned actives finish with this week. For next week, what do you want to do to show and express yourself for your ideal classroom in your imagination?
Okan: A flying home. I will design a home with cartoons. Then, I will add cups on it. It will be a flying home.
Ayça: I want to draw a picture and I want to paint it.
Ekin: I want to design my classroom with cartoons.
Arda: I will design with cartoons. I will make a tent, a toilet, a real kitchen, and a real toy room.
Miray: I want to do it with paper and pens.
In the eighth week of ideal classroom day, children were in meal time. Children were trying to decide on what to do after the meal time.
Yaman: Çep
Miray: Nemo
Ayça: Nemo
Ayhan: Nemo
Ekin: Nemo
Researcher: How can we decide?
Ayhan: Who wants Nemo, raise your hand.
(Everyone raises their hands.)
Ayhan: Yesss.

Children used our strategies in the existing classroom in the decision-making process in their ideal classroom. When the teacher became passive, children took initiation and become active in using strategies.

As we see, they wanted to be active participants in the decision-making process of the classroom community. The teacher needed to be more active in guidance and assistance in the decision-making process. Otherwise, they stepped

back in initiative to be a decision maker in the classroom community.

4.2.1.1.3.3 Listening

In teacher-child relationship, children wanted to tell their agendas, stories, and works to the teacher. They wanted to talk with teacher and want that teacher to listen to them carefully. Moreover, they wanted to be listened to.

In the ideal classroom day they were in the breakfast in the seventh week, they were telling me things about them. I asked them" What do you children want to tell their teachers?"

Ekin: They want to talk.
Researcher: About what?
Ekin: Spiderman.
Yaman: Clothes.

4.2.1.2 Curriculum spaces

In this category, it is focused on learning and teaching spaces in the classroom that children descriptions of ideal classroom. Themes were subcategorized under learning spaces, themes of curriculum and curriculum materials, ideal classroom day.

4.2.1.2.1 Learning

Children's descriptions of learning in the ideal classroom is covered in this section. Children expressed learning styles in hands-on learning, real life skills learning, active learning. There was direct teaching in the existing classroom construction of children. However, in the ideal classroom construction of children, it did not take place. They wanted to be active participants in learning environments in their ideal classroom.

4.2.1.2.1.1 Hands-on learning activities

As children expressed their interests in hands-on learning activities in the existing classroom, they carried their interest in the ideal classroom. Hands on activities mean the activities including paper, pens, cutting, sticking. Children expressed that they love making hands-on activities.

> Researcher: Which activities do you like most?
> Miray: I like activities such as painting and drawing.

In clay activity, Okan shared his ideas about the activities in his classroom.

> Okan: Children do beautiful and exciting activities. They paint with watercolors. They make cats. They paint plates. They make bunnies from the plates. They make beautiful animals and paint them. They make brushes from clay. We make things from clay.
> Yaman: children love making puzzles. They paint on it, and then they put all of them together.

In the ideal classroom day, children were engaged in hands-on activities with love and interest. From the first day of ideal classroom, some specific children wanted to be engaged with hands-on activities such as painting and drawings. In the third week of the ideal classroom day, many of them wanted to play. Ayça again wanted to paint with finger paint. When she started to play at the table, Arda and Yaman also joined the painting activity. It can be commented as that children had negative approach toward the activities. They can think that the ideal classroom day is child-centered, but the activities were teacher-centered. They were involved in the activities with teacher guidance.

This comment was supported with the fourth day of ideal classroom, they started to involve activities in a different way. They expressed that they did not want to do activities but wanted to discover materials in the art center.

> Ekin: I want to use everything in the classroom instead of doing activity.

> Barış. I want to use these yellow things (beads in art center) and I want them to be my gold. I would like to take them to home. They are beautiful.

These conversations supported that children avoided from activities in ideal classroom day. They slowly started to be close to activities by discovering. In the fifth day of ideal classroom, they continued doing hands on activities and play.

> Okan: I want to play with play-book. I want to play in corridor and housing center. I want to do clay and water color.

Starting from the sixth week of the ideal classroom day, children started to plan activities with materials. Even if some of them continued planning discovering materials.

> Ayça: I want to paint papers and make plane.
> Yaman: I want to work on beads and makes with them masks.
> Ayhan: I want to work with blocks and make robots with them.

Some children continued discovering materials.

> "Okan took the tooth brushes from the box in the art center. He said" wowow", and the other friends wanted brushes from him. He gave them brushes"
> "Children discovering materials in the box with excitement".
> "Okan took the yellow beads, and played with them by touching"

In the eight weeks of the ideal classroom, after children searched for their discovery on the computer, they actually designed their curiosity. For example, Barış made a plant eating insects with cartoons after searching for it. They wanted to make things concrete in learning process. Ekin also wanted to paint Colibri bird. However, the print machine was broken, we were unable to take prints. She also wanted to see her curiosity concisely after searching for it.

> In the ninth week of the ideal classroom day, children
> Ekin: I want to design a flower for my home.
> Yaman: I will design a parrot, a colorful parrot. I will draw and design it.

In the ninth week, children followed their plans.

> "Ayça prepares the table for painting. Ekin takes papers from the art center; Okan, Barış, Ayhan, Yaman are playing catching parrot game"

Children applied their wishes with their practical applications in ideal classroom. They in this study loved hands-on activities to be engaged in the classroom. However, in the ideal classroom day, it took time to break the power of the teacher in the hands-on learning spaces. After they found independent spaces, they used independent and actively hands-on learning spaces.

4.2.1.2.1.2 Real life skills learning activities

Real life spaces were described from children's views in the activities. These places were home environments such as kitchen, farmers, nature, real institutions and technologies. They wanted to experience real life practices in their learning environments.

They drew or built home parts to their classroom, especially kitchen. They wanted to use it as active participants. Moreover, they wanted to take responsibility in their ideal classroom by using real life spaces.

Barış: This child comes to kitchen; they make delicious meals.

They built and described natural and real spaces such as farm to their ideal classroom. Children expressed their views on how to learn them and wanted to experience themes in natural and real environment.

> Miray: This is our cave (showing inside the boxes). They walk around cave. They examine wild animals in the cave. They dig deep inside the cave. They see zoo there. They observe animals there.
> Miray: … They put insects to the secret place. They analyze them. They open the houses of insects. Insects go out. They play catching insects.

In drawing activity, Miray expressed her ideas about what she wanted to do in her ideal classroom.

> Researcher: What are there in our ideal classroom?
> Miray: There are animals, and they are real animals.
> Miray: There are snakes, prairie rattles, and anacondas. All children run away from this classroom. I am alone in here. Thus, it is named as animal classroom. I am living in this classroom with animals all day.
> Researcher: Do you live with animals all day?
> Miray: Yes, I give fish to flamingos, leaf to giraffes, and meat to him, milk and cat food to cat.

Children expressed their interest to have real learning practices in the real materials or institutions. It is a significant thing that children wanted to explore their curiosities by analyzing and discovering real materials or practices in real spaces. In the drawing activity of sixth week, Yaman drew his ideal classroom.

> Yaman: Right now, we are in rocket. We analyze inside of the rocket.

In the ideal classroom day, children wanted to search about their curiosities. However, they wanted it in real environment in the internet. Children wanted to discover their curiosities in real environment. However, we had no way for it in our existing environment. Children wanted to create real environment with the help of technology.

> "Yaman and Tuğba search about factories in the computer. Tuğba showed factory pictures from internet. Yaman smiled and he was excited.
> Yaman: Let's look different factories. I don't want food but water producing. I don't want small factory. I want big factories. I want to see factories that has pipes in it.
> Researcher: Do you mean like that?
> Yaman: Yes, food get through pipes, real one.
> Yaman continues to search for factories".

It was difficult for children to have access to real spaces during ideal classroom day. However, there were examples of children's practices of real materials. Therefore, it is seen that children's ideas and children's practice in constructing ideal classroom had a coherence. Real spaces in the curriculum were crucial from children's point of view.

4.2.1.2.1.3 Active learning activities

Active learning spaces can be defined as learning occurs with children's own initiations and curiosities rather than direct teaching from an adult. Children were active in their own learning. In this study, they showed interest and willingness to learn by themselves in the classroom community. They wanted to take responsibility to learn.

> Miray: Children prepare presentations by themselves. There are animals' pictures here. They explain animals that they do not know. They prepare presentations by themselves. They prepare dirty water and clean water presentations.

They expressed their ideas on different activities that they want to do in their ideal classroom.

> Okan: Children build robots.

In the active learning environment, children designed discover center to their ideal classroom construction to examine and analyze things that they curious about.

In photo interviews, children also took photo of discovery center in the classroom and shared their ideal function of discovery center in their ideal classroom. They also brought the idea of active participation about discovery center.

> Ayhan: This is an observation table.
> Researcher: What children do there?
> Ayhan: Children do observations there.
> Researcher: What do children observe?
> Ayhan: There are pink dolphins and fish. They observe them.

Ekin: Cats, puppy, but they are real. Interesting picture can take place. Octopus in the sea, it would be good to look photos.
Miray: I like discovery center. In my ideal classroom, I want to bring things too. For example, paint materials.

These conversations supported the idea of children wanted to be active in designing the learning spaces. They wanted to bring things that are interesting to them for the discovery center. In our classroom, teacher only brought things to discovery center according to themes of the curriculum. They wanted to be active in the curriculum by bringing things to discovery center.

Another point in the active learning spaces, children explained their acts according to their curiosity and interest in the classroom and expressed that they are searching and observing things in their ideal classroom. They wanted to be active learner in the classroom by engaging with active learning spaces. In drawing activity, Arda and researcher talked about his drawings and stick them to classroom.

Arda: This is a boy. There are some water and houses here.
Researcher: What are you doing in the classroom?
Arda. I do activity. There is water.
Researcher: What is the activity?
Arda: I examine houses.
Researcher: What do children do in the classroom right now?
Barış: Firstly, he observes birds then he try to catch them.

In the ideal classroom day, children sometimes did some experiences and observations and planned their own learning in the ideal classroom meeting in the morning. They expressed their curiosity and interest. If our sources were available, I could try to prepare the learning environment for them.

Researcher: What are you doing Arda?
Arda: I am blending colors and I am looking at the changes in the color.

In the same week, there was another experience with balloons. Okan asked the question of how balloons collapse. I showed them with a balloon. I blew up a

balloon and give it to Okan. He collapsed it slowly. Others also wanted to blow up balloons. Children experienced and felt Co2 gas and were active learners of the experience. They expressed their curiosity, and I gave them the materials, and all of the students in the classroom experienced with this material. They were active learners in the process.

In the ninth week, children wanted to search for wild bees. Children and teacher searched them on the internet. When Okan and the teacher mentioned watching video about wild bees, other children also came to look at it. Other children and Okan also learned new things about wild bees. They wanted to experience an informal learning activity that they were active learners rather than being taught directly by a teacher.

Same thing happened with Barış where he wanted to look for mount of insects. We started to analyze them from computer. Then he started to ask new questions and asked for other insects.

> Barış: I see an insect in the water.
> Researcher: Do you think insects live in water?
> Barış: Yes, I saw.
> Barış: Do you know this fish?
> …
> Barış: I want to search for more.
> Researcher: more?
> Barış: Yes, more and more. Let's look more.
> Research: This is freshwater prawn
> Barış: I want to do it. I will design it with cartoons.

Barış had interest at the beginning we started to search for it. He got more excited with his leanings. He was more excited than at the beginning.

As we see, children wanted to be active leaners in the ideal classroom. When we gave them space for their interests and curiosity, they could be an active learners and active participants in the classroom. Their ideas about ideal classroom and their

practice were coherent. Thus, it can be said that children wanted to have active learning spaces in the ideal classroom to be active participants in their own learning.

4.2.1.2.2 Themes of the ideal classroom curriculum

In the data analysis, there were some repeated patterns of themes that children wanted to learn in their ideal classroom. Children wanted to learn academic content and nature, technology, science in their ideal classroom. They also wanted to have experience about their interest in the curriculum.

Firstly, it was very strong repeated theme that they wanted to learn academic content in their ideal classroom. They gave answers to questions of why children come to school as learning academic skills.

> Researcher: Why children come to this classroom?
> Ekin: Children come to the school to do activities.
> Esma: Children learn reading and writing, and I will learn reading and writing for the next year. I am six years old. This class is for them who are five years old. But I am also here.
> Barış: Children do Çep in this classroom.

In the classroom designing with boxes activity, Okan expressed his ideas about learning.

> Researcher: What children learn in this classroom?
> Okan: Numbers and letters.

In the classroom designing with boxes activity, Ayhan stated his ideas about learning.

> Researcher: What do children learn in this classroom?
> Ayhan: Writing.

In the classroom designing with boxes activity, Barış stated his ideas about learning.

Researcher: What do children learn in this classroom?
Barış: Çep

In the drawing activity in sixth week, Okan gave his ideas about curiosity.

Researcher: What children learn about the classroom?
Okan: There are shapes here such as rectangle, square and circle. They learn letters and shapes.
Okan: They learn letters and shapes. They learn how to write and how to take notes.

It is an important point to see that children had views on learning as academic content. It is clear that children wanted to read and write at these ages. They knew letters and they knew that letters have meanings. They wanted to learn them. However, it is also important when children heart about learning, they first thought about academic learning. It could be resulting from because reading and writing is a must for these children to be aware of their environment. They could feel the need to teach them at these ages.

However, in the ideal classroom day, children did not show any academic content learning plan. It can be a reason that they wanted to learn academic content because of being a literate individual, and school is associated with learning, reading and writing in the social construction.

Secondly, children wanted to learn nature in their ideal classroom by showing active learning skills. There were many themes under nature that they are interested in and curious to learn.

Researcher: What do children do in the classroom right now?
Barış: Firstly, he observes birds, then he tries to catch them.
Researcher: What are they curious about the most?
Yaman: They are curious about climbing.

In the classroom designing with boxes activity, Okan, Ayhan and Barış gave their ideas about learning.

Researcher: What do children curios about the most in this classroom?
Okan: Real monsters.
Researcher: What children curious about most in this classroom?
Ayhan: They wonder about how to learn animals' body. They wanted to learn animals' body all the time, but they cannot learn. But they will learn one day.
Researcher: What are children curious about in this classroom?
Barış: They are curious about animals. How animals are, they want to look for it.

In the ideal classroom day children expressed their curiosity about nature and tried to discover their curiosity with our existing classroom possibilities. In the meeting of ideal classroom day in the morning, they planned their own themes for engaging and mostly expressed their curiosity about nature; animals, human body, materials.

In the seventh ideal classroom day;

Yaman: I am curious about World. I want to learn about earth crust.
Ekin: I am curious about birds and insects. I wanted to look their pictures. I want you print pictures of them and I want to paint them.
Ayça: I am curious if rose bird exist or not.
Barış: I am curious about a plant; it is a little bit different. It eats insects.
Researcher: It is insectivorous. These plants eat insects.
Ayça: I am curious about it, too.
Ayhan: Me too.
Researcher: We can search for it.

When we searched it from computer, all of them came to look for it. All children participated into the activity.

In the ideal classroom, children wanted to learn physical materials, how they work. They wanted to do experiments in the classroom. We tried some of them in the classroom. We wrote other questions to curiosity board to search them later. They wanted to search for their curiosity of how questions;

How balls collapse
How water came to the world
How sounds come out from our mouths
In the ideal classroom day children wanted to learn how to help animals.

Children wanted to work on social solitary issues in their curriculum.

> Ayhan: I wanted to learn about animals and how to help them. No one gives water and food to animals, and we need to help them. If we do not feed them, they can die from starving.

Other children listened to this conversation and they planned their activities based on it.

> Barış: I want to design a factory. It will be good and durable. It will produce delicious foods.
> Yaman: I want to design a factory. It will be a factory that produces foods for animals.

Children took other friends' agendas and designed an activity with it. Barış and Yaman designed a factory together during the day.

Themes of ideal classroom day showed differences between children's statements for ideal classroom day and actual practices. They expressed to learn academic content. However, it is seen that in practice they did not do anything to carry these ideas. However, there was coherence on children's curiosity for nature. They implemented their plans to search for their curiosities. On the other hand, they showed interest to do activities for helping their social environment they live in. It can be said that children wanted to have learning themes that were related with their immediate living environment.

4.2.1.2.3 Play

Play was an important part of ideal classroom curriculum as it is expected. Children gave great importance to play their ideas about the ideal classroom. In all activities, children expressed that children in their ideal classroom were in the play. Also, they added that ideal classroom was for children's play.

> Ayhan: Children do many beautiful things. They play, then they paint, draw and they go out garden. In garden they play with their friends.
> Yaman: Children do activities, play and go out to the garden.

In the ideal classroom day, children gave more space for play during day. In the beginning only two children engaged with hands-on activity, other children only wanted to play.

> Researcher: What do you want to do in your ideal classroom day?
> Barış: Playyyyy (excitement with smiling)
> Ayça: I want to do activity. I want to do hand printing. I want to paint my hand.
> Ayhan: I don't want to do
> Esma: me too.

Children decided to play at the beginning of the study except for Ayça. In the third day, they were in the meeting of ideal classroom day.

> Researcher: what do you want to do Arda?
> Arda: I am not going to do anything.
> Researcher: you don't want to do anything today?
> Arda: nothing, I only play in the housing center.
> Researcher: Ok.

Starting from the fourth day of ideal classroom, they started to add other things together with play to their schedule in the ideal classroom. There was a balance between in time of play and other engagements in the classroom.

> Barış: I want to be zombi and play zombi. I want to play with play-dough. And I want to play with colorful stickers.

Children designed their plays as a class. In the ninth week, children planned a game for all classroom. Children were only wanted to play something in the beginning of the ideal classroom day process. However, with time they started to plan their games in the ideal classroom by offering and discussing the content and roles of the play in the ideal classroom day meeting in the morning. Therefore, this situation was creating a togetherness and cooperation atmosphere in the classroom community.

Ayhan: I want to play a game with my all friends catching parrot.
Researcher: You decided to play a game with all friends
Ayhan: Yes, with Barış, Miray, Yaman, Okan
Researcher: Who play in the game?
Ayhan: All of our friends. Arda, Ekin, Barış, I, Okan, Yaman everyone
Ayhan: Some of them become parrot.
Researcher: Will some of them be catcher?
Ayhan: Barış will be red parrot. We will be protector parrots. Lion and owl will be parrot catcher.

It is seen that there was coherence about play between children's statements and their practices in the morning about ideal classroom. Children wanted to play in the ideal classroom, and they did it. It is important to think that there were changes in the time that children engaged with play. They were engaged with play for all their time in the ideal classroom day. However, it changed with time. The reason for it can be that children's agency and power relationships in the playground could be transformed to other parts of the curriculum. Children agency and power could be showed increase in the other areas. They wanted to have place that they show full agency and power in their ideal classroom.

4.2.1.2.4 Materials

Children documented their ideas and descriptions about curriculum materials in their ideal classroom environment. Materials were subcategorized as real materials, academic materials and sensory materials.

4.2.1.2.4.1 Real materials spaces

Children gave importance to reality of learning environments. Real materials and real learning spaces were expressed in the data. Real materials were included living and nonliving materials. Children especially gave data on living materials in learning environments. They wanted to have real animals and they expressed it very

specifically. As I mentioned in real life learning activities section, it was connected with it. They wanted to have a connection with real life with materials in the classroom.

In drawing activity of ninth week, Ayhan drew lots of animals to his ideal classroom.

Ayhan: I draw animals. But they are real.

There were many of these conversations in activities. Children especially stated that their animals are real.

Another point in their views was that children wanted to have real home materials learning environments. As children are seen themselves as responsible citizen of classroom, they wanted to take responsibly about their livings in the classroom by using real spaces like kitchen, cleaning materials in order to feel like an individual.

In the magic carpet activity, children viewed Waldorf classroom and they expressed their views.

> Ayça: I like all about this classroom. I like the cups. I like kitchen, I would like to have real kitchen in our classroom. I would like to have real kitchen and real washing machine in our using area. I would like to behave like mom rather than playing with toys.

It is understood that children wanted to feel real in their plays with real objects. This could change children's play's quality. If we wanted to children feel as active participant of the learning environments, it could be needed to prepare them real learning space. They were aware of toys and reals objects. Adults also did not appreciate about toys. Toys are seen as childish thing. They also could see like that. Therefore, real space could help children feel as active individuals in society.

Children also mentioned about masks and costumes in the classroom in order to use in learning centers.

> Okan: I would like to have a real microscope to observe. A real remote control, real car, real kitchen, real cook place.
> Barış: I design masks. There is no mask in our classroom. So, I will design an animal mask and they will use it to make laugh. Children love to make laugh their teachers.

Children criticized about emptiness of housing center and wanted real materials in housings center for drama.

> Okan: I would like to have theater costumes. Costumes can be belonging to different occupations such as tourist, other occupations.

In ideal classroom day, children expressed their views in practice about real spaces. In the garden, Barış and Esma talking about garden.

> Barış: I don't like snails.
> Researcher: You don't want to be in garden?
> Barış: Yes, because, they are very gross.
> Researcher: Why do you think they are gross?
> Barış: They have slimes like my nose, I don't like it. I don't like to be in our garden.

This conversation was contradicted with children's ideas about real animals in their classroom environment. They expressed in their wishes for animals in the ideal classroom, but in reality, they are not in the same way.

In the six-week, ideal classroom meeting Yaman expressed his happiness to bring costumes to classroom.

Children stated to be in real places by using real materials. In practice it was difficult in the ideal classroom to do. However, children found different way to carry out these ideas in the ideal classroom day. In the eighth week of ideal classroom, they planned their ideal classroom practices. Ayça expressed her curiosity of rose birds. She wanted to see the eggs of birds.

Ayça: I don't want to search from computer. In real, I want to search for bird egg.

However, they wanted to see real visuals from computer at least. Same thing happened with searching of plants eating insects. I was searching for video for the plant. They expressed that they do not want see animation videos and wanted to see real videos.

Ekin: Tuğba I want to watch real videos. (There was animation video)
Researcher: Ok I am looking for real one
Researcher: This is no (it is again animation)
Yaman: But this is not realistic.
Researcher: Let's look this one
Yaman: Aa it is real

There were contradictions and coherence between children's statements and their practice about ideal classroom. However, it is seen that quality of children's engagements in the classroom could increase with real materials usage in the curriculum.

4.2.1.2.4.2 Academic materials spaces

Classrooms were supported with academic materials. They also pointed out academic materials in their ideal classroom and wanted to learn writing and reading, and they expressed to have academic materials in the classroom. These materials were defined as materials that are related with writing and reading.

Firstly, books were important academic materials for children to read, to explore, to get excited about. In the existing spaces, children especially highlighted about book center of the classroom. In the ideal classroom, children mostly pointed out what kind of books that wanted in their classroom. Children designed box center in three-dimensional classroom mapping activity. They designed lots of books in it.

> Okan: We want interesting books. They need to be scary as monster and enjoyable.
> Ayhan: I would like to have not scary but funny books.

Other than books, they wanted to have other academic materials.

> Okan: I would like to prefer my teacher bring me puzzles.

Children mentioned about books as bringing to classroom according to their interest. These data were very obvious in the photo interviews. All children took photo of their books that they brought from their home.

Secondly, many children took photo of ÇEP books in the classroom. Even if a few children mentioned as homework about ÇEP, many children wanted ÇEP in their ideal classroom.

> Ayhan: I would like to have them (ÇEP) in my ideal classroom. But, I want them to never finish and be more. I would like to have them more with magic if they finish. ÇEP is very fun.

Children did not always give positive statements about academic materials. One child demonstrated her dislike about writings in the classroom. She gave this statement in different activities. She emphasized that she got upset when she could not read or understand. It was new for me to see children's point of view about writings in that way.

> Ayça: I do not want writings in my ideal classroom. I would prefer basket instead of numbers board. I would like to throw toys into it.

Thirdly, children also mentioned about guess box for their ideal classroom. Guess box was a box in our classroom. I used it to children to guess children materials inside of it when we started to an activity. Children loved to guess what is inside.

> Okan: I design a machine and you touch inside and try to guess what is in it. This is a guess box.

In photo interview they took photo of guess box in the classroom.

Ayhan: I want guess box in my ideal classroom also.

Children also mentioned about other academic materials especially white board, pencils, shapes, numbers and letters board to learn writing and reading in their ideal classroom.

In the ideal classroom day, children did not document any data about academic materials. Only one time, children offered to use number boards to play in the housing center. They did not want to use academic materials other than that way. In practice, they did not prefer to use academic materials as active participant.

4.2.1.2.4.3 Sensory materials

Children wanted to have sensory materials in their classroom to touch and play. These materials were mostly water and sand. Starting from eighth week of ideal classroom, children included water and sand table for their classroom.

> Barış: I will draw sand center and also it will be black sand.
> Okan: I will draw a water center. Children will play with water and it will never be gone away from this classroom.

Children shared their ideas about sensory spaces that they want in their classroom. Okan focused on sensory place need to take place in the classroom permanently. In our classroom, in the discovery center, sensory materials had taken place for a while according to theme of the week. However, these sensory materials took place for a week. There were also some restrictions about usage of these places along with week for security and cleaning of classroom. They wanted a place for permanent and no restriction about these centers.

> Ayça: I want water and balloon in this table. I want fill balloon with water and explode it in the sink. I want to play water games in my ideal classroom.

Children also wanted to have sensory materials in the other learning centers. Yaman took photo of quiet center. He explained that he won't like quiet center because of rough toys.

> Yaman: I would like to have bottle instate of these toys. I want things like fishes in the bottle. I would like to observe fishes and squeeze them. I want to see their movements and touch it.

In the ideal classroom day, children told their wishes to be engaged with sensory materials. But in reality, we did not do it.

> Arda: I want to do slime with colors.
> Researcher: How can we do slime
> Arda: I don't know. I want to colorful slime.
> Ayça: I want to blow up a balloon and then fill them with water. I want to do a water balloon.
> Okan: I want to do a newspaper dough. You mix it with newspaper and clay. You add some color. Then you mix and create a sculpture.

Children started with fourth day of ideal classroom day expressed their ideas to do with sensory materials. However, in reality, we did not do them because of materials inadequacy and time. However, I criticized myself about it, I could do these kinds of sensory materials at that time.

Children's imaginative ideas about sensory materials were matching with their practical ideal classroom day practices. Sensory materials were very important for children in the curriculum of the ideal classroom.

4.2.1.2.5 Ideal classroom day

Ideal classroom day were a part of our ideal classroom day curriculum. Children were planning their days at that day. There were ideal classroom day project plan board in the classroom pin-board. Children were following the process from there.

They documented their ideas about ideal classroom day by using research tools and took photo of the board, and they built classroom that had ideal classroom day program like our classroom.

When children designed their ideal classroom, children expressed that their ideal class had ideal classroom day. Children defined ideal classroom day from their perspectives in different activities.

In three-dimensional classroom making, Ekin told about their desired classroom.

> Ekin: Children have ideal classroom day. Children love much more about things that they want to do. Children love to play with pencil anywhere they want. Children work anyplace they want. This makes them happy.
> Miray: I like ideal classroom day. Children decide on ideal classroom day. I like that al lot. Children decide everything. I decide my activities myself.
>
> Okan: I like ideal classroom day. We play and get fun in the ideal classroom day. We become teacher; you are not. When we become teacher, we take pictures and do by ourselves. We go out to corridor without your permission. I get excited by playing with clay in the ideal classroom day.

It is seen that children emphasized being independence and decision-making process from children's definitions of ideal classroom day. Moreover, it was interesting that children were reminding me rules of the ideal classroom day. About rules, we did not have any trouble. In the existing classroom, I was the one that reminding to children about classroom rules.

In the ideal classroom day, children expressed their ideas about ideal classroom. Children were thinking that the other days they would not be free in the usage of the classroom. Children were having their snacks. Yaman sat on teacher seat. Other children were talking to him about sitting there and being teacher anymore.

> Ekin: We will call you teacher Yaman.
> Yaman: I don't want it. Then, I am leaving the seat.
> Esma: Don't sit there then.
> Yaman: No, I can sit.

Ekin: We don’t say these kinds of things in ideal classroom day.
Ekin: You will not do anything you want tomorrow.
Yaman: You too.

Children saw ideal classroom day as they are free, and they could do anything they want. However, it was interesting that sitting to teacher seat was not restricted the other days. However, I noticed that children did not know that. If I tell them, you can do anything you want, they try things. If I don’t, they are not aware of their rights and accessibilities.

Ideal classroom days were associated with being a decision maker in the classroom. It is seen that children need to hear and be informed about that they were the decision makers in the classroom. In the sixth week of the ideal classroom day, I talked to Okan about ideal classroom day. In this conversation

Researcher: What do you like about the ideal classroom day?
Okan: I like discovering beads and I like activities.
Researcher: What do you like about activities?
Okan: I decide them.
Researcher: How do you feel about deciding the activities?
Okan: Happy.

Children asked about ideal classroom day and wanted to have it the other days too. At once, one child met her father by saying “We need to have ideal home day in the home dad”. It was very interesting to hear that. Children were very excited about ideal classroom day and liked it. It is because they were independent, decision makers and active participants. Children expressed their worries about ideal classroom day in the eighth week of ideal classroom day.

Barış: Tuğba, will ideal classroom finish then?
Researcher: No, it will not.
Ayhan: AAA
Barış: Never?
Researcher: I don’t know, you will decide to continue or not.

4.2.1.3 Classroom rules and order

Children documented their views on their ideal classroom rules and order in the child-participated activities. They mentioned about their ideal classroom rules and schedule of their ideal classroom. Firstly, ideal classroom rules of ideal classroom from children's point of views mentioned by stating children's imaginations and practices.

Children in imaginative statements of ideal classroom expressed their thoughts on classroom rules and order. They wanted to have the rule of helping each other when they get hurt. On the other hand, they mentioned about flexibly usages of classroom in their ideal classroom.

In drawing center, Yaman explained his classroom rules.

> Yaman: There are rules in this class. Children help each other when they fall.

Children wanted to be flexible between centers in terms of the accessibility and transition of the toys. In the photo interviews, Ekin focused on their usage of centers.

> Ekin: I like to play in housing center. I would like to carry toys from housing center to other centers.

In the drawing activity, Okan explained his classroom.

> Researcher: what do children do in the classroom?
> Okan: They play. Here is both classroom and garden. Here is garden. Here is classroom. These children go out to garden anytime they want. Look 4 of them are in the classroom, 4 of them are in the garden.

Children wanted a flexible schedule in their ideal classroom. In our classroom, most of the time children offered that children who want to be in garden, they can be, children who want to be in classroom, they can be at the same time. I explained them it was not safe, and it was difficult for me to look both places. As we see, children transferred these ideas to their ideal classroom.

Children shared their ideas on the schedule of their ideal classroom. Children shared ideas about rest time and wanted to have a choice to get rest or not.

> Ayhan: I want cushions in my ideal classroom but just a few. Because, I don't like sleeping. Yaman, Mert and Barış like sleeping but we don't. Rest time can be anyone who wants to sleep, they can, anyone who doesn't like to sleep, they don't.

As we see they expressed mostly order flexibility in classroom and independence in the rules of classroom. They wanted to be individuals who have choices and are flexible according to their needs.

It was interesting to see children's creations of classroom rules in ideal classroom in practice. They stated more rules and order for their classroom than I expected.

In the ideal classroom day, they focused on the rules of their ideal classroom.

> Ekin: We want to run in the corridors and classroom.
> Esma: We can paint anytime we want.
> Ekin: We don't want to do boards.
> Ayça: I want to bring toys to the classroom.
> Esma: We can change the places of toys in between centers.
> Ekin: If we want to eat our food we will, but if we don't, we won't.
> Ekin: We want our teacher to fill our water earlier.

These were the rules for their ideal classroom in the first week. Children focused on being flexible in schedule, independence and, flexibility between centers. Children wanted to run in the classroom. They changed other rules of classroom such as water rule. I gave children water after they get their plate. They wanted water during soup time. Some accident happened during that time. They wanted to change this rule.

In the first day, children followed these rules. They run in the classroom, changed the places of toys, and played with their own toys. In the meal time, some of children did not eat anything. In existing classroom, children needed to taste their foods. Children acted independently during the day.

In other days, they continued to add new rules to their ideal classroom day.

Barış: In classroom, get on tables.
Researcher: Do you want to get on the tables?
Barış: Yes, and under it.
Researcher: Well, will you be in safe?
All of them: Yess.
Researcher: ok.

They continued to add rules during the day. In the meal time, they were around the table. Okan was with his toy on the table. Barış told Okan to not bring toy to the table during meal time. Okan told me that incident.

Okan: Barış told me to put my toys to their place, and I put it to the ground.
Barış: But you cannot play with it in the meal time. There was the toy. He was playing with it.
Researcher: you mean they shouldn't bring toy to the table.
Barış: yes (shook his head)

Okan took his toy to top of quiet center. This was a rule in our existing classroom. Children carried this rule to their ideal classroom day.

In the third day, children continued to add rules.

Ayhan. We need to wait until 5 when we share our toys.
Researcher: you mean to wait until 5 minutes when you wait turn for toys.
Ayhan: Yes.
Okan: I want to take Legos without asking permission.
Researcher: Does everyone think like that?
Okan: I want to tell something more. We can play with toys before our friends give permission.
Researcher: You want to play with toys without asking permission.
Yaman: Yes.
Ayhan: For example, Barış likes my toys and before asking me for permission, he takes my toys. Right?
Researcher: Is it okay for you?
Ayhan: No
Researcher: What are you going to do? Okan told his idea, you don't want it.
Okan: I found it.
Ayhan: You found?
Okan: Then we can think another rule
Researcher: What is it?
Okan: For example, we can take Ayhan's toys without asking permission. Not take immediately. Our friends get upset.
Researcher: you mean you will ask for permission
Okan: Yes, a kind permission.

Researcher: Ok.
Ayhan: Now, it is my toy, anyone who wants to take it needs to ask for permission.
Researcher: Does everyone accept it?
All of them: Yes.

It is obvious that children changed the nature of classroom rules over time. In the beginning of the ideal classroom day, children were more likely to determine rules that do not exist in the existing classroom such as running in the classroom. However, they started to determine rules about their social-emotional relationships such as sharing, waiting for their turn. In the social-emotional relationship rules of the classroom, they started to have some conflicts about the determining rules.

In the existing classroom, children needed to not throw away toys, some children wanted to carry this rule to ideal classroom day. Some of them wanted to change it.

In the third day of the ideal classroom, children talked about it in ideal classroom meeting.

Ayhan: Tuğba, I will use toys without throwing them away. If someone throws toys away, I will let you know about it.
Researcher: You don't want toys to be thrown away?
Ayhan: Yes, because, they can be broken, and I get upset.
After a while, Barış started to talk about it.
Barış: We can use toys by throwing them but slowly.
Researcher: Ayhan thinks different about it.
Barış: but slowly slowly.
Researcher: you can talk about it with Ayhan.
Barış: Ayhan should we throw them slowly?
Ayhan: I am thinking about it. I assume that I will say "yes".
Researcher: It is okay to throw away slowly.
Barış and Ayhan: Yes.

Children agreed to make slow changes in the classroom rules of existing classroom. They wanted not to forbid a thing completely but want to make small changes.

In the sixth week of the ideal classroom day, children added new rules.

Yaman: I want to change my center after choosing it.

This rules in our existing classroom were after choosing a center in planning time, children needed to play at least 5 minutes in the center. I brought this rule because children could think carefully about planning their plays and centers. They wanted to change it.

In the eight week of ideal classroom days, after starting of ideal classroom day, there was a collision in the computer usage. I offered to make list for the usages. We made a list to solve the problem. They offered to solve problems of waiting turns with making list. Making list was in our existing classroom community. Children brought in through this implementation to their ideal classroom.

As can be seen in the above, children did not have many rules or order for their ideal classroom in their statements. However, in the ideal classroom day, children created a classroom community with specific rules in time. It was worth of considering that children determined rules of classroom in the side of teacher helps at first. Then, they started to determine rules of social order. Both children's statements and practices were related with existing classroom rules.

Lastly, in the ideal classroom children had a schedule that was flexible. They planned things as playing, making research and working about the thing that they were curious about. As I stated before children wanted to play, and they played at the beginning of the ideal classroom day. Their ideal classroom ideas and ideal classroom implementations in real were indeed compatible. They wanted to play all day. However, they gradually started to add more things to their schedule. In the schedule, children planned a hands-on activity, then they played. Some of them, wanted to play only while some of them just made hands-on activities. This aligned with their interest. Some children really did not like to do hands-on activities, and

these children only played. Children who liked to do hands-on activities carried these interests to ideal classroom as all day. This has shown that ideal classroom day supported children's interest and met children's needs individually.

4.2.2 Informal spaces

Informal spaces involved children's views on their relationship with environment including friends, place, themselves. I noticed that children established different relationships with their classroom that was based on their relationships and social and emotional beings. There were many things that I was unable to observe and notice the relationship they constructed in the classroom before the study. In this part, their construction of their ideal classroom was analyzed based on personal spaces, their agency, social spaces, secret spaces, social-emotional space.

4.2.2.1 Personal spaces

Children documented that they wanted to create a personal space in their ideal classroom. It means that children wanted to be active not only with their physical beings but with their bringing and works in the classroom community. In the existing classroom, they emphasized on their own childhood photos, their own toys and their works in the classroom as spaces that they liked and wanted them to continue in the ideal classroom.

Family center in the classroom involved more likely in their photos. They wanted family center in ideal classroom too and brought ideas to family center as based on home bringing. They wanted to establish connection between home and classroom via family center and wanted to bring toys and personal things to this

center in their ideal classroom. In the photo interviews, Okan gave some ideas about family center.

> Okan: I want family center in my ideal classroom. I want to bring toys from home and put them there.

Children took photo of their own toys in the classroom. Toys day was on Monday. They loved to bring toys from home to classroom. In their ideal classroom, they wanted to bring their toys every day.

> Barış: In my ideal classroom, I would like to bring toys from all days.

Some children took photo of pin-board in the classroom and loved exhibition of their works in their ideal classroom.

> Ayhan: In my ideal classroom, I want to do a lot of works. I would like to exhibit my works. For example, there can be an exhibition. We can do works and we can exhibit them immediately.
> Ekin: I would like to have much bigger pin-board in my ideal school to put up more our works.

They wanted more space to exhibit their works in the classroom.

In the clay activity, Yaman stated that children loved to see their works in the classroom.

> Yaman: Children make puzzles. Teacher hang it to ceiling. Puzzle has been on the ceiling. Teacher put something black to its edges. Then it has been a painting. It has been hanged to the wall.

Moreover, they wanted to expand their personal space by including their family members to the activities as members of the classroom. They included their family members to classroom.

In the three-dimensional classroom making, Okan and Yaman designed their family members as members of the classroom.

> Okan: I will design a sibling too.

In the drawing activity of ninth week, Okan also designed a family member.

Okan: I will design a cat and a sibling to my classroom.

In the drawing activity of sixth week, he expressed his ideas about his family members.

Okan: there will be my father and my other three siblings.

They designed their own pets for their ideal classroom. In the drawing activity, Barış stated their ideas for his ideal classroom.

> Barış: There is a chameleon here who transform into any animal. It is my friend, and I teach him good things and movements.

In their documentations of their ideal classroom, children gave special priority to create a personal space including their works, toys, family members and pets. As the matter of the fact, they wanted details that a reference to their self being in their learning environments.

In ideal classroom day, children brought toys from home and expressed their ideas about bringing toys to the classroom in ideal classroom assessment meetings.

Miray: I like to bring my toys and play with them in ideal classroom day.

In eight week of ideal classroom day, Ayhan was talking with his friends;

> Ayhan: Miray I will bring you many toys from home. Not to say lots of toys.
> Miray: (Smilling to Ayhan)
> Ayhan: Do you want?
> Miray: Yes
> "Ayhan opened up the plastic bag, they started to look forward together, and Barış also came)"

As we see, children wanted to have their personal toys in the ideal classroom and also in practice gave importance to bringing toys. Toys bringing was an easy thing to reflect in ideal classroom day in practice. If children had more time and opportunity in reality, they would apply other ideas about personal space in the ideal classroom

day. To give space to create personal spaces that were references to their beings were very crucial in the perspective of them.

4.2.2.2 Children's agency

Agency means that individual's space to make decisions and choices based on their needs and their environment. As we discussed in the personal space, children wanted to have things that are belong to them in the classroom and wanted to affect environment that they live. They documented that children wanted to have more agency in the classroom by involving into the decision making and choosing process of designing spaces in the classroom.

Children pointed out many different places of the classroom to criticize overestimation of their beings in the classroom and expressed that they wanted to have more agency to influence their environment. In the photo interview, Ayhan shared his ideas about quiet center and wanted more agency in the quiet center.

> Ayhan: I want more toys her but not like that. I want more animal toys. I wouldn't like to name here as "quiet center". Instead, its name can be "big forest eagle". I don't like the "quiet center" name. We can only play there in the rest time. So, I don't like quiet center.

As we can see, children also criticized the names of centers. They wanted to have agency in naming the centers. In our classroom, rest time and quiet center was much related. Children's reactions to rest time caused negative views on quiet center. Ayhan wanted to change this relation with their agency by naming centers and bringing different toys to the centers.

Children gave statements on children's choices in ideal classroom and wanted to have right to choose materials for the learning environment. In photo interviews, Miray made it very clear.

Miray: I like animal's blocks. I must choose classroom toys. If I do, quiet center doesn't exist in my classroom. I don't like toys in there.

Children wanted to see things that they created and affected. In the magic carpet activity, they demonstrated things in other classrooms that they have affected on. One of the examples were in public school garden picture, Yaman stated something that made it clear. He saw a hole in the garden of public school.

Yaman: I like that hole in the garden. Children dig it. It is very beautiful.

In the ideal classroom day, children experienced agency. In the first day of ideal classroom, after children's ideal classroom meeting, I asked to sign our agreement. They got surprised about it. Signing to agreement made children very surprised. They surprised because they thought that only adults do signs.

Ekin: what do you mean?
Researcher: It is a sign
Ayça: It is funny (she is embraced)
Ayhan: I am going to sign too. (Very excited)
Ayhan: Okan your sign is very beautiful.
Ayça: Oo I signed. (She is smiling)
Ayça: Ayhan signed too.
Ayhan: Do children sign? (He is very surprised)
Ayça: Mommies sign
Ayça: Signer (laughing)
Ekin: Signer

Children also showed agency when they used voice recorder. They liked to use it. They wanted to talk to it. Children used it when they were solving their conflicts in solution meeting. Sometimes, some children wanted it to talk about things. Voice recorder became a tool for them to raise their voice in the classroom. In the first day of ideal classroom, Ayça wanted it to talk. Ayça and Esma in the housing center, in tidy-up time:

Ayça: look Esma. You talk with it. Say something. Look look. (She introduces it to Esma)
Ayça: I am here. I am here. (She talks to voice recorder).

Ayça: Look Esma. You are going to use like that. I am here.
Ayça: I am putting my toys to their places. I am putting shoes to there. Bye bye kisses.
"Then she gave me back voice recorder."

Ayça expressed herself by using recorder. She emphasized on "I am here". She wanted that people could hear her voice by listening to voice recorder. They used many different ways to express themselves and to raise their voices.

In ideal classroom assessment meeting of third week, Miray expressed that "I like getting up from meal".

Ayhan: I am happy to determine the toys rules today.

In the six week of ideal classroom day, Ayça wanted to use voice recorder.

Ayça. I miss Cemoo. I felt upset when Ekin went early. Ali Ali Aliooo …. (Singing)

Ayça raised her voice with voice recorder by mentioning about her feelings and singing songs.

In the ninth week of the ideal classroom day, they were in their ideal classroom. Research-students came to our building to do research with children. They wanted to use the corridor. I asked children about it.

Arda: I am going to play here
Ayhan: We want to play in the corridor.

They did not accept it. If we were not in the ideal classroom day, this scene could be different. They can say yes to this question. However, in the ideal classroom day, they experienced their real power and effect on the environment.

As we see, there were coherence between children imagined ideas and practices in showing their agency. Children wanted to be more active in influencing classroom community by being active in the decision-making process.

4.2.2.3 Secret spaces

Children wanted to have secret in their ideal classroom. From the seventh week of the study they started to present their wishes to have secret places in their classroom. It is important to see their definition of secret places.

In the block activity, Ekin and Barış designed a secret place in their ideal classroom.

> Ekin: Here is secret place. When children lift this, they can enter inside of the secret place. Only children can enter there.
> Researcher: What children do in their secret place?
> Ekin: They play secret games there. They open their secret presents.

In the same activity, Miray and Ayhan also built a secret place for their ideal classroom.

> Miray: And there is also a secret place here. They use it for hiding from people. They hide to their secret place when they are scared from people.
> Researcher: What do these animals do in their secret place?
> Ayhan: of course, they make planning.
> Miray: They plan pecking, eating and biting people.

Children also built secret place in three-dimensional classroom making activity to their ideal classroom.

> Ayhan: Here is secret place.
> Researcher: what do children do in secret place?
> Ayhan: Hiding
> Ekin: They can open their secret presents.
> Yaman: They can open their presents without being seen by the teacher.
> Researcher: Do their teacher not see here?
> Yaman: Yes. Their teacher never saw them there. They hide there their chocolate and they eat them.
> Ayhan. Can I say what's inside of it? They hide special toys there.
> Researcher: Do not their teacher know?
> Yaman: Teacher tells them not to bring chocolate there.
> Researcher. Their teacher told them not to bring chocolate and children put them to their secret place?
> Yaman: Yes.
> Ayhan: Children has a small fridge there. They put their chocolate there because they don't want them to melt.

Children kept designing secret places in other weeks too. In the ninth week, children situated their secret place to another corner of classroom that was away from door and garden. Children really wanted to have a secret place that was quiet and out of sights.

In the tenth week, children put different function of their secret places. Children stated that their secret place was also a place for searching and observing nature. It meant a learning place for them.

> Miray: This is secret place. Children sleep and play here and they put insects there. They observe them. They uncover insects. Insects come out and they play insect catching.

Children defined their secret place as child-centered place that met children's needs. Secret places were critics to teacher-centered classroom environment. They wanted to have privacy and were aware that their teacher monitors them all the time. They wanted to have privacy from adult-centered atmosphere.

Children also showed their agency via secret places. Since they referred to bring toys that teacher do not want to classroom, they wanted to transfer this rule with secret places by showing agency. Also, they mostly expressed that secret places were for eating chocolate. Chocolate was a restrictive food for children. It was restrictive at home and at the school. They wanted to break this restriction with secret places that was belong to their world.

But some of them thought different about secret places. This conversation meant that some of them did not have a need to hide from teacher. Children's needs and teacher's need could get a mutual point for this child. This could be a purpose for teachers to get. Children and teacher might not need to hide something from each other by coming to a mutual understanding.

> Yaman: Children do not go to secret place in this classroom because they do not like hiding things from their teachers. They want their teacher to know everything too.

In the ideal classroom, they designed a secret place to their playground with blocks. In the ninth week of the ideal classroom, they in the morning started to build a secret place between the quiet center and the books center.

> "Children try to cover the place between the quiet center and the book center with red sheet.
> Ayhan: How are we going to get inside of it?
> Barış: Hıımm Ekin can you bring other sheets, let's try with them.
> Ekin: Then bring red sheet, let's try it too.
> Barış: Let's put this red sheet here and fold it.
> Ayhan: Great.
> "I come closer to them"
> Researcher: Hello friends, can I take notes here
> Ayhan: Yes
> Ayhan: Here is our secret place. It is for Ekin, Barış and me
> Barış: But we need to put more things
> …
> Researcher: Barış what are you going to do in your secret place
> "They bring blocks"
> Ayhan: We will hide from evils and thief.
> Barış: No, we will fight
> Ayhan: I mean we will fight.

Children's needs for secret places were compatible with in real ideal classroom day. I offered them some materials to build a secret place to our classroom. We built secret place with cartoons. In the tenth week, we built a secret place in the classroom. Secret space was in between the books center and the housing center. They played and they used there to hide.

As we see, they wanted to have secret places in their ideal classroom and reality had and built secret places to the classroom. They gave significance to secret places that support children privacy and are out of sight of adults. They wanted there to be active places that only children's voice and agency counts.

4.2.2.4 Imaginary spaces

Imaginary spaces theme can be defined as children's views about their ideal classroom on imaginative, fantastic and unrealistic things. These ideas were very difficult to carry out in learning environments.

Children established their ideal classroom with real animals that are wild and also wanted to have an animal class without children. They established their ideal classroom on fantastic items.

> Miray: There is snake, prairie rattlers, and anaconda. These animals make children to run away. I am alone in the class. I named this class as animal class. Anymore, I spent my time in this class with animals.

In block activity, Ayça- Yaman and Miray and Ayhan built a class only animals live in.

> Yaman: I think people do not manage here; animals do.
> Miray: Our class is managed by animals. There is no people and teacher.
> Ayhan: Animals go to toilet, do cooking, and that's it. They are not doing anything else.
> Okan: In my ideal class, there is flying home. It has wings.

They also brought some characters to their ideal classroom. In the drawing activity, Barış stated their imaginations about ideal classroom.

> Barış: I would like to have a zombie in my class.
> Yaman: I want a Spiderman.

> In the tenth week, Miray built a classroom with blocks.

> Miray: This is a monster classroom. Their teacher is a ghost. Everything is ghost. So they are unseen. I am a ghost, too.
> Miray: It is written as monster school. This classroom is alive. There is its mount, tongue, and eyes.
> Ayhan: My classroom is alive, too. Look there is its ears.

They also expressed their ideas that are imaginative activities in the classroom.

> Okan: There is funny master here. When we put water here, posters drink it. This is poison source elixir.
> Researcher: Is it real?
> Okan: It is real. This elixir makes people happy and get fun.

It was very normal for children's developmental process to establish ideal classroom based on imaginative items. It could be interesting and attractive for children to have fantastic items in their learning environments based on their interest. In the ideal classroom day, there were no supported data about imaginative spaces. To establish a fantastic environment was not realistic. Thus, they did not state any practical activity about this theme.

4.2.2.5 Social spaces

Social space theme can be defined as children's views on their social relationships, friends and social activities. Children's social activities were documented based on being together with friends and places.

Children mentioned about their social activities that are based on being together with friends in play or in a special activity. In drawing activity, Okan drew many friends of him to his classroom and he explained that children were in pajamas party. In the same activity, there were other examples for that.

> Okan: There is a pajama party in this class.
> Ekin: We are doing barbecue.
> Ekin: Other children in this class want to go on a trip.

In the clay activity, they kept mentioning about social activities in their ideal classroom.

> Okan: there is noel celebration in this class.

Moreover, children mentioned about play as social activity in all parts of data and explained their classroom's doings with playing. Children's play was based on their play in existing classroom.

> Researcher: What do children play?
> Ekin: Housing, they play caravanning as we are.
> Researcher: What are you doing together?

Barış: I will draw bank and we will sit together on it. We play and we play with puppets.

Moreover, they expressed their views about classroom social activities through play such as hide and seek, playing tag, and caravanning.

In the ideal classroom day, they had specific plays that have some specific groups.

"Barış, Ayhan and Yaman play dinosaurs"
"Yaman, Barış, Ayhan play together about animals."

As we see, children's perspectives were coherent in both ideal classroom statements and actual practices. Children's social activities were based on being together and some specific game that were determined shroud children's agenda.

Children explained their doings in their ideal classroom as playing with their friends. These friends were specific friends based on play. In drawing activity, Barış mentioned about his friends in his ideal classroom.

Barış: I just want my all friends in this classroom. I draw Miray and Okan.
Miray: I draw three children. Okan, Yaman and Miray.

Children gave features of their friends in ideal classroom. There were different views of children about their friends. They mentioned their friends' genders and expressed their views on same gender friends wishes. They also mentioned their friends' ages. Some of them preferred to have younger, whereas some preferred older friends in their classroom.

In the drawing activity Arda drew his friends in his ideal classroom.

Arda: His name is Arda. He is a male.
Researcher: Do you like friends who are male?
Arda: Yes.
Barış: She is Zeynep. She is my classmate. We have problems sometimes because she is very naughty in this age. She is one year younger than me.

Ekin. This school is very big. …. they go to art class. But she is behind them, because, she is younger than them. She walks slowly. Younger ages and older ages are in the same classroom.
Barış: There is a big brother here. There are older children in this class. He is playing in the classroom.

In the ideal classroom day, they showed responsibility about their friends. In the sixth week of ideal classroom day, when children applying their plans;

"Barış designing a snake with cartoons on the table;
Ayhan: Barış, do you need help?
Barış: Yes
Ayhan. I can help, because children help each other."

There were many examples of helping of children in the ideal classroom day. One of them attracted my attention. They wanted to help their friends in teaching their own skills.

Researcher: what do you want to do today Okan?
Okan: I want to learn knit.
Ekin: I know how to knit. I can teach you.
Ekin: I want to learn how to draw
Yaman: I want to teach Ekin how to draw.

Children's social spaces in the ideal classroom reflected by the place that they socialize. They mentioned about places as block centers housing center, garden as their social places and mentioned about play places as garden too.

Barış: This is Flip. He likes block center. This is Dori. He likes housing center. This is Krem. Krem likes to eat. This is slick. He likes to swing.
Okan: Children play in the garden. They play hide and seek.

In the ideal classroom day, children used specific places to play and socialize. Block center was important place for plays. They used corridor as social place.

"Ayhan and Yaman play in block center on seats."
"Ekin, Ayhan, Okan, Yaman and Barış play in the housing and block center."
"Ayça and Esma play in corridor together"

I brought camera to corridor. Children were playing a game. I did not understand their games. I assumed that they play an animal game. However, after I watched video of corridor play, I noticed that a child used space very differently than I expected.

> "Ekin, Ayhan, Barış and Miray in the corridor"
> Ayhan: my friends let be wolf. (They touch wolf picture on the wall)
> Okan: I will be an animal.
> (Children touch to animal pictures on the wall and they transform to animals)

There were animal pictures on the wall of our corridor. I stuck them to wall by categorizing animals according to continents. They transferred these pictures on the wall into their games.

Moreover, they wanted to use top of housing center. These places brought some conflicts to our classroom community. Only Esma, Ayça and Ekin used these places.

> "Esma and Ayça are on the top of housing center
> Ekin, Tuğba, Esma and Ayça call us small (because they are on the top)"

Children and I got difficult times because of usage of housing center. Firstly, I was worried about the dangerous side of this place and children used here to running away from children that they have problem with. Also, sometimes, they manipulated other kids from here like the example above.

It is seen that children constructed their social relationships based on places, friends and specific activities. Block center was an important social place for children of this study in both their imaginative ideas and practices. However, there were different place usages with ideal classroom day in practice such as corridor and housing center. Playing with specific children observed in the ideal classroom day too. Specific activities to be together (pajama party) was not observed accept specific

games. It is needed to be taken consideration that ideal classroom day was time restricted and once a week.

4.2.2.6 Social-emotional spaces

Social emotional theme can be defined as children's views on their emotions, conflicts situations in their ideal classroom. Children expressed their views about place that they need to have a feeling of relaxing and being good. Social-emotional spaces of them were included as solution meeting, and places and toys for relaxing.

In our existing classroom there was a solution meeting process for them when they experienced a conflict with their friends or teacher. There were different views on solution meeting in the data. Some children carried it to their ideal classroom, some of them did not want to have it in their ideal classroom.

In the class activity, Barış and Esma told about their ideal classroom.

> Researcher: Do these children experience any sad things?
> Barış: Yes, they have problem with sharing their toys.
> Researcher: What do they do?
> Barış: They go to solution chair.

Barış carried his existing classroom solution strategy to his ideal classroom. However, some of them did not carry solution meeting to their ideal classroom. They showed their agency toward solution meeting. In the solution of problems, they tried to find something different than solution meeting concept. In the tenth week, they built their classroom with boxes.

> Researcher: How do children handle their problem in your classroom?
> Ayhan: They do something different from solution meeting. Children get help from animals. Animals come to them to help when a problem comes out. They say that "do not fight, let's finish the fight".

In the photo interviews, Miray approached to solution meeting in a different perspective.

> Miray: Well, for problems, we solve them during play. Children need to solve them among themselves.

This approach was a criticism to existing classroom order and an offer from children's point of view. They did not want to solve their problems out of playground on chairs and did not want to break their plays when they experience a problem. They wanted to solve it among them and in a natural sequence. Another point for solutions of the problems was classroom community with no problem in ideal. They expressed that in their ideal classroom, they did not experience any problems. They in their ideal classroom shared and waited for their turns.

> Ekin: These children do not have any problems.
> Researcher: What do they do?
> Ekin: They are very smart. This transparent (pipette) one said that "can you give after 5 minutes?" This one also said "yes".

Children wanted place and toys to regulate their emotions in their classroom. They wanted special places for emotional and social problems to regulate their emotion and express their emotions freely. In photo interviews, Okan expressed his views on stuffed toys. He also wanted them in their ideal classroom to squeeze them when he got angry. Moreover, Ayça told her ideas about her ideal classroom.

> Ayça: I want to have a place that makes me relax and happy. In this place, I want toys, plants, flowers and soil.

Children wanted to have toys to help them to regulate their emotions. These materials could be something soft materials or natural materials. The important point was that, all these materials helped individuals to relax by touching in a sensory way.

Children as individuals were aware of their need of these place in the ideal classroom community.

In the ideal classroom day, social emotional spaces were documented through social emotional conflicts and solution meetings. They did not document any practices about places and toys for relaxations. It can be reason that creating a place needs more prolonged time than once a week of ideal classroom day.

In the ideal classroom day, children experienced some conflicts. These conflicts were mostly rule of play, sharing toys and waiting for turns. The frequency of conflicts was reduced with time in ideal classroom day. There were differences between nature and frequency of the conflicts and solutions through process of the ideal classroom day.

Nature of conflicts resolutions showed differences. Children implemented different strategies. These strategies were solving by themselves in the solution meeting, solving by guidance of me, solving conflicts during play, and solving conflicts with guidance of their friends in the solution meeting.

It was interesting that when children used solution meeting, one of them took role of teacher in solution meeting. One of them tried to lead solution meeting by giving children turns, trying to understand the problem. It was garden time and children were playing with Okan's toy in the climbing space. They were using the toy as fish catcher. Ayça were in the play, but she added new rules to play and others took her from play. Then she took toys away from them to make solution meeting. She called all children playing that game. It was a long conversation. I gave some highlighted conversation parts.

> Ekin: This game has no running part. You need to adapt our rules.
> Ayça: You are not listening to me. Then we need to call everyone. (she called other friends in the game)

Ayça: I will tell you something. We need to talk about it first. We need to solve it. I am playing too. But you are not hearing me.
Ekin: Our game is not running game.
Ayça: We need to talk about it.
Ayça: If anyone has a solution tell me.
Ekin: You are not a teacher Ayça.
Ayça: I know, but I am telling you. I am in the game also. Why are you doing this?
…
Ayça: I will keep these toys until handling this issue.
(This conversation repeat itself and some children get bored and start to cry and I intervene it. I asked about the problem)
Ayça: Tuğba look, give this toy to anyone who wants to talk. We think a solution. Give it to someone when she or he want to talk. And talk.
Okan: (Okan express the problem) they did not listen to me and I get angry.
Some children wanted to go back to play area.
Ayça: Can you come; I am calling you. I will give voice recorder who wants to talk. I am keeping toys until we solve it.
…
Ayça: I want to pull toys and they do not listen to me. I try to say something and but talk with each other.
..

Conversation kept going like that on listening. I offered them to make a turn list to pull fishes. They accepted it and Okan accepted to follow turns and they went back to play.

This conflict resolution was interesting because, I notice that Ayça were imitating me in solution meeting. She was both try to lead solution meeting by arranging talking turns and try to raise her voice in the game. They carried solution meeting in existing classroom to their ideal classroom. However, it was different from existing classroom, it was longer and only some children raised their voice.

In the third week of ideal classroom day, children started to have a friend who behave like teacher in solving problems. Ayhan and Okan had a conflict about a toy. They were in solution meeting. They called me to help them. I listened their voice. When they discussed about their problems, Barış came and said, “I am a teacher”.

Others accepted it and they tried help them by guiding them as I did in existing classroom. He used sentences that I used.

> Barış: Okey tell me who took this toy firstly.
> Ayhan: me
> Okan: Me
> Barış: Both of you?
> Barış: Hımm lets do like that. Firstly, let's play with turn. But it's very sad to hear that Okan hit his friend.

Ayhan and Okan discussed it with Barış and he kept in saying playing with turns. Then he offered a new play with toy, Okan and Ayhan accepted the idea and they started to play together. When teacher's power of guidance in solution meetings was absent, it substituted by power of children's friends in guidance. They were used to have a person to give guidance to their solutions.

Another change in the nature of the solution meetings were children's transferring of existing classroom solution strategies to ideal classroom in practice by offering and implementing the solution by themselves without teacher involvement. The power transferred to children in the classroom. They used their power by taking responsibility in the conflict solution.

In the conflict resolution, children called me for help in solution meeting. I guided them during their conversation. They found a solution that everyone agreed on.

> Okan: I want play with my toys. They played two times.
> Barış: You need to share it.
> Researcher: Okan can decide about his toys.
> Barış: but I want to play fishing.
> Researcher: Okan what do you think about it.
> Okan: I want to play myself little bit, then I can give you.
> Esma: But you already play with it at home
> Okan: no, I didn't play with it at home.
> …. (Conversation goes like that)
> Okan: Then they can play 5 minutes. Then I can play 5 minutes. To find who play first, let me make rhyme. "portakalı soydum…." (A Turkish rhyme)
> (Then in the rhyme Barış came out, he gave these toys and started to wait 5 minutes.)

In the seventh week of ideal classroom, children had a conflict about pitcher. Esma, Ayhan and Yaman were discussed about the solution meeting. Then Arda attended to the solution.

> "Arda arranges to time with me as putting 5 minutes space on the clock.
> Arda: After 5 minutes Ayhan will take pitcher.
> He said it to them.
> Arda: Ayhan you will play 5 minutes, after she played, she will give it to you"
> Then he goes to quiet center to play with Yaman"

Children were solving their problems without me by implementing existing classroom strategies we used to by themselves. They carried their solution strategies to their ideal classroom as waiting turns, giving some time and rhyming.

Sometimes they solved their problems at the play. They were having a problem about sharing toys. Then one of them offered to play together. That way they solved sharing toys conflict.

Ayhan: Let's play together. I can give you milk that way.

Then same group started experience conflict with other group about toys again. But this time, they offered a different solution and wanted something different toy from another group.

Ayhan: If you want rabbit, you need to give us something from there.

These solutions were at spot of negotiations in play. These negotiations were very important for children. I noticed that when teacher power and help were not there in the classroom, children found solutions by their own ways. The nature of the solutions changed with playground, they found solutions of being together and exchange. These were real life social practices than solution meeting in a different place than on the spot negotiations at play.

The solution meetings had advantages and disadvantages in a classroom community. When all solutions were solved during the solution meetings, children had less experience in solving real life problem in reality. However, solution meetings gave advantages in raising voice for children having difficulty in expressing themselves in the playground. Another advantage was that solution meetings worked when children were very angry or sad with each other. Children calmed down during solution meetings by separating the place they experience conflict.

Solution meetings were very useful when children have intense emotions. I noticed that when they were very angry about the conflicts, they repeated the same things over and over, which made it difficult to talk. I tried to guide them by drawing their attention to something else during the solution meetings. Then, they could talk about their problems.

> "Children were in the garden. Ekin, Miray, Okan and Barış were playing dinosaur's game."
> Ekin: Miray told me "I am not going to look your face anymore"
> Researcher: Why do you think so?
> (Ekin told me the same thing. Then, Miray came, and she were angry.)
> Miray. I did not say face.
> Ekin: You said.
> (That conversation kept going like that. After a while, Ekin started to cry, and Miray got angrier. She was still keeping screaming like "I did not say face").
> Researcher: Can I help you?
> Ekin: Yes, you do.
> (I distracted their attention, and they were very angry.)
> "Then, they started to talk about it."

The frequency of conflicts has changed in time. At the first weeks of ideal classroom day, they experienced more conflicts and confusion in solving. The conflicts were very difficult and took long time to solve than the other days. They experienced eight difficult and long conflicts. They created various solutions for these conflicts.

On the second day of ideal classroom, they experienced four conflicts during the day. These conflicts were about game rules and sharing toys. They solved three of these conflicts during the solution meetings. One of them was solved by the guidance of me. During the sixth week of ideal classroom day, they experienced one or two conflicts. They solved them during the solution meeting. However, they sometimes did not want to attend to the solution meetings. At that time, I intervened in the conflict by showing our classroom agreement, which was that when we had problem in sharing, Tuğba needed to help us.

As observed, their ideas and practices had a coherence in the ideal classroom. They wanted to have solution meetings in their ideal classroom, and they performed those meetings on the ideal classroom days, too. Children who wanted to solve their problems during the play solved them in the playground. It is seen that the solution meetings had advantages and disadvantages in children's points of view. It could be arranged as not always using the solution meetings. However, they did not apply for any special place or toy to regulate their emotions except the solution meetings. It was essential to think that ideal classroom day was once a week. Creating a place for the emotions might be difficult for them at this point.

4.2.3 Physical spaces

Physical spaces category is based on children's views on physical features of the classroom. Themes of physical spaces were nature spaces, soft spaces, aesthetic spaces, facilities and accessibility in children's point of views in the description of their ideal classrooms. Children's construction of the ideal classroom day in physical way were categorized as children's usages of physical space, and changes in physical space.

4.2.3.1 Nature spaces

Children drew and designed the features of nature for their ideal classroom. In the existing classroom, there were no nature materials such as flowers and plants. However, they frequently mentioned these materials for their classroom during every activity. These nature features were mostly based on grass, trees, plants, flowers and real animals.

During the magic carpet, they expressed their critics as schools had no green areas. They mostly described the academic classroom with tables and shelves and told that they disliked the academic classroom much with shelves, lockers, and chairs. They wanted to be in a setting that looks like home or nature and said that they wanted to live in a Waldorf classroom.

> Okan: There is no grass and soil around the school. Animals cannot live in. (for an academic classroom).

Children wanted natural materials in their classroom and wanted woods, stones and sticks. They expressed that they would play very well with these kinds of materials in the classroom.

They gave importance to have soil, flowers and grass in their classroom. During the three-dimensional classroom design, they designed gardens with greenery, and the classroom with flowers.

Arda: In my school, there is a garden, and it has soil and flowers.

During the tenth week of the activities, they kept designing flowers and plants in their classroom.

> Ayhan: Children play housing here. Some of them play with blocks or zoo game. Some of them pick flowers.
> Researcher: Do you have flowers?
> Ayhan: Yes, some of them pick roses, and there are also three inside the classroom.

From these conversations, it is understood that children wanted natural features, and they wanted to be engaged with real nature activities. They wanted real animals and want to take care of them. It can be said that activities on real life skills was integrated with nature features from their perspectives of ideal classroom.

4.2.3.2 Soft spaces

Children frequently expressed their likes for soft spaces in the classroom. They took the photos of the place. They gave suggestions for more soft materials in the classroom. The soft places that children gave importance were cushions and carpets. Especially the carpet areas took their attention while designing their classroom. Moreover, on three-dimensional map making process, the carpet covered large space in the classroom. The conversation about the carpet was from the photo interviews with Ayhan.

> Ayhan: I want carpet in my ideal classroom. It would be good to have these kinds of carpets. Like this, rainbow color. I like colorful carpets.

Other than the carpet, they highlighted the importance of the cushions for them in the existing classroom. However, they were not satisfied with the adequacy and the shape of the cushions. They wanted more cushions for every child, and also, they wanted thicker cushions to play and not to get hurt.

> Yaman: I want thicker cushions in my ideal classroom.

They also pointed out the soft materials in the classroom to play in the centers. This was very interesting for me. As a teacher, I was not aware of this need from their perspective.

The conversation was from the photo interviews with Yaman. He shared his ideas about the quiet center. He disliked tough manipulative sin the quiet center. Instate of tough manipulates, he wanted soft toys to play.

> Yaman: I don't want manipulative in my ideal classroom. I want it in different shapes. I want it in a triangle shape, and also soft.

Overall, they demonstrated with their wishes for soft materials to create safe environment in their ideal classroom not to get hurt with the soft materials. They played physically active games in the classroom. However, they sometimes got hurt from it. In order to protect themselves and to keep playing physically active game, they wanted soft spaces.

4.2.3.3 Aesthetic spaces

4.2.3.3.1 Color and beauty

Children highlighted their views on the beauty and the color of their classroom. The classroom was required to be physically beautiful. In all activities, they expressed especially the color of their classroom. The greatest importance was the color of the classroom walls, and they also shared their ideas about the color of the classroom materials. They wanted more light colors in their classroom and expressed many different colors for their classroom such as green, yellow, purple, blue or pink. These colors were light, colorful and attractive for them. In the drawing activity, Ekin drew a big and pink school.

> Ekin: Tuğba look, these colors take children's attention. This is a big classroom.
> Miray: I design a school. I will paint it light green.
> Mert: I like having a yellow classroom. I like yellow color a lot.

They mostly drew and designed their classrooms in a colorful way. The colorful designs were more than only one-color designs. In the drawing activity, they drew their classroom colorfully. The researcher asked them about the colors of their classroom, and they said they like a colorful classroom.

> Researcher: Your classroom looks very colorful.
> Ekin: Yes, I want that way.

They also pointed out the other materials in the classroom and mostly imagined changing the color and the shape of the table. During the photo interviews, they expressed their views on the table and wanted the table to be in a different shape, rather than a rectangle.

> Ekin: The table can be in different shapes like heart, square, circle or triangle, or maybe as flower.

Another point is that they decorated their ideal classroom with colors, ornamentals, and beads and wanted to be in an attractive and well decorative classroom. During the tenth week activity, they expressed that they wanted to have a decorative classroom and decorated the classroom with beads.

> Ayhan: We wanted to have a decorative classroom. Let's keep decorating here, too.

4.2.3.3.2 Materials: durability, adequacy and diversity

Children shared their views on the materials in their existing classroom by pointing out their critics and their suggestions. They classified the classroom materials into four on three features as durability, adequacy and diversity of the materials.

Firstly, they had many critics about the old and broken materials in their existing classroom. For their ideal classroom, they preferred to have more durable materials. Some of them expressed it by saying new materials. However, at the end, they mentioned their feelings of discomfort about the broken and old materials.

During the photo interviews, many children took the photos of the old and broken places of the classroom. Ekin also took the photo of the art center. In their existing classroom, shelves sometimes came out to our hands when we tried to take something out of the shelves in the centers. The art center was one of them.

> Ekin: I want bigger art center, and its shelf must not come out.
> Mert: I want my classroom to be new. New door, new corridor, new outside door.
> Okan: In my ideal classroom, I want a family center not broken.
> Esma: I want bigger and durable toys.

Secondly, the adequacy and the diversity of materials were pointed out by them in all activities, especially for centers. They wanted more different and diverse materials. All they wanted were adequate number of materials. They wanted more materials in the classroom centers such as blocks, housing quiet and art center.

> Miray: In my ideal classroom, I want more materials in the block center. I want beads, blocks, animals, bigger blocks and a lot of triangle blocks and different shapes.

They wanted adequate materials in their ideal classroom. They thought that the table, the chairs, the art center materials were not adequate for the number of classrooms.

> Ayhan: The materials are not adequate enough, they are inadequate.

4.2.3.3.3 Windows, electricity of the classroom

They shared their ideas about the physical structure of the classroom by reversing electric structure and windows. They wanted to have secure environment in terms of

electricity. In the three-dimensional classroom making, they designed electricity structure to help children be secure in the classroom.

> Arda: This is the electricity place of the classroom. If the electricity is gone, children will turn on this one.

They shared ideas about the windows of the classroom, too. They wanted that the windows must be bigger to have more relaxed and air fresh environment in the classroom. During the photo interviews, Arda took the photos of the windows.

> Arda: In my ideal classroom, I want bigger windows on the ceilings.
> During the drawing activity, Arda drew a huge window.
> Arda: This class has a huge window.

These physical structures of the classroom provided a secure and air-fresh environment for children. Electricity and windows were under the control of adults. Besides, adults kept children away from these places by emphasizing verbally on its risk and danger, they especially thought and designed these structures to be safe for them.

4.2.3.4 Facilities

Facility theme is based on children's views on new spaces and parts of the classroom that they want for their ideal classroom communities. These facilities were pool, climbing wall, football and basketball ground, and playground. Some of them only designed their ideal classroom based on these facilities. They told many things that children can do in these facilities with excitement.

> Okan: … I want a climbing wall, a pool to jump, and a place to do exercise.
> During the ninth week of the drawing activity, Yaman drew the parts of his classroom, and he stuck them on bigger paper.
> Yaman: This is a basketball field. Children play basketball here. There is a pipe here, and they go inside of the pipe. If they go out of the pipe, they are out of the game. If they go inside of the pipe, they win.

For Yaman, it was important to have game fields and parks in his ideal classroom. He wanted to have physically active grounds and facilities in his ideal classroom. Moreover, all children drew facilities to their classroom and designed facilities based on physical activity. They gave importance to spaces for physical games and exercise.

Another point is that in all activities, they designed a pool in the classroom. As a matter of fact, they firstly started designing a pool, and then they built the other parts of the classroom regarding the pool in the three-dimensional map making. They explained the details for the usage of the pool such as who used it and how they used it.

They designed spaces like farm for their ideal classroom. The farms were the places that they wanted to be in, so they incorporated farms into their ideal classrooms. They wanted to have farm facilities to observe and take care of animals there. They wanted to experience the real-life skills in farms.

> Ayhan: I wish there would be deer and squirrel, and do you know what the best in the farm is; horse.

Overall, all these facilities were the spaces that they were active participants and wanted to be active participant physically and socially in their classrooms. It was important for them to think the classroom more than a classroom with toys and activities. For them, the school was more likely constructed to engage in social and real-life facilities.

4.2.3.5 Accessibility

They shared their ideas about being close to the other parts of the school. Accessibility appeared in two different ways. The one was physical accessibility, and the other one was emotional accessibility.

They wanted to have physical accessibility to the other parts of the school. They wanted to be close to the places that they like, and they need. Among these places, the focus was on the garden. They wanted direct closeness to the garden. During the drawing activity, Esma expressed that the garden is inside the classroom.

> Esma: Here is park, slide, swing and, grass. Here is the garden classroom. Here is inside actually. There is a garden inside the classroom.

They brought new ideas about the accessibility of the garden during the sixth week. Children wanted that their classroom could have a door for open to the garden. They wanted to see the garden, and when they were out of the classroom, they wanted to be in the garden directly, without passing corridors and entrance doors. They wanted more accessibility to garden.

> Ayça: This classroom has a door and it is opened to the garden. Children go out to the garden directly.

The focus on the accessibility of the garden could be derived from children's wishes of flexibility in the curriculum. When they asked me about whether anyone who wanted to be in garden could go out anytime they wanted or not, I answered them that the garden was away from our classroom, so it was difficult for me to look after them. They actually wanted to be more engaged with the garden anytime they wanted.

Another point is that children also wanted other parts of the school in their classroom. During the photo interviews, Ekin shared her ideas about the sink in the classroom.

> Ekin: I would like to have a sink in my ideal classroom.

Also, Ayça drew a door made of glass for her classroom.

> Ayça: There is a door made of glass here so we can see inside the classroom.

All these above could mean that they liked being in the classroom, and they wanted to engage all time in the classroom. Toilets and washing their hands places were out of the classroom. They wanted to have these facilities in their classroom. They wanted full accessibility in their classroom.

In the three-dimensional classroom map making, children designed three pipes connected with each other, which provided accessibility to the other parts of the class.

> Yaman: There are three pipes. One of them to pool, the other is opened to toys, and the last one to grass.

Children also expressed their wish to accessibility to other classes in an emotional way. Our neighbor classroom was expressed as fellow class for them. In the drawing activity, Okan drew many children to his classroom.

> Researcher. Who are they?
> Okan: This is you; this is Fatma teacher. These are two classes. They are fellows' classes.
> Researcher: What does fellow class mean?
> Okan: It means being brothers and sisters. It is a good thing.
> Researcher: What they do?
> Okan: They play together. This is both class and garden. These children can go out to garden anytime they want. Look, 4 of them here (classroom), 4 of them are in garden.

Fellow class idea was repeated other parts of projects also. Physical accessibility transformed to emotional accessibility. Children wanted to use this physical accessibility by being together in the social-emotional spaces.

4.2.3.6 Usage of physical spaces in the ideal classroom day

Usages of physical classroom spaces showed some changes. Although children continued to use play centers and tables in the same way as existing classroom, there were new spaces that children were active than in existing classroom. These spaces

were teacher seat, computer table, under the table and table, corridor. It was interesting that these spaces were restricted and ruled spaces in existing classroom.

Teacher seat was used by teacher in the existing classroom mostly. Children had many conflicts over teacher seat. Children made list for siting in the teacher seat. According to list, children were using it at meal times. Children played games with it sometimes. They were sitting on it and other children were turning it.

Corridor was a place that was restricted to usage of children anytime they wanted in the existing classroom. Children used corridor as an important playground in the ideal classroom day. Sometimes children only played in the corridor. However, most of the time, they used space for corridor to block center in corner of the classroom. They run at that place in their games. After, we built secret place, they started to run between corridor and secret place.

> "Ayhan, Yaman, Barış and Okan use between corridor and block center for running."

Table was used for doing activities and lunch mostly. These times were mostly teacher-centered times. Thus, in ideal classroom day, they showed differences in the usages of this places. They sometimes were used under the table in designing their activities. In the seventh week of ideal classroom day, they were using under tables when they design their factories. Moreover, they separated a table for their activities, and one table for lunch. In the morning, they used one table to make hands-on activities. When breakfast time came, Arda offered that we can eat on one table, their activities could stay in another table. In the breakfast time, children were very close to each other on the table. However, they were not complained about it.

All spaces in the classroom were used actively in the ideal classroom day. From the beginning to end of the ideal classroom day, there were change through

equal usage of spaces in the classroom. In the first days, they were using the play centers more likely, then with time, they started use other spaces too equally.

> "Ekin drawing in one table. Ayça cut plastic cups in the same table. Arda is working with recycling materials. Barış and Ayhan are designing factory under the table. Okan, Miray, Esma are playing with play-book on the other table." (Eighth day, Field notes)

4.2.3.7 Changes in space

Children wanted to make some changes in the classroom. Some changes had to stay in children's plans only. Because, there were immobility of things in the classroom. Children offered to make changes about centers. They wanted to change places of housing center and block centers in one row and did not want to them to be opposed. They could think that in order to change toys between centers, it would be easy for them.

Children changed the place of table in the classroom. They brought table to the middle of the classroom. The other important change in our classroom was building a secret place to our classroom. Children designed many secret places for their ideal classroom. When we found big enough cartoon for it, we built one. Children used there for hiding, secret space and plays in the housing center.

4.3 The process of the project

Ideal classroom day study brought many differences and awareness to our existing classroom community. Thought out process, I questioned about our existing classroom community and my educational philosophy and practices in the classroom.

I subcategorized changes during process as children participation, existing classroom community and my role as teacher.

4.3.1 Changes in children's participation

Children's participation to ideal classroom showed changes. All children showed participation to ideal classroom day in their own ways. Children were more active in the playground at the beginning of the study.

> "There are fixed routines in the center. There are fixated time for lunch and rest time. Children have space to be active between these time frames. Children change the circle time to play time. Children show full active participation in play" (Second day, Reflective Journal)

Children were less active in the activity planning at the beginning of the study. With time, children started to be active participant in designing and planning things that they were curious about. These planning were based on hands-on learning activities and active learning activities.

> "Children were participating to ideal classroom day planning to play. However, now children's practices have started to change. They asking to make search on their interest. For example, this week they were curious about factories. We searched and created a factory with them. This can have two reason. Children may started feel more valuable and children can feel more secure environment to express their interest. Other reason can be that children can feel more active individual in the activity space like they did in play space. Children are free in the play space. However, activity space is more adult centered. The destruction of this perception can be the reason that children are more active participants in the learning of their interest with teacher." (Seventh day, Reflective Journal)

Children were active participant in decision making process of ideal classroom community. Even if children were active participant in decision making process of existing classroom community, there were a full participation in the ideal classroom day. However, they showed changes in perception of decision making. At first days, I noticed that they did not aware of what is things that decide in daily life at home

and school. At the process of study, they developed their awareness of decision making.

> "Children use "I decide" sentence more. After I noticed their lack of awareness of decision-making process, we did some conversations on it from their daily decisions. That helps children to use this sentence more and in a meaningful way." (Seventh day, Reflective Journal)

Children assessed their participations in the ideal classroom in the ideal classroom assessment meeting that we carried out at the end of the ideal classroom day. It was very obvious that they showed changes in expressing and assessing their ideal classroom day week by week. They gradually expressed their views of ideal classroom day assessment with more detail.

In the first day of assessment meeting, Okan did not want to attend to talk in the assessment meeting. However, in tenth day of assessment meeting;

> Okan: It was good to be in a classroom without teacher. I had faced with little problem. There were things that made me sad. I solved them by doing solution meeting.

Children started to assess their days by saying problems that face with and how they solved them. In the beginning of the study, they mostly mentioned about their problems that they face with. However, they were mostly complaining about the problem. Then, in time they were expressing their solutions they try to solve.

In children's assessments of their participation to ideal classroom day, they expressed about how their plans went and expressed their pleasant emotion about their day. It was significant that children's activities were very different from each other. Their different practices created a diverse classroom community with meeting children's different interest and needs.

4.3.2 Changes in existing classroom community

In the existing classroom day, classroom rules and order affected from process. I noticed that there were many unnecessary restrictions for children. For example, after these processes, we decided to bring toys from home every day. Bringing toy made children very happy. The second one was in planning time, children had right to change toys between centers and they had right to change their centers without waiting 5 minutes.

I changed the usage of classroom boards. I hung emotion board to size of children for their active using. Children active used boards to tell their emotions by hanging their pins. Also, children were free to take toys out of garden by asking other classes in the garden. they were using corridor actively in our existing classroom, this also continued as like that.

I decided to make more classroom activities together such as picnic and pajama party and trips.

In the curriculum, I was more likely interested in children agenda and their curiosities to engage them to curriculum. I was asking children about their curiosities before writing my weekly plan. After ideal classroom day study, I decided to do it more systematically. I asked children before a week about their curiosities. Then I wrote weekly plan. By this way, children became active participant in writing weekly plans.

We designed a secret place in our classroom during ideal classroom day study. Secret place stayed after the study and it would be through at the end of the semester. I understood that children were in need of secret place to construct their own worlds out of adults.

4.3.3 Changes in my role as teacher

Firstly, I noticed that teacher need to be very flexible. The flexibility was for two-way, flexibility about curriculum and flexibility of classroom rules and order. Teacher needed to change based on children's interest and agenda during the day. The flexibility of teacher created more child-centered atmosphere and increased children participation in the classroom community.

As a teacher, I noticed my role of guidance and preparation in the classroom. In research process, children were contributing actively to classroom curriculum by their own interests. I was guiding them about their questions and I prepared the learning environment according to their needs.

Teacher's perception of child was very crucial in the classroom community. My perception for children has changed considerably during this study. In theory, I was seen children as active individual in their own lives. However, in practice I did not give them many spaces for being active individual. I had doubt about their practices and ideas to trust in creating of curriculum. However, I experienced their power and competence during the period. I started to use their ideas more likely in planning curriculum of the classroom.

Secondly, I noticed that teacher needed to stimulate children's awareness of decision making and participation rights. Actually, it needed to be for children's all rights. In the process, children were unaware of their participation of decision-making process in the existing classroom. With emphasizing on their decision-making process in the ideal classroom day, children started to be aware that there were things that children decide.

Thirdly, listening to children in only one way was not effective in the teacher-children relationship. I noticed that there were many things that I was not aware of

the existing classroom. There were many ideas and critics of children about their environment. However, I heard their different voices in the study. I was supposed to listen to them. I only listened to them in one way. They showed their voices in different ways with pictures, touring, their practices, plays, usages of place. Moreover, I noticed many things about their ideas from my observations and reflective journals. I understood the importance of observations and reflective journals in the classroom with practice.

Lastly, I started to give more responsibility to children in the classroom. I noticed that children love to take responsibility about things in the classroom. Children had responsibilities of cleaning the ground of the classroom after activities. Children brought sweeper and started to clean around. They had many responsibilities about self-care. I started to extent their responsibilities with classroom works.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The main aim of the present study was to investigate children's perspectives of their existing and ideal classroom community as well as their practices and ideas for possible changes and rearrangements through children's active involvement in the research process as co-researchers. In order to construct their ideal classroom community better, children were supported with child-centered activities. The main questions were children's construction of their existing and ideal classroom community and children's implications for the classroom community from their perspectives for educators in creating a child-centered classroom community.

The present study provided many benefits to my perspective in childhood and classroom community perception. My academic background and field experiences as a teacher has enhanced my perspective on how to build a classroom community in early childhood education. Therefore, this particular study has taught me to recognize different views. Children's perspectives about the classroom community has broadened my knowledge and experiences in the field with a focus on different factors in a classroom community. In order to reflect my experiences and knowledge about the study efficiently, I discussed my findings in four parts: children as co-researchers, children's construction of existing classroom community, children's perspectives and practices about ideal classroom community, and children's implications about classroom community.

5.1 Children as co-researchers

The major contribution of this study to the field is the involvement of children as co-researchers to the research process by engaging them in significant and meaningful participation and giving them a voice about their classroom community in an effective way. This finding is consistent with the existing research which highlights that children decide on the methods of research confidently and effectively starting even at the age of five by cooperating with an adult researcher (Lundy et al., 2011). Therefore, it might be said that children are capable of being critical thinkers of their environment while working as co-researchers with an adult.

As discussed above, children are able to contribute to the research process effectively by making their voices heard, attending the decision-making process, and taking responsibility and initiation. In order to achieve this effective process together with children, the topic of this research plays a significant role in attracting children's attention and in internalizing and possessing the research process. In this study, the ideal classroom community concept received great attention from children in the course of pursuing and empowering the research process.

Throughout the research process, they showed differences in active engagement. Even though all children expressed interest and willingness to partake in the process in their own ways, they were more active in the data collection process. However, in the decision-making process, they needed more support and guidance about the data collection methods. Thus, it might be stated that children do not engage with all steps of the research process equally as co-researchers.

Although it is suggested that not all issues regarding children's decisions can be relevant or reasonable (Lundy et al., 2011), in this study, children's whole involvement was relevant throughout the research. As found in the study of Murray

(2016), children can make valid decisions and interpretations based on the evidence in their environments. Also, in this research, children made their own decisions about their ideal classroom community as a co-researcher. Therefore, all processes were meaningful for children and teachers in the study.

Children as researchers increased research quality and provided enriched data in the present study. Jung (2015) supported the claim that child-centered methodology empowering children by encouraging their freedom and agency in the process produces more enriched and meaningful findings. Moreover, children as co-researchers enhances the quality of the outcomes by giving voice and practices to them (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2009).

The power imbalance between children and adults is a notable issue to discuss in the research process. If the study is based on a research with children, power issues require attention in order to give space to children's views and experiences in a respective way. Being co-researchers for children help to decrease power imbalances between children and adults. In this study, children were aware of the fact that the teacher was a researcher throughout the process of the ideal classroom day. Some observations include children's criticisms on the disruption of the usual sequence and practicing new implementations in ideal classroom day. Therefore, children's engagement of co-researchers decreased power imbalances between children and adults by empowering children's active involvement as an active decision maker in the research process. Power issues were discussed in Lundy et al.'s (2011) study with children as co-researchers in which they suggested that children's ideas and views needed to be listened respectfully. However, in the implementation of this idea, careful consideration is required from the adult researcher on whether it is the best approach to implement or not. This study also

supports this claim by discussing the process with children about their decisions and practices of the ideal classroom whether it is the best implementation of them for their good or not.

Another important part is that children as co-researchers needed to be seen as respected researchers by adult researchers. Adult researcher's perception of children as the right holder (United Nations, 2009) and co-constructor of society (Dalhberg, Moss, & Pence, 2013) provides more opportunities and construction for children as co-researchers methodology. Therefore, children's perspectives and experiences are taken more seriously and respectfully. Although this study was conducted for academic reasons, being a teacher in this classroom community and having academic education background on children's rights allowed me to take children's perspectives more seriously. The ignorance of children's views was not possible for me in my relationship with children in my own existing classroom community in the first place. Therefore, adults' perception of childhood has an impact on the effectiveness of children as co-researcher studies.

In research with children, participatory techniques need to be fun and attractive for children's interests and developmental levels (Kinash & Hoffman, 2008). The present study revealed that the types of techniques in data collection are important in pursuing children's interest and engagement with the research process. Otherwise, children may show rejection and transform these activities based on their own ways. However, it is important to be careful about these activities not to be childish or too much adult-oriented (O'Kane, 2008). It is important to choose data collection techniques based on children's developmental level, interests, and familiarity (Lundy et al., 2011; Green, 2017). Additionally, there were many different activities used in data collection. Green (2017) suggested that using various

activities multiple times provide enriched representations of children's understanding. Therefore, the enrichment of data collection methods and appropriateness of these methods for children's developmental levels and interests are crucial in children as co-researchers methodology.

Children as co-researchers provides a space for children to participate in the classroom arrangements and the community relatively more. Children's active involvement with the decision-making processes that affect them provides several benefits for both children and the development of classroom community (United Nations, 2005). Therefore, both the researcher and teacher benefit from this process since they develop childhood perception in their minds in practice and expand their knowledge about children's participation practices in the classroom community. As Green (2017) suggested that adults need to support children in active participation to empower children's voice in the research process. Therefore, engaging children with the participation during the process provide more child-centered perspective and classroom community with the support and guidance of adults.

In conclusion, children as co-researchers in the studies provide many positive outcomes such as increasing research quality, giving a voice to children and empowering children to participate in their own way to their own environment. Moreover, my childhood perception undertakes a meaningful change in practice by highlighting children's capabilities. Furthermore, children as co-researchers challenge the power imbalances in studies by empowering children's active participation.

5.2 Children's perspectives on existing classroom

In this study, children's existing classroom construction was analyzed with the data of participatory activities. The data analysis revealed that children's constructions were mostly based on the likes and dislikes about their existing environment. This clearly demonstrated that children are critical thinkers of their own environment. As it is supported by critical pedagogy, it is stated that studies of children as co-researcher empowers children's critical thinking skills in their environments at any age (Mclaren, 2011; Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015). In the present study, children demonstrate their critical standpoints about power concept, community elements, classroom practices and routines, and physical spaces of existing classroom community.

The findings clearly demonstrate that in the existing classroom community, children provided data on power imbalances. These power imbalances are based on adult power, which teacher and school personnel in this case. Power imbalances for adults were related mostly with the decision-making process in the community. Some children questioned teacher power whereas some of them stayed away from this criticism. In that regard, escaping from criticism might be due to the presence of the teacher as a researcher in the study. In early childhood education, power relations are normalized in developmentally appropriate practices for young children (DAP) by being accepted by teachers as regimes of truth (Mac Naughton, 2005). Furthermore, in Foucaultian view, power relations are normalized rather than providing space for creating a community of practice (Cohen, 2008). Thus, the results show that power imbalances between teacher and children lead to a decrease in construction of sense of classroom community in children's perspectives.

On the other hand, Lash (2008) states that classroom routines increase togetherness in the community. However, children criticized these routines for being very boring. It could be because of the fact that these routines were conducted with the teacher's decision in most cases. Corsaro (2015) stated that children do not take information directly from the adult world, but rather they experience them in cultural routines. If these routines are under the control of adult power, children's feelings of togetherness in classroom routines might be affected negatively. As it can be seen, children's perspective is contradicted with studies conducted with teachers. Therefore, taking children's perspectives about classroom community is essential to enhance sense of community.

The findings demonstrate that being a teacher in the classroom do not mean that children's perspectives and understanding are necessarily known by the teacher. In this respect, I have learnt many things about children's constructions and understanding of the community thanks to this study. The findings are also supported by Mac Naughton (2005) who emphasized that teachers need to be effective in observing, documenting, and reflecting the classroom environment. Thus, in the classroom community, teachers need to understand children's point of view by critically observing and documenting children's actions and statements in order to develop a better understanding of their perspectives and create necessary changes.

In the present study, the findings revealed that children are aware of the classroom community element of collaboration among the members of the community. They gave value to the classroom community by pointing out to their positive social connections among peers and teacher. All children agreed that the classroom community needs to be collaborative in the play. They highlighted that their favorite place in the classroom community is the most social one. These

findings are in accordance with other studies as well (Farmer, et al., 2016; Kangas, 2010). Children view their community based on their relationships (Alaca, et al., 2017). It is worth saying that the perspectives of children and teachers are in line with each other regarding the importance of positive relationships in the classroom community. Moreover, it should be noted that classroom community is empowered by the following elements: time spent together and mutual interest among members of the classroom. As a consequence, collaboration in a classroom community is likely to increase with time, mutual interests, and social connections.

Children value being an active participant in the existing classroom community. Children want to be an active participant in their own lives and their own learning process in the classroom. Firstly, children's highlighted documents of active and real-life learning spaces demonstrated that, in the classroom community, children are active learners and participants in the classroom. However, it is worth to note that children's active participation in classroom practices are limited since they directed criticism about teacher's intervention to their play and practices. In the existing classroom, children are aware of their own spaces to act; however, it seems that children are not completely active and independent in their play time. Green (2017) stated that active participation is enhanced through valuing children individually. Therefore, it might be said that children feel valued in active learning spaces and take their own responsibility for their own lives in the classroom community to some extent and they want more spaces to be active.

In the existing classroom community, children feel valuable and respected as members of the classroom. This could be concluded from their ideas and criticisms about their own environments. Children also question the appropriateness of the physical and academic spaces for them. They highlighted and criticized

materials and places that are not suitable for their age and capabilities. Kincheloe (1997) stated that children are competent and critical thinkers of their own lives. Contrary to the traditional ideas of how children should be a member of classroom perspective (Wilkins, 2014), children as critical thinkers of their own lives provide insights into how early childhood education centers should be like from their own perspectives.

Democracy is an important element of a classroom community (Wisneski, 2007). Children pointed out that democracy is enhanced through being a partner in the decision-making process. Therefore, children criticize teacher power on decision-making process about classroom practices. Therefore, children are aware that they can participate more actively in decision-making process by challenging the existing conditions.

Children's emphasis on their personal space and family members can appertain to valuing the membership in the existing classroom community. As Whitinton and Mclnnes (2017) claims, sense of belonging brings about emotional connection to community. I also came to the realization that children focused on social-emotional spaces in order to express their emotions in the community so that they could establish strong emotional connections with the classroom community. Moreover, children recognized and appreciated the interaction with the teacher in this study. This finding is in accordance with the study of Botsoglou et al. (2019) which claimed that children value the emotional connection within the teacher in their community. Therefore, children feel close to their teacher by experiencing positive moments such as a smile or a hug from the teacher. To conclude, in the existing classroom, children tend to have meaningful experiences with regard to their feelings as a member of the classroom community.

Overall, children showed a critical perspective about their existing classroom community by addressing the issues of power imbalances, classroom routines, physical space, decision-making process, being an active participant, membership, and emotional connection. On the other hand, the perspectives of children present opportunities for teachers and researchers to question their role in throughout the research process and classroom practices with respect to the classroom community. Therefore, both teachers and researchers can develop their understanding of social and cultural context of the classroom community.

5.3 Children's perspectives and practices on ideal classroom community

The present study provides valuable insights into the understanding of children's ideal classroom community construction. It is evident that children enjoyed the process of ideal classroom building by captivating their imagination. It could also be concluded that children described and implemented their ideal classroom in a realistic manner. In that way, the process of ideal classroom building encouraged children's involvement in the classroom practices.

This study showed that children choose to depict themselves as the members of their ideal classroom community as active participants, responsible individuals and decision-makers in the classroom practices. Children also were acting in implementations of ideal classroom day based on their conceptualization of an active member. On one hand, these findings contradict the studies of teacher perspective which regards children as passive members in need of teacher's modeling and supervision (Whitington & Mclnnes, 2017). On the other hand, these results support the idea that children are competent meaning-makers of their own

lives (James & Prout, 1997). It can be noted that children see themselves as an active member while they also want to be seen as one by others, too.

Although children stated that they wanted to be active decision-makers in the classroom community in their own words, being an active decision-maker for children requires time and awareness of the teacher in the ideal classroom day in practice. The study suggests that children are not aware of their own competence in arriving at decisions about their own lives. Thus, teachers need to increase awareness among children by recognizing their decisions and giving more space to them during the decision-making process in the classroom community.

Another finding of this research revealed that although children mentioned the teaching role of the teacher in their answers, they did not engage with the teacher's teaching role in the ideal classroom day in practice. One possible reason behind this contradiction can be that children tend to have the traditional role of a teacher in their minds. As long as traditional learning environments continue to exist in educational settings, children may hold these thoughts for the rest of their lives. Therefore, traditional learning environments where teachers adopt the role of teaching need to change through encouragement of children's participation as also emphasized by Botsoglou et al. (2019).

The results also indicated that children expect their teacher be a playing partner and assistance provider in the classroom community. This notion is also supported by Botsoglou et al. (2019) as children want to interact with their teacher to a great extent. This expected interaction is not based on teaching but in playing and assisting children in making decisions together. Playing with the teacher can be important for many reasons such a decrease in power imbalance between children

and the teacher and facilitation of collaboration among the group members in case of a rule-based game.

Furthermore, the teacher’s role in assistance is related to children's incapability due to their physical and social-emotional development stage. Although children want to have full agency and responsibility in the early childhood classroom community, they are aware of their developmental capabilities and potential. Therefore, they might occasionally need some assistance from the teacher at some point.

Based on another result, children showed a tendency to attempt to reduce power inequalities via different strategies such as playing with the teacher and stating that the teacher was, and still is, a child. These strategies in the findings point out that children want to be equal to the teacher in the classroom community. On the other hand, if the teacher's role in playing and assisting is encouraged, it can render decrease in teacher’s role of monitoring the classroom. Therefore, the power imbalance among children may increase (Ryan, 2005; Kessler and Hauser, 2005). Children who face challenges in expressing themselves in the conflicts can be affected negatively. In order to balance the power relationship between teacher and children, especially among children, the teacher need to be an observer and a documenter to analyze the relationships and situations with children (Mac Naughton, 2005). Therefore, the circumstances necessitate the teacher’s balanced attitude behavior.

In this classroom, children showed interest in engagement with hands-on, real-life skills, and active learning activities in their early childhood education classroom community. They were also engaged in practicing with these kinds of activities. These activities have a central point for children since they feel as a

responsible and independent participant during the process. Children try to break teacher-centered learning spaces into child-centered learning spaces, which are based on their interest, independence and curiosity (Kincheloe, 1997). Moreover, children's views on learning are more process-, interest-, and curiosity-based rather than having fun without showing any effort in learning (Kangas, 2010). Children are aware of the fact that the learning requires an active process.

In the ideal preschool classroom community, children value the learning spaces that are out of routines and based on independence. This finding is contradicted by the study of Wasconselos and Walsh (2001), which claims that the rituals and routines empower a classroom community by promoting children's participation and engagement. However, children deconstructed the importance of rituals and routines in their ideal classroom community in the present study. It can be concluded that teachers create routines of the classroom community and children want to deconstruct adult power by rejecting the routines and rituals in their ideal classroom community.

Children value self-referencing in the classroom community with an emphasis on their personal materials and self-identity concepts. Kangas (2010) also found that children saw personal spaces as an important part of the classroom community. Therefore, it might be said that children want to ensure their membership in the community by making spaces personalized with their own works, toys, and childhood photos. Moreover, collaboration among families, teachers, administration, and children is an important element of community. Children show an awareness of the importance of their family members as part of the community.

In this study, centers in the classroom affect children's plays and friendship groups. Children construct some centers based on gender from their perspectives.

This finding can be supported by Corsaro (2015) who stated that children are the agents of the environment with their own experiences. Although these centers do not have a gender-based atmosphere, children are likely to construct these places with regard to their gender-based experiences. One possible reason behind could be that the teacher is not active or present in these centers. Based on critical theory, children's power increases in free play times (Ryan, 2005; Kessler and Hauser, 2005). The lack of teacher involvement and critical observation in these environments may lead to the emergence of traditional norms among children. Therefore, I propose that teacher's observation and engagement with children in all parts of the classroom need to increase in order to create a democratic and positive classroom community spaces.

The findings also suggest that children are aware of and value a sense of togetherness in the classroom community by expressing wishes to have group games, work and play with other classes, and collaborative activities in their ideal classroom. In implementation of their ideal classroom, children tended to be involved in collaborative activities. Moreover, they expressed their preference for play with same-gender friends in their statements but chose to play with friends from both genders in practice. Furthermore, it was interesting to see that children preferred to include children from different age groups to their ideal classroom community. It might be because children want to be socially active and act as co-constructors of society by working and playing with younger or older friends (Corsaro, 2005).

The data analysis revealed that children need social-emotional spaces in their classroom community in order to learn how to regulate their emotions. Children are aware of their emotions and need specific strategies to handle them. In the study, children used toys and places to regulate their emotions. However, in practice,

children did not create their own place for their social-emotional needs. The data indicates that children need the guidance of the teacher in creating these environments or the time spent for the study was not enough to create these environments. It might be concluded that creating a socio-emotional place in the classroom is tied to the power of the teacher (Kessler & Hauser, 2005). Therefore, children might need more time and engagement with ideal classroom days in order to activate their power in their space.

The study has revealed that solution meeting in the existing classroom community shifted to the ideal classroom community in terms of conceptualization and implementation. Solution meetings offered to raise children's voices for all parties in the community. However, some children who have dominant power criticized the solution meeting and offered to solve their conflicts on their own during the play. This finding supports that solution meeting is more likely to be under control of an adult since children who reject adult power and who are also powerful in the social playground do not want to participate in a solution meeting. As discussed in the study by Kessler and Hauser (2005), when children are free in the playground, they use power on each other. Therefore, power does not vanish when the teacher is absent in the community. Furthermore, power relationships sharpen among children in free play time. Therefore, it might be said that adult power is necessary in some cases within the classroom in order to foster democratic and positive classroom community.

The data analysis of the study has shown that children chose to construct their own child-centered classroom community although they experienced more conflicts at the beginning of the study than the existing classroom. Over time, the number of the conflicts dropped to the normal sequence of the existing classroom.

Moreover, in time, children experienced the leading role among their friends in solving conflicts by showing their construction of the teacher's leading role in existing classroom community. Children started to gain power and control over the conflict situations by helping and guiding their friends. Corsaro (2015) stated that children observe the adult world first and they reconstruct these processes from their own perspectives. Therefore, children constructed their classroom community experiences by offering strategies during conflict situations in the same way that the teacher offered in the existing classroom community. This evidence supports the claim that as adult power decreases, children's power and active participation in conflict resolutions increase.

In the process of building an ideal classroom community, children developed an understanding of the need for rules to be followed in the shared environments over time. This finding is along with Heinrich Joerdens (2014) study that involved children as co-researchers. Children focused on the importance of rules in the classroom community. However, in the current study, children do not only say this in their own words but also practice and construct this in the classroom community through collaborative creation. When children experienced these conflicts in the ideal community, they discussed and tried to find a rule together. However, it is worth noting that, in the rule building process, teacher's support and guidance is crucial and needed.

This study showed that children valued secret places that were defined as places outside of adult supervision in the classroom. There are different views on children's needs for secret places. The study of Botsoglou et al. (2019) showed that children need a secret place in order to stay off task and relax. Therefore, this study's findings support this claim. Moreover, children's views on building secret places

support Corsaro's study (2015) on the secondary adjustment notion that children adjust their power accordingly during the presence of dominant power of adults. In this study, children wanted to create a place where only children are active. Children constructed their own world in secret places by imagining to bring things that adults do not accept in the classroom community. However, in the implementation of an ideal classroom day, children built a secret place but did not act in accordance with the secondary adjustments. One possible reason behind this might be children were not under the influence of adult power in an ideal classroom day.

According to Kangas (2010), imaginary-oriented learning environments promote children's imagination and creativity. In this study, children pointed out they wanted to have fantastic classroom environments. The fantastic environment can include their heroes, cartoon characters, or imagined characters. Based on their statements, it might be said that imaginary environments help and empower children's developmental processes in their ideal classroom community. However, children's conceptualization of imaginary-oriented spaces was not applied to the practice of the ideal classroom day. This situation might have resulted from the fact that the time allocated for the research was limited and children had only one day to engage in the relevant activities.

The data analysis has revealed that children value the physical design of the preschool classroom. There were many suggestions of children about ideal classroom in terms of physical design aesthetics, durability, adequacy, and diversity of classroom design and materials. These suggestions are in line with the findings of Botsoglou and his colleagues' study (2019). However, there were little rearrangement of the physical environment in the ideal classroom in practice. It might have resulted from the fact that children needed more time to be active to

change the environment in practice or needed more awareness raised by the teacher to be informed about their capabilities in the ideal classroom community.

My theoretical understanding of childhood perception was challenged by and developed with the practical implementation of child-centered community building with children as co-researchers. This is supported by the findings of Alaca et al. (2017) since they revealed that the teacher's abilities and interests in children participation improve with participatory processes. In order to build a democratic and positive classroom community based on their perspective, sufficient time and practice are needed for achievement. Moreover, the importance of reflective thinking to develop skills and capabilities of having democratic and positive classroom community was recognized by both teachers and children as members of the classroom community. Lastly, I noticed that there are many ways for children to express themselves. Rinaldi (2006) also emphasized multiple ways of listening to children (Rinaldi, 2006). Being aware of multiple ways of listening and consciously being active in listening to and observing children promote teacher's understanding and perception of children in the classroom community.

In conclusion, children are aware of the community elements in building their ideal classroom. Children emphasized being an active participant in all aspects of the classroom. They developed their ideas by collaborating with the teacher in a democratic decision-making process. The ideal classroom community has elements of personal and secret spaces to empower children's membership and belonging to the community. Moreover, children wanted to establish truthful and positive relationships with others in their community. The ideal classroom community of children showed that children want equality among the members of the community.

5.4 Children's suggestions for classroom community

The present study offers implications for children's ideal classroom community from children's own perspectives. Children focused on many different parts of the classroom community, which were categorized under three themes. Children offered suggestions for formal, informal, and physical spaces of the classroom community.

In the formal spaces of the classroom community, children described and constructed learning and teaching concepts. In these spaces, children's suggestions emphasized being an active member in formal spaces by balancing power relations. I propose that it is necessary to increase children's role of active participant in the classroom community by encouraging children's active behaviors in order to raise awareness among children. Children and teachers can equally take the role of the decision-maker in classroom practices. For example, all participants including the teacher can have one vote right. In the present study, children and I arranged meetings to take decisions about the classroom practices by discussing equally among classroom members. Decision-making meetings can be arranged in the classroom.

As discussed above, children focused on active and real learning in their environments. I suggest that, instead of explicit teaching, the classroom environment can be arranged based on children's interests and curiosity. The discovery center can take place in a classroom that is arranged according to the theme of the classroom. Based on their curiosity and interests, trips can take place to involve children in real life learning spaces.

Children suggested that teachers needed to change the traditional role in the classroom community. In their opinion, a teacher needs to assist children with the things of which children are developmentally incapable. Moreover, a teacher needs

to be a guide and supporter for them in the community to appreciate their interests and curiosity. Furthermore, a teacher needs to be a playing partner for children. Additionally, a teacher needs to be careful about intervention in children's play and peer culture. Children do not want to have a teacher intervention in their peer culture. To conclude, a teacher can have role of critical observer and documenter of the classroom community.

In building rules for the classroom community, children's perspectives show that rules need to be built in alliance with children's will. Otherwise, children do not internalize the classroom community rules. This might be difficult for all members of the classroom community. Therefore, as children suggested, classroom rules can be built collaboratively in the process.

Children have criticisms of the routines in the classroom community. Thus, I suggest that routines are an important part of the classroom community in order to give voice to children in the routines for that purpose, practitioners can create routines in which children take an active role during the process. Routines can be performed by children instead of the teacher. The nature of the routines can also change over time. For example, in our classroom, children are sometimes paired with their friends to discuss their agenda and emotions. This change makes the routine more flexible and attractive to children. Moreover, children and teachers can think about what kind of changes they can make about the routines together. In this way, children could have a chance to become more active participants in their own learning spaces.

Secondly, children offered suggestions for informal spaces of classroom community such as personal spaces, play centers, peers, secret spaces, and imaginary-oriented spaces. Firstly, children value personal spaces in the classroom

community. I propose that special attention can be given to children's own ideas and materials in the classroom environment. Children can have specific days to bring special materials to the classroom. The classroom can be designed for children's own belongings or family belongings. Family members can be an active member of the classroom community. Children's names and works can be displayed with special attention. For example, in our classroom children have specific places to exhibit their works or put their toys that they bring from home.

In children's construction of the center, children would construct some center with a specific gender. In order to deconstruct this belief, classroom centers can have more open-ended materials. Other than that, block center and housing center can be closer to each other to create a space for children to combine their games with friendship making and deconstructing gender stereotypes and . On the other hand, teachers can be more active in these areas to deconstruct gender-based dominant power dynamics.

Children had different suggestions for their peer environment. Firstly, children value being with different age groups. I suggest that practitioners can invite different age groups to the classroom to create a platform to involve their games and explore different age groups. Secondly, children value being together in the classroom. They prefer to have group activities in their community. I propose that activities based on togetherness should increase in number such as classroom special parties, outdoor activities, all family participation activities, etc.

Children suggested having secret spaces in the ideal classroom. Thus, teachers and children can create secret spaces with construction paper or fabric to the center of the classroom. Children can use this place whenever they want. Children can construct these places based on their own interests. Furthermore, as discussed

before, children want to have an imaginary-oriented classroom environment. Children suggested that their fantasy characters can be included in classroom activities and decoration of the classroom environment.

In the present study, children focused on social-emotional spaces. They suggested that children are in need of social-emotional spaces in the classroom in order to have a place to regulate their emotions. These places need to have soft materials and objects that children can use to relax. These places might be constructed collaboratively with children in the classrooms. Teachers can use some social-emotional strategies with visuals in these centers. Children might use these places whenever they want and need.

When it comes to the physical features, children value having an aesthetic durable physical environment. The classroom can be decorated together with children according to their ideas. Moreover, the materials of the classroom needed to be diverse and adequate considering the number of children. However, all classrooms do not have the opportunity to handle all of children's suggestions. However, teachers and children can work together to cope with these difficulties with other materials such as natural materials. Furthermore, they also can create home-like classroom environments, which include pillows, carpets, and real home materials etc.

Overall, the present study puts forward practical suggestions for building a preschool classroom community from children's perspectives as co-researchers in the project. Children in this research suggested that they wanted to be valued and engaged in all practices of classroom. Therefore, these suggestions need to be considered critically for practitioners and professionals in the preschool education field on the basis of promising findings presented in this paper.

5.5 Discussing findings based on Freire's critical education framework

The study's findings have similar connections with Freire's banking model of education. Freire defined banking model of education as transition of knowledge from one person who holds it, to another who absorb it (Freire, 2013). Learning is supposed to be transition of knowledge rather than act of learning. Teacher stands as an authority in holding knowledge to which for students who are empty vessels and waiting to be filled. Freire offered problem posing model instead of banking model of education. This study tries to deconstruct Freire's banking model of education to more child-centered education as similar with Freire's problem posing model. These similarities are based on Freire's concept of dialogue, democratic relations, voice, creativity and imagination.

The findings revealed that children as co-researchers show relevant participation in the ideal classroom community. Contrary to the banking model of education, the preschool's hidden curriculum includes children as active participants in the existing classroom community. It might be noted that ideal classroom day increased children's existing active participation. Therefore, children were relevant and showed more engagement to ideal classroom. However, even if existing classroom has dynamics of child-centered education to some extent, ideal classroom presents many opportunities to children to be more active and encourage children's passivity with many ways.

The findings present that teacher-child interaction need to be balanced on the concept of participation, listening and power in the ideal classroom construction of children. In the banking model of education, teachers are the authority figures and, in the place, to teach while children are in the passive role. Even if this preschool

support balanced teacher-child relationship, children showed critical standpoint on more balanced teacher-child relationships. In line with Freire's (2013) problem posing model, children wanted to see teacher in the role of both learner and teacher in a balanced way. On the other hand, children offered that teacher needed to listen children's voice. This finding also coheres with Freire's education model by pointing out dialogue based on relationship between teacher and children. Moreover, Freire's suggested that students should also engage in both role of teaching and learning. In line with this claim, in the ideal classroom children took both role in a balanced way.

Children were active, independent and responsible decision-makers of the ideal classroom through research process. Contrary to Freire's banking model where children are in the role of passive receptors of the knowledge, the children in this study were critical thinkers and actors in the classroom. Ideal classroom day provided children opportunities to be active participants by running their imagination stimulating their creativity in the process. Freire (2013) argues for the idea that learning should be an invention and re-invention process for both teacher and children. Therefore, ideal classroom day paves the way for child-centered education model. On the other hand, in the Freire's banking model of education, there is disconnection between learners and reality. The disconnection decreases the value of knowledge in the perspective of student (Freire, 2013). However, the findings of this study revealed that connecting with reality as active participants increased level of engagement, motivation, sense of self and ability to work collaboratively.

The findings revealed that even if children continue to carry solution meeting in the existing classroom to ideal classroom community, some children who act upon other children both expressed and implemented to deal with problems in the play rather than solution meeting. Contrary to the banking model of education, existing

classroom had dynamics to encourage passivity of oppressed children. Therefore, children in the ideal classroom continued to use these dynamics to raise their voice and noticed their sense of self in the community.

Overall, ideal classroom and existing classroom context of this study have some similar connections with Freire's critical education framework based on concepts of dialogue, voice, creativity, imagination and being critical. Findings revealed that ideal classroom community increased the level of engagement, motivation, and recognition of creative ability and sense of self. On the other hand, relevant contribution of children increased with balanced dynamics of child-centered education practices between ideal and existing classroom community.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study interpreted children's conceptualizations of existing and ideal classroom community and their construction of their own ideal classroom community in implementation by including children as co-researchers in the research process. Firstly, children were competent and interested in the process as co-researchers by partaking in all steps of the research. Children as co-researchers in the study was interpreted by the factors of power relations, adult researcher perception, and quality of research. Since there is little emphasis on children as co-researchers in Turkey's context, this study might have a lot to offer to the topic and contribute to the field.

Children suggested critical perspectives on their existing classroom community. These critical perspectives were based on adults' power spaces in the classroom community. Moreover, this study's interpretation shows that there are both differences and similarities between children's perspectives and an adult's perspective about the classroom community elements. Therefore, the study might contribute to field in terms of inclusion of children's voices in the classroom community as a member of the community. Therefore, this study offers practical suggestions for a classroom community from critical perspectives of children.

Children both conceptualized and implemented their ideal classroom community in the study. Children carried out meaning-making activities for them from existing classroom to ideal classroom community in terms of both conception and practice. Moreover, there were compatibilities and contradictions between ideal classroom community conceptualizations with child-participatory activities and their implementations as co-researchers. These compatibilities were things that children

were able to do in practice whereas the contradictions were in need of time and more practical engagements. Consequently, the study offers practical suggestions and information about classroom community building process with children.

6.1 Significance and implications of the study

This study is significant for early childhood education research. Firstly, the research can contribute to children as co-researchers methodology for relevant studies in studies in Turkey, considering children at the age of five. It is crucial as a comprehensive study in implementation of the mosaic approach and children as co-researchers in a three-month process. The study is an ethnographic case study analyzing the construction and deconstruction of classroom culture. Furthermore, it adds to the early childhood education field by suggesting practical and theoretical ideas for educators and practitioners from children's perspective. Additionally, another significance denotes the inclusion of the teacher as a researcher in the research process and reflective journals.

The study has many implications for early childhood education and research. Firstly, the study contributes to the work of practitioners by raising their awareness in understanding childhood perception in theory and practical field. It also might benefit the process of building a child-centered classroom community within practical and conceptual framework. Secondly, the study contributes to researchers by giving practical implementations of children as co-researchers, five years old. Children take an active role in all processes of research. Thirdly, the study has implications for policy-makers to include children’s voices and active participation in research and early childhood education community building.

6.2 Limitations of the study

Although the results of the study provide meaningful and practical insights into preschool classroom community and children as co-researchers methodology, the present study has some methodological and practical limitations. Firstly, the duration of the study were three months. At least, six months might be better in constructing an ideal community for the purposes of this study. However, time constraints due to my graduate studies allowed me to conduct the research only in three months.

Moreover, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to the entire population. Ideal classroom construction in the present study is these children's construction. Moreover, even though there were multiple activities to take children's insights, it may be possible that children's true insights about existing or ideal classroom were not fully included.

Furthermore, there are only children's views about ideal classroom day in the study. We do not hear the voices of children in home environment. Families can be included to take children's reflections about ideal classroom shared in home environment. In addition, the voice of other parties at school was not present, either. Since this study was an exploratory study on children as co-researchers, children's voices in home environment can be examined in the future research.

Children in this study have received preschool education for almost four years. Therefore, these children had experience and domination in classroom practices. Having four years of preschool education experience is rare in Turkey's context. Thus, this issue had positive and negative impacts on research results. Even though children were active in expressing their views on classroom community, this case prevents the generalizability of the findings to others.

6.3 Directions for further research

The study was carried out with children as co-researchers, who are five years old, lasting for three months in ideal classroom construction. For further research, there are some directions. Firstly, the research process of the study can be extended to more than three months. It is evident that more time in ethnographic studies enrich the findings and improve the culture of the classroom. Children younger than five years old can be included in the study in order to find out children as co-researchers and ideal classroom construction in different age groups. Secondly, the study can be conducted with the same children in different levels of school such as primary or secondary so that different findings can be found in community construction and co-researcher method.

Furthermore, the study was carried out in a public university preschool center, which serves middle-class families. Studies can be conducted in different school settings whether private or public in order to find out children's perspectives of classroom community in populations with different socioeconomic backgrounds. Another point to consider is that the number of children was eight in the study. It is a relatively a small sample compared to existing center-based early childhood education settings in Turkey. The study can be conducted in different classrooms larger samples of children.

The study partially used the mosaic approach and children's suggestions in data collection. Other parts of the mosaic approach can be used in data collection by including other members of the school community; families, administrators, other teachers, and other children in the school. On the other hand, different ways can be found in listening to children’s voices in the community and as co-researchers by asking directly to children.

In the study, the teacher was a participant researcher in the classroom community. For further research, the researcher can work with another teacher so that the teacher could have only one role in the process in order to raise the effectiveness of teacher's role in the process of empowering children's voices and practices in the classroom community with children.

"The ideal" concept triggered children's imagination and promoted their attention to research process. This concept can be expanded to other societies' dimensions such as ideal home and city. Since ideal classroom day as a part of an exploratory research, this research can be analyzed in more detail and can be used to design an intervention program in education field.

6.4 Concluding remarks

Children wanted to continue to have "ideal classroom day" throughout the year. However, there were intern teacher program of the preschool. Therefore, it was difficult to continue to have an ideal classroom day. Children and I decided to have an ideal classroom day in the summer term, but after four months, I forgot about the ideal classroom day. It was children who reminded me about my promise to have an ideal classroom day again during the summer term. We continued to have an ideal classroom day through summer, which showed that children were excited to have an ideal classroom day. Overall, ideal classroom day provides children with an atmosphere where they feel that they are valuable citizens and decision-makers for their community.

It would be beneficial for teachers, policy makers, and administrators in the education field to have an ideal classroom day in their schools to witness and examine children's construction of their own environment. This process clearly informs us about children's voices and agency, which are essential parts of the community.

APPENDIX A

ETHICS COMMITTEE REPORT

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
İnsan Araştırmaları Kurumsal Değerlendirme Alt Kurulu

Sayı: 2018-36

19 Eylül 2018

Tuğba Aladağ
Temel Eğitim Bölümü

Sayın Araştırmacı,

"Okul Öncesi Çocuklarının İdeal Sınıf Toplumu Paydaşları Üzerine Görüşleri" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığınız SBB-EAK 2018/39 sayılı başvuru İNAREK/SBB Etik Alt Kurulu tarafından 19 Eylül 2018 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Doç. Dr. Mehmet Yiğit Gürdal

Doç. Dr. Gül Sosay

Doç. Dr. Ebru Kaya

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi İnci Ayhan

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Nur Yeniçeri

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Institution: Boğaziçi University

Project Title: Children's perspectives on the ideal classroom community

Thesis Adviser: Assist. Prof. Ersoy Erdemir

E-mail: ersoy.erdemir@boun.edu.tr

Tel:

Researcher: Tuğba Aladağ

E-mail: tugba.aladag@boun.edu.tr

Tel:

Dear Parent,

This research is being conducted by Tuğba Aladağ who studies at the Boğaziçi University Primary Education Graduate Program. We are inviting your child to participate in a research study entitled Children's Perspectives on the Ideal Classroom Community.

The research procedures include child participatory activities, observation and informal interviews with children. If you agree, interviews will take 15 minutes to complete. We would like to audiotape and videotape during the study. Child participatory activities are drawing, photo-taking, touring, magic carpet, creative art activities, mapping. Duration of study will be three months.

We plan to publish the results of this study but will not include any information that would identify you, your child or family member. To keep this information safe, the audiotape and videotape of your child will be placed in a locked file in researcher's private computer until a written transcription has been created. As soon as this process is complete, the tapes will be destroyed. To protect confidentiality, your child's real name will not be used in the publications.

Your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. Your children's consent will be taken verbally. Your child may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, your child may stop participating at any time.

If you have any questions, concerns, please contact with Boğaziçi University Primary Education Department Assist. Prof Ersoy Erdemir (Tel: 02123594558, Address: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, 34342 Bebek, İstanbul) or with Tuğba Aladağ (Tel: 5425918393). You can ask your research participant rights to Ethics Committee for Master and PhD Theses in Social Sciences and Humanities (Boğaziçi University SOBETIK).

If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.

Participant name:.....

Signature:.....

Adress (Tel no):.....

.....

Date :...../...../.....

Participant’s parent name:.....

Signature:.....

Date:...../...../.....

Researcher name:.....

Signature:.....

Date:...../...../.....

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (TURKISH)

Tez Çalışmasının Bağlı Olduğu Kurum: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

Tez Çalışmasının Adı: Okul Öncesi Çocuklarının İdeal Sınıf Toplumu Paydaşları Üzerine Görüşleri

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Ersoy Erdemir

E-mail adresi: ersoy.erdemir@boun.edu.tr

Telefonu:

Tez Öğrencisinin Adı: Tuğba Aladağ

E-mail adresi: tugba.aladag@boun.edu.tr

Telefonu:

Sayın Veli,

"*Okul Öncesi Çocuklarının İdeal Sınıf Toplumu Paydaşları Üzerine Görüşleri*" isimli erken çocukluk eğitimi araştırması için Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Temel Eğitim Ana Bilim Dalı Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi Programı Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi Tuğba Aladağ tarafından …… yürütülecek olan proje çalışmasına kızınızın/oğlunuzun katılması istenmektedir.

Bu çalışmada çocuğunuzun eğitimsel etkinlikler, öğretmen, arkadaşlar, yardımcı personel, fiziksel çevre, uygulanan müfredat ve oyunlar gibi sınıf toplum bileşenlerini/paydaşlarını nasıl gördüğü ve nasıl olmasını istediği araştırılmaktadır. Bunun için de çalışmaya katılmayı kabul eden çocuklarla bir proje yapılacaktır.

Araştırma projesi üç ay sürmesi öngörülmektedir. Her hafta haftada bir gün olmak üzere 20-30 dakikalık; kavram haritası oluşturma, okul çevresini gezme ve fotoğraflama, sihirli halı çalışması yapma, çizim yapma, kil çalışması, grup tartışması ve üç boyutlu harita yapma etkinlilerini sırayla içermektedir. Çalışmanın diğer adımında ise her yapılan etkinlikten sonra çocuklar ile sınıfta formal olmayan sohbet ve grup tartışması ortamında çocuk görüşmeleri yapılacaktır. Bu etkinlikler esnasında çocukların fikirlerini almak için video ve ses kaydı alınacaktır. Bu etkinlikler ve grup tartışmaları ile çocukların ideal okul öncesi toplumu bileşenleri üzerine kendilerini ifade etmelerini teşvik etmek amaçlanmaktadır. Katılımcı çocukların görüşmelerde her zaman için herhangi bir konu ile ilgili olarak soru sorma ve itiraz etme hakları olacaktır. Her çocuk kendisi veya siz istediğiniz anda çalışmayı bırakma özgürlüğüne sahip olacaktır. Görüşmelere katılan tüm çocukların ve ailelerin bilgileri gizli tutularak hiçbir kişi, kurum ya da kuruluş ile paylaşılmayacaktır.

Araştırmaya yalnızca velisinin izni olan istekli çocukların dâhil olabileceğini belirtir, çocuğunuzun katılımı için izninizi rica ederim.

Bu araştırma bilimsel bir amaçla yapılmaktadır ve katılımcı bilgilerinin gizliliği esas tutulmaktadır. Video ve ses kayıtlarında çocukların ismi yerine bir

numara kullanılacaktır. Video ve ses kayıtları araştırma projemiz süresince araştırmacının özel şifreli bilgisayarında muhafaza edilip araştırma sona erdiğinde silineceklerdir. Bu araştırmaya katılmak tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Katıldığınız takdirde çalışmanın herhangi bir aşamasında herhangi bir sebep göstermeden onayınızı çekmek hakkına da sahipsiniz. Bu araştırmada çocukları akademik ya da farklı bir alan dâhilinde değerlendirmeye tabii tutmadığımızı belirtmek isteriz. Araştırma projesi hakkında ek bilgi almak istediğiniz takdirde lütfen Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Temel Eğitim Bölümü Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Ersoy Erdemir ile temasa geçiniz (Telefon: 02123594558, Adres: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, 34342 Bebek, İstanbul).

Bu formu imzalamadan önce, çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız varsa lütfen sorun. Daha sonra sorunuz olursa, Tuğba Aladağ (Telefon: ……) sorabilirsiniz. Araştırmayla ilgili haklarınız konusunda yerel etik kurullarına (Boğaziçi Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Alt Kurulu (INAREK) veya INAREK/SBB Etik Alt Kurulu) da danışabilirsiniz.

Bir örneğini almış olduğum Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formu' nu okumuş ve anlamış bulunuyorum. Çocuğun bu araştırmaya katılmasında herhangi bir engel görmemekteyim.

Ben, (katılımcının adı) ....., yukarıdaki metni okudum ve çocuğumun katılması istenen çalışmanın kapsamını ve amacını, gönüllü olarak üzerime düşen sorumlulukları tamamen anladım. Çalışma hakkında soru sorma imkânı buldum. Bu çalışmayı çocuğum istediği zaman ve herhangi bir neden belirtmek zorunda kalmadan bırakabileceğini ve bıraktığı takdirde herhangi bir olumsuzluk ile karşılaşmayacağını anladım.

Formun bir örneğini aldım / almak istemiyorum (bu durumda araştırmacı bu kopyayı saklar).

Katılımcının Adı-
Soyadı:.....

İmzası:.....

Adresi (varsa Telefon No, Faks No):.....

.....

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl):...../...../.....

Varsa Katılımcının Vasisinin Adı-
Soyadı:.....

İmzası:.....

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl):...../...../.....

Araştırmacının Adı-Soyadı:.....

İmzası:.....

Tarih (gün/ay/yıl):...../...../.....

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