



**A Comparison of English and Turkish Early  
Years/Kindergarten Teachers' Understandings of and  
Practices in Outdoor Activities**

by

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A thesis submitted to Plymouth University  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

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## Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree either at Plymouth University or at another establishment.

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## **Abstract**

**Mehmet Mart**

### **A Comparison of English and Turkish Early Years/Kindergarten Teachers' Understandings of and Practices in Outdoor Activities**

My thesis presents a comparison of English and Turkish Early Years/Kindergarten teachers' understandings and practices of outdoor activities. Comparative research provides a wider understanding of the two different cultures' current circumstances in outdoor activities. Such research provides in-depth understanding of educational aspects in different cultures, and produces enhancement opportunities for educational pedagogies (Alexander, 2001). I had been conscious of possible differences in cultural perception of childhood and its temporal effects on historical developments as well as on the way children play and engage in outdoor activities and this informed my approach.

This thesis was based on ethnographic research involving two sets of observations and interviews exploring English and Turkish teachers' perceptions and practices of outdoor activities. The observations and interviews were held both before and after an intervention that I introduced. This intervention used social media to allow teachers to exchange photographs and comments about their outdoor learning practices and share ideas across the two countries. Four main themes emerged from the research: professional learning in the early years, barriers, freedom and pedagogic roles. The interaction that allowed them to see different practices had a notable impact on the teachers; enhancing their approach to outdoor activities and contributing to their professional development. Therefore, this research reveals the importance of cross-cultural research as well as the practicality of the new model: The Online Interactive Professional Learning Model based on the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT).



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## **List of Abbreviations**

AC	: Abstract Conceptualization
AE	: Active Experimentation
CE	: Concrete Experience
CTML	: Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning
DBS	: Disclosure and Barring Service
ELT	: Experiential Learning Theory
ECEC	: Early Childhood Education and Care
EPPE	: Effective Provision of Pre-School Education
EU	: European Union
EYFS	: Early Years Foundation Stage
EYITT	: Early Years Initial Teacher Training
EYPS	: the Early Years Professional Status
MNE	: (Turkish) Ministry of National Education
OFSTED	: Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
QTS	: Qualified Teacher Status
PL	: Professional Learning
RO	: Reflective Observation
TA	: Teaching Assistant

## Chapter 1: Introduction

As a qualified kindergarten teacher, I had worked in Turkey before I earned a scholarship from the Turkish government to pursue my higher education abroad. Having worked previously as a teacher, I had an overall opinion about the conditions of preschool education in Turkey, which led me to decide to investigate outdoor activities in order to find ways of enhancing them. One key factor leading me to focus on outdoor activities is that I grew up in a southern village in Turkey where I had the chance to play outside freely from morning to evening. Outdoor activities are important for me since they provide unforeseen opportunities and individualized options which help improve\* children's imagination and their adaptation to a range of factors such as the weather, or environmental changes for example. Although I had these unlimited opportunities in my childhood, modern life restrains children indoors most of the time as a result of urbanization. Therefore, I am more focused on outdoor activities as a teacher and a researcher in order to utilise it to the maximum. When I came to the UK, I had a chance to observe the situation in the UK informally because I worked as a volunteer for a while. As a result of these experiences, I noticed differences in outdoor activities, which were part of daily activities in England, but less frequent in Turkey because they were (and still are) optional for teachers. This evident contrast in the implementation of outdoor activities led me to consider the impact of teachers' perceptions of outdoor learning on

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\* It is necessary to explain the meaning of 'improvement' throughout the thesis. It stands for a change in a positive way, and aiming to enhance the quality or quantity regarding the context of the word. For example, in the above context, it means 'development' of children's imagination, and later mentioned 'improvement in salary' means wage increase, and so on.

their outdoor practices and activities. There was also a potential need to provide wider perspectives for the participating teachers to aid reflection and comparison.

I aimed to use the advantages of cross-cultural research in order to critically consider two diverse contexts (Tobin, Hsueh & Karasawa, 2009) and because there is an increasing recognition of the benefits of international research and comparison. In addition to a descriptive approach to cross-cultural research, I developed a new model based on Experiential Learning Theory so as to develop a more collaborative but critical approach with my participants. This integration provided a framework within which participants could approach their own and each other's activities critically. The impact of cross-cultural research on teachers' professional learning for outdoor activities can be valued for application to further pedagogical issues. My motivation for designing this research was that I have experienced a lack of importance placed on outdoor activities in Turkey, and have observed the regulated outdoor context in England. Thus, the opportunity to conduct research in England provided an opportunity for in-depth thinking about the differences between the two education systems. Cross-cultural research is likely to provide constructive opportunities (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006) for participants and researchers. In this case, education systems are dynamic and ongoing processes based on cultural (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012), global, political, economic (Penn, 1996) and social factors (Uygun, 2008), hence these elements play a descriptive and determinative role in past and present education. As a result of these factors, the activities and the conditions of early years education are shaped. England and Turkey are representative of two variant countries in terms of early years, with a hundred-year gap between them in



terms of early years provision, and provide an opportunity to compare teachers' understanding and practice of outdoor activities.

Although there are common perceptions regarding the importance of outdoor activities for children, there are different descriptions of its role and implementation. The context of outdoor activities in this research covers various activities led by the participating teachers. The use of terms is described in the outdoor activities section in the Literature Review. It is however inevitable that there is some cultural impact on and differences in outdoor activities; therefore, while some countries like Scandinavian countries and the UK are indicated as prominent countries in practice (Beames, Atencio & Ross, 2009), Turkey has less emphasis on outdoor activities due to lack of adequate materials (Çelik, 2012). There is a notable historical gap in the appearance of the early years settings between England and Turkey in terms of their first early years settings and emphasis. While the first early years setting in England was in 1850s, in Turkey the first early years education was regulated only in 1950s (see Deniz, 2001; Moss, 2006). This century old gap is only one example of the differences between these countries because, as discussed in the literature chapter, the historical differences are likely to lead to difference in implementation, with different views of early years services. However, there has been a recent convergence of thinking about Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) between the two countries with the impact of globalization. However, my experience indicated that the convergence is not reflected in outdoor activities, where practices and beliefs vary to a considerable extent between the two countries. Initially, I had assumed that Turkey would learn from England, but as my research progressed, I came to understand that both countries had a lot to learn from each other.

In particular, the basis of my research is outdoor activities in the early years in these countries because these activities reflect “specific norms, values and culture” (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006, p.82) as well as their importance for child development. There has been a rising value placed on outdoor activities in the last few decades in schools due to a consent that children have access to more technological devices leading them to stay indoors for more of their time. In other respects, the opportunities provided through outdoor activities are unforeseen because they provide children with unique, imaginative and varied possibilities. Therefore, the policies/programmes in both countries have statements on the necessity of outdoor activities in schools (DfE, 2012; Ministry of National Education, 2013b), which outdoor activities include; the activities in school playgrounds, outdoor areas, field trips and so on.

In comparing the two countries, it is important to consider the terms of reference that will be used: ‘early years’ is used for the English context and ‘preschool education’ for the Turkish context. Early years is defined in England as a service provided by early years providers for under-fives in order to enhance their learning and development requirements (The National Archives, 2006) within the regulations of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2012; DfE, 2017). In Turkey, preschool education is defined as preparation for school; supporting physical, cognitive and emotional development, creating equal environments for children, in particular, for those coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and supporting the use of Turkish language properly within three to six years (Ministry of National Education, 2013b). It is recognised that “language and translation” issues (Alexander, 2001, p.512) are likely to occur in comparative research. The first term to be explained is that preschool, is called

*Okul Öncesi* in the Preschool Education Programme in Turkey (Ministry of National Education, 2006; Ministry of National Education, 2013b) and focuses on the education and care of children until starting primary school. This has a few different types, two of which are *okul öncesi eğitim* (preschool education) and *anasınıfı* (kindergarten) (Ministry of National Education, 2006; Ministry of National Education, 2013b). The use of different terms exhibits the cultural differences in the countries compared. In the UK, the term ‘early years’ suggests a broader, formative period of life, whilst in Turkey preschool suggests a more limited preparation for school. As may be predicted from the terms used, while the UK emphasises a general term ‘early years’ (including both child-care and education), the Turkish context has ‘preschool’ (concentrating only on educational aspect). However, in this thesis terms from dominant literature (Anglo-centric terms) are used to discuss the general concepts since the majority of literature is accessed from the UK and other Western countries, but the specific themes were still identified from each country’s context. This means that while using Anglo-centric terms for discussing the common facts for early years, the specific terms regarding the countries are used to reflect the context properly.

Just as the definitions and terms used are different, so there are also some important factors influencing the two different approaches in early years such as the historical developments of these countries, perceptions of play and approaches to outdoor activities. These factors have had an influence on the process of development of early years settings over the history of these countries as well as on their programme development. There were four main aspects that played a role in historical development, which are, namely, policy/programme development; care-education divide; workforce issues; and curriculum

issues. In addition to these aspects, John Dewey's visit to Turkey in 1924 is a fundamental milestone for educational development in Turkey. His visit to Turkey is a historically important moment in shaping the Turkish education system (as I discuss in detail in the next chapter), but other factors have also played important roles in shaping early years education such as the policy/programme development for both countries, which may be political, economic and international (Tomlinson, 2013), workforce requirements, care-education division (Randall, 2000), the perception of play and outdoor activities. In order to identify the historical changes in these countries, the original documents (publications by the governments) were accessed and analysed thematically in the Literature Review. There are a number of different influential aspects for these topics. In particular, some pioneers in the field explained the perceptions of childhood differently, and researchers have different approaches and perspectives.

As I stated above, the principal focus of this research is outdoor activities, which also involves different discourses across countries as a result of varied practices within these countries. For example, while England has a place for outdoor activities in their daily early years plan, the adaptation of outdoor play in Turkey is optional for teachers, as suggested by the MNE (Ministry of National Education, 2013b). These different approaches require research to identify and compare the current circumstances between these countries in order to ascertain possible ways to develop both of their current practice.

This research seeks to extend comparative aspects of the participating English and Turkish early years/kindergarten teachers' understanding and practice of outdoor activities. In this regard, the main research question is: **what are the perceptions of outdoor play held by Early Childhood teachers in Turkey and England?**

To answer this main question, the following questions are posed:

- **What shapes these teachers' understandings?**
- **How do teachers enact these understandings into practice?**
- **How does sharing ideas between Turkish and English teachers influence their understanding of the importance of outdoor activities?**

The main reason to focus on these countries and research questions is to determine the variables around outdoor activities. There is a considerable difference between teachers' perceptions in previous research (see Mart & Bilton, 2014), and also England is an example of one of the developed countries while Turkey is considered one of the developing countries. The main research question and the following two sub-questions aim to identify the initial situations of the two countries, the research then aims to identify the impact of communication with practitioners in another country in terms of improving\* one's own perceptions and practices. A key point of this research study is to identify the impact of online interaction with others on the participants' understanding and practice in their implementation of outdoor activities. To that end, I undertook a longitudinal research design that included interviews and observations in both countries to identify the participating teachers' starting perceptions and practices in outdoor activities. Online interaction followed the first part of the research for at least two months. At the end of this time frame, I administered the second interviews and observations in order to

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\* The context of 'improvement' through the thesis for my research means a change positively. This improvement/positive change is aimed as enriching the practice for the participating teachers.

determine the changes in the teachers' perceptions and practices over the period of the data collection.

An ethnographic approach combined with an intervention was adopted so as to explore the research question in-depth. Ethnographic research is a way to identify the condition of a group of people within their natural habitats through observation and interview (Brewer, 2000). By using this approach, the participating teachers' understanding of and practice in outdoor activities can initially be determined as well as the barriers for them in activities. In addition, the impact of supportive methods to reflect on practice can be described via the second part of the ethnographic research. This second stage was a direct intervention which involved the use of social media (Facebook group) to allow participating teachers from both countries to exchange information about their practice. The current conditions of the two different countries for outdoor activities are identified in-depth, and then the impacts of the interactive intervention on the professional practice of these teachers are explored by further interviews and observations. The findings of this research are discussed in the following chapters.

The thesis is organised in the following way: the Literature Review forms the first chapter focusing on a) the historical developments of these countries in terms of policy/programme development, care-education divisions, workforce issues as well as Dewey's impact on Turkish Education system, b) the varied perceptions of play from the pioneers in the field, c) outdoor activities in these countries in comparison to related worldwide views, and d) professional learning in early years. The Literature Review is followed by the Methodology chapter to discuss the philosophical aspects, research methods, and the research process. The following four chapters are about the findings and

discussion of the four main themes; professional learning in early years, barriers, freedom and pedagogic roles. The Conclusion chapter discusses the impact and implications of this research study, its limitations, suggestions for further research, and its contribution to knowledge, as well as the reflection of my journey as a researcher. It explores the similarities and differences in these countries' outdoor activities with a focus on the participating teachers. This study indicates an affirmative outcome of the research process in terms of the intervention prompting a wider perspective for the participants, which understanding and participatory design can be used in further activities.

In addition to these points, it is necessary to present my journey as a researcher. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there has been another factor which played a role in the design of this research. Since my undergraduate degree, I have had a focus on early years and outdoor activities and organized my educational experiences and previous research around this enthusiasm. During my master's degree, I specifically focused on these same aspects in order to have background information as required. Once I started my PhD research, I focused on supporting the participating teachers through their activities. This is because teachers are key component in delivering aims during activities and it is important for them to have opportunities to get support from people in similar situations. This support enables them to have critical but comparative approach to their practice rather than following normalized expected approaches. My initial aim was to focus attention on cross-cultural research and consideration of alternative ways for participating teachers to approach the various opportunities for outdoor learning. As a result of this process, I have learnt more about the cross-cultural contexts as well as expecting the unexpected outcomes from research. I have experienced a different culture,

living in England, in addition to academic development. It has been a unique experience for me to understand that little weather issues were not a problem to facilitating outdoor activities. This made me think about that the excuses for not going out which may not be a real issue for someone else. So why do we (in particular teachers) over-think and generate excuses instead of overcoming or finding alternatives? In education, in particular outdoor activities, there is no specific way, option or activity for children, and everyone can interpret events and activities differently, whilst considering the opportunities to address the same aims.





## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1. Chapter Introduction**

This chapter explores relevant literature on early years to consider the cross-cultural highlights around the world, and to provide a basis for this study through a discussion of the key historic milestones within England and Turkey. In this case, there are some important historical differences and similarities in terms of development of preschool/early years between these countries such as policy/programme development, care and education divisions, workforce issues, curriculum issues along with the influence of John Dewey's ideas, in Turkey particularly. The historically developmental themes and global factors influence the perception of play in both of these countries. Additionally, the current practice of outdoor activities is regulated by the impact of such factors as well as professional learning in early years. It is necessary to describe the historical developments of these countries because the relationship between past and present is an area of contention in comparative research, and the cultural distinctions around education are required to be considered (Alexander, 2001). In the overall background of these countries, whilst both of these countries have experienced a focus on the early years in the last a few decades it is also possible to see greater similarities occurring with the impact of the European Union (EU) and growth of globalisation.

### **2.2. Historical Development of Preschool/Early Years in Turkey and England**

The current conditions of early years are influenced by the historical aspects of the countries. The focus of this research, aimed to identify the similarities and differences of

two countries' provision over the history of early years and preschool provision, considering a number of variables including socio-historical ideologies on childhood. As Alexander (2001) mentions, it is important to link the historical development of countries with the current condition of a research project. Besides, the historical background of a country identifies and regulates their current practice (Tobin, Hsueh & Karasawa, 2009), and they are informed by cultural perceptions of childhood.

Childhood is a period of every person's life and has been repeatedly studied by various disciplines (Kehily, 2004). Different perspectives on childhood have given light to how romantic concepts motivated initial interest in early years services by way of protecting children (Campbell-Barr, 2014), but in both countries more recent concepts of childhood have focused on the educational advantages of early years services. Thus, childhood and children studies have been a part of various academic disciplines such as Sociology, Cultural Studies, Psychology and Education for decades (Kehily, 2004). The changing perceptions of childhood and developments in childhood studies influence early years policy because policy-makers consider the cultural contexts as well as other influential factors, which are discussed later in this section.

Changing or reorganizing educational policies and hence educational settings may be one of the most difficult issues around the world as education is an ongoing process. It affects a substantial number of people including students and their parents, as well as educators. As a result, it is important to identify policy/programme development for England and Turkey. The terms policy and programme are not used interchangeably, and each term is associated with one country. Policy is used for England and programme is for Turkey because the terms are used differently in their contexts. While England commonly uses

‘policy’, Turkey prefers calling educational regulations ‘programme’. These different terms are used to identify the regulations of these countries’ educational systems.

In the next section of this chapter, a thematic discussion of historical developments in both countries follows. Finally, a discussion of the influence of John Dewey on the Turkish system is discussed in detail. While representing the historical developments in these countries regarding the themes, there might occur some chronological gaps within the sections. This is because the specific documents for each sub-title are discussed accross the sections (for the chronological list of specific policy/programme development publications, see Appendix-1).

In terms of a brief overview of developments of early years in these countries, it might be useful to highlight that I am briefly looking at the historical developments of early years services and the impacting factors around them. The first day nursery in England opened in 1850, in order to include poor women into the workforce (Moss, 2006). Since then, there have been fluctuations in the policy support for, and level of early years services. The early nurseries aimed to provide invaluable nurturing opportunities for children (Bennett & Tayler, 2006). In time, the importance and the conditions of early years education changed (see Tizard, Moss & Perry, 1976), in particular, after the First World War. During this period, the number of early years schools decreased because of inadequate funding (Moss, 2006; Tizard, Moss & Perry, 1976). This trend changed after the Second World War, and the importance of early years services was felt even more strongly as their role in supporting participation in the labour market was realized (Bennett & Tayler, 2006; Moss, 2006). During this period, several noteworthy steps were taken for nurseries in the UK including the Nursery Centres Scheme that regulated the

training of staff members as well as family needs; and the transition of war nurseries into civil institutions governed by local authorities (Tizard, Moss & Perry, 1976). After 1990s, early years provision in the UK has changed with the impact of global factors, and both education and care aspects started to be considered together, there was also an increasing emphasis on the role of local authorities (Randall & Fisher, 2001).

However, the case of Turkey is different than the case of England in terms of development by numbers. Although the first early years settings was seen in 1950s (Deniz, 2001), a specific change was experienced in the 1990s when the number of preschool institutions increased “by 200% from 1993 to 1999” (Deniz, 2001, p.81). This rapid development was the result of two sittings of the Educational Council\* in the 1990s in accordance with the development of preschool, although there had been no statement on early years in the council’s agenda in the previous council meetings (Aytaç, 1965; Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007). Since 2000, there has been further major progress in preschool as Taner Derman and Başal (2010) note that the number of early years settings increased by 10% in 2000 alone, but this was still under both the expected improvement and developed countries' average.

Such brief historical changes in the number of early years settings in these countries indicate the historical differences in terms of valued aspects of early years settings illustrating some similarities in the last few decades. In addition to these historical

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\* The educational council has the most important consultative role in the Turkish education system and most of the time; the education system in Turkey is influenced by the council and is shaped as a result of the council decisions. The participants of the council convene and share their ideas, members are those who have different roles in the society such as researchers, teachers, representatives of Ministry of National Education. According to their decisions and global agenda, the preschool education programmes are changed and improved. The council convenes once in every three or four years.

differences, the impact of policy/programme development process should be noted to describe the background issues of similarities and differences because of the ongoing debate about the focus on care and education.

### **2.2.1. Policy/Programme Development in England and Turkey**

The term of ‘policy’ is used most commonly throughout this thesis, due to the predominance of its use in Anglo-centric literature. In the case of the policy/programme development process in general, Kellmer Pringle (Pringle, 1974 cited in Kehily, 2004) identifies the four main requirements of children in the policy making process:

- “the need for love and security,
- new experiences,
- praise and recognition [and]
- responsibility” (p.13).

These are key elements to address in successful policy/programme formation for all countries. Furthermore, the cultural differences of countries also have an influence when the understanding of childhood and policy development is concerned. There are some powerful issues, which have an impact on societies’ understanding of childhood (Sanders, 2009). These issues are informed by war, political ideology, sexist ideology and the poverty level as well as global, economic and political factors (Penn, 1996). Because of these factors, a country is likely to attribute a meaning to children and early years for different purposes. Moreover, childcare can play an important role in improving the following social concerns: “improving educational attainment, reducing crime, improving health, boosting productivity, [and] closing the gender pay gap” (DfES, 2002, p.60), all of which indicate that there is a direct correlation between the conceptualization of childhood as an investment and the policymaking process. “Constructs of children and

childhood and those who work with children are woven together from cultural and economic strands within society” (McGillivray, 2008, p.244-245) and “these values shape ECEC policy and provision” (Campbell-Barr, 2014, p.10). From these values, there are three main aspects on policy development process, which are discussed in detail under the following subheadings.

### ***Perceptions of Childhood and their Influence on Policy (Programme)***

There has been a discussion around childhood, working with children and policy (programme) development for years (Loreman, 2009). In this case, although some followers of the fundamentalist Christian belief long thought of children as born with sin, and that the devil resides in children’s souls, Jean Jacques Rousseau criticised this view and advocated that the children were born as innocent and vulnerable (Gabriel, 2010). In particular, this and similar dilemmas are likely to lead to various paradigms in education regarding the treatment to children bound by the dominant concepts of childhood. Parker-Rees (2015) clarifies the perceptions of childhood considering the approach of adults as an application of the culture in terms of engagement with ideas. Correspondingly, the philosopher, John Locke defines the new-born child as an empty vessel, so children start their life without any knowledge, and in time they gain experience and knowledge as a result of their personal interaction with their immediate environments (Ural & Ramazan, 2007). Such different approaches for childhood are illustrative of McGillivray’s (2008) claim that they cause different policy development processes in different countries.

Often embedded in the policy/programme making process is an image of the vulnerable child, who requires support in their learning. Therefore, Jean Jacques Rousseau’s (1911) statement is often cited, claiming that human beings are not inherently sinful (Tremblay

*et al.*, 1999). This means that children know nothing about what is acceptable for society, so they need to learn these things from the environment. Regarding Rousseau, Gabriel (2010, p.150) states that “the ‘innocent’ version of childhood needed to be protected from the corruption of adult society.” Shuffelton (2012) claims that to maintain the innocence of children, they need to be included in society, but this does not mean giving them adult roles; it means respecting them as children, teaching them the right behaviour patterns while providing them with protection. These various approaches to childhood which suggests that children are innocent and/or vulnerable shape the approach of adults and the provided opportunities for children. Stephen’s (2006, p.5) quote points out two dominant perceptions, which shape early years/preschool policy: the romantic and the economic as “ideas about children, childhood and learning; [and] socio-political perspectives on the purpose and outcomes of educational provision in the early years.”

Sociological perspectives on childhood are furthermore discussed by Gabriel (2010), highlighting that the child was seen as an ‘incomplete organism’ and childhood was seen as a preliminary to adulthood in the 1960s. For instance, the aim of childcare was to turn an immature, senseless and deficit child into a mature, logical and proficient adult (Gabriel, 2010). With regard to these attitudes of adults towards children, children are positioned as passive because their understandings, emotions and behaviour are overlooked by adults, so they need to be controlled via adults’ opinions. Adults’ understanding of childhood will regulate the opportunities that they provide for children, whether that is in relation to developing policy or providing early years services directly. Consequently, the socio-historical developments of childhood mean that there are differences between countries. Because of the role of adults on regulating the

opportunities for children, the focus of settings varies between England and Turkey in this research study, as the former is a developed and the latter developing country. Furthermore, Gabriel states that the school curriculum, schooling issues, how children spend time in schools are also arranged by adults. Political, social and economic (Penn, 1996) factors have effects on regulating schools and policies more than children.

In addition to economic factors, Shuffelton (2012), also mentions the determinative factors of society on childhood, such as gender. Rousseau's idea was that toys and games are determined with regard to societies' perspectives. Shuffelton (2012) exemplifies the social status-quo in which girls were given dolls to prepare them for certain behaviour; feeding and caring, and boys were given robot-like toys in the 1980s and 1990s. This stereotypical practice shows that the feminine toys are deemed suitable for girls and the manly toys for boys to prepare them for their adult roles (Miller & Kuhaneck, 2008). These toys also structure children's play because with these toys, children play games imitating, hence reproducing, the prospective roles they are expected to play in their adult lives. In most cases, these children may not have a choice to play different games. I, personally, can reflect upon my experience that gender stereotypes were explicit in Turkish society. Childhood is perhaps not as free as Rousseau's philosophy implied in practical terms. In the light of these different perceptions of childhood, the policy/programme development is affected by different approaches with children being "objects of policy and provision" (Campbell-Barr, 2014, p.13) since adults are to accommodate the policy/programme, and children are only there to receive education. This is valid for every country, and not only for England and Turkey.



### ***Other Factors Influencing Policy***

Penn (1996) clarifies that policy development is influenced by macro level causes and mediating influences. I have already highlighted gender and the role of adults, but this will interplay with different factors that include cultural values, beliefs, norms, family, regional contexts, socio-political and economic ideologies, public welfare factors, rate and timing of urbanisation, family policies, industrialisation, traditions, political change or conflict, poverty, standards and birth rate change. Such factors have an effect on the development of policies worldwide. Furthermore, politics, economics, international bureaucracies, regime and lifestyles have an international effect on policy development (Tomlinson, 2013). Therefore, given these points from Penn (1996) and Tomlinson (2013) one could anticipate diversity in England and Turkey in relation to the historical development of policy/programme as well as the current circumstances of early years.

Another macro influence is published research, which has an important influence for policy making processes because it provides messages regarding necessary aspects of current policies (Penn, 1996; Penn, 2013). In this context, Malone and Waite's (2016) report emphasises the requirement of revising and creating new policies considering international aspects bearing cultural influences in mind. This fact is supported by Hall's (2009) claim that research indicates the necessary changes in the current policies regarding children's developmental aspects and missing points of current policy. Thus, as Penn (1996) states, policy makers and politicians anticipate more research on policies in countries to improve educational regulations. These factors have an impact on policy development worldwide, specifically in England and Turkey. England has had a strong evidence based (research based) policy making process in the early years since the late

1990s (Campbell-Barr, 2015) along with various approaches around the world. Turkey is mostly affected by the aforementioned Educational Council meetings alongside the developments around the world. For example, different approaches (Reggio Emilia, Montessori) are taught to candidate teachers in Turkish universities (see Balat, 2012), but they are secondary to the influence of policy. Hence, this research can provide a common opportunity for these countries to consider their positions from a cross-cultural research perspective by scrutinizing two variant countries in terms of economic, historical, religion, norms and political issues as teachers' perceptions of and practices in outdoor activities are influenced by these aspects.

### ***Global factors***

Other countries, in particular European countries, also have an impact on policy development in England. In terms of being outside the classroom for three and four years old, there was a gap in the practice between England and EU countries, whereby England fell behind EU (western Europe) expectations, so the English framework has been changed to close this gap (Faulkner & Coates, 2013). In addition to this, in the case of outdoor activities, Scandinavian countries have been accepted as role models because the first forest school occurred in Scandinavian countries (Maynard, 2007a). Similarly, Italy utilises the approach of Reggio Emilia to support children's abilities in nurseries through different activities in several areas. This approach has recently been taught to English teachers (Faulkner & Coates, 2013) as well as to teacher candidates in Turkey (Balat, 2012). Thus it can be understood that other countries' approaches, activities and systems can affect policy developments in England and Turkey. Such influential international

aspects are important for my research study in terms of distinguishing what has shaped the differences between the two countries.

The EU occasionally launches some regulations for economic, social and educational issues for both its members and the candidates. In the case of education, the Lisbon Treaty is important for policy development issues in England (as a part of Britain, England is not recognised as a member state but the same regulations apply) and Turkey because both countries regulated their systems with regard to this treaty (Penn, 2013). The Lisbon strategy in education is described as a “modernisation of the education systems” with the cooperation of the EU countries in order to develop the related countries (Pépin, 2011). Hence, as Penn (2013) states, English policy development was affected by the 2002 EU Barcelona targets as a part of the Lisbon Treaty as well as other European countries. In other respects, Turkey was also affected by the Lisbon process as a candidate of the EU (Arslan Cansever, 2009). In terms of Turkey and England, this can be seen as a common imposing factor from the EU, which required policy change and development in both countries. EU and global factors led these countries to have similar emphasis on education since 1990, which is confirmed by the published documents presented in the following sections. However, as England is going through a process of leaving the EU and recent changes in Turkey are likely to make it impossible to join the EU, the EU’s future impact on policy development in both countries will probably decrease.

These above-mentioned influencing factors on policy/programme development processes of these two countries, and their historical developments, are likely to lead to diversified results in the division of care and education, workforce issues and curriculum issues in the countries’ early years development processes and practices in the near future.

### **2.2.2. Care-Education Divide over the Policy/Programme Development Process**

The care-education divide is an important aspect of early years because early years involves both childcare and early education. Therefore, in Europe, while educational settings are used to support child development as well as to increase school readiness, childcare settings are also intended to support the labour market in various countries (Burger, 2010). The role of the labour market, various aspects and the global factors were discussed in the previous section in order to present the influences on early years policy development process. The noteworthy documents to define care and education division started occurring after 1960s in both countries. In this case, there were several important points which were benchmarks for England's early years system in 1960s as well as preschool in Turkey. Child-minders (Tizard, Moss & Perry, 1976) and playgroups increased at that time, and since then early years education and nursery schools have become a formal part of government policy and have constituted the basis of today's system (Moss, 2006). Therefore, a two-tier system of care and education developed over time.

In Turkey, the importance of preschool education was emphasised for the first time (Deniz, 2001)\*. The council in Turkey in 1953 emphasised the importance of preschool education, but execution of this decision was left to the local authorities' discretion (Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007). This is very similar to England for the same time frame (see Randall,

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\* Throughout this and following sections, the original documents from the educational councils have been analysed to illustrate the changes in preschool education in Turkey, which have been published from the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Even though these documents have many old Turkish words, as a native Turkish speaker, I explored the meanings and interpreted them, considering the supporting literature around them.

2000). Correspondingly, Aytaç (1965) expresses that the government failed to provide state preschools, which were managed by the MNE in Turkey until 1965. This statement suggests that Turkish government failed to accept the council's decisions in 1953 about preschool education. Concurrently, the council in 1962 underlined the necessity of preschool education in Turkey in the light of other countries' implementations in this field (Oguzkan and Oral, 2003 cited in Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007).

In England, at the same time, Preschool/Early years became associated with both care and education since it involves children from birth to school starting age as combined. Initially, the history of early years' in England has been shaped with regard to different factors such as government, labour market and educational factors. Fundamentally, it should be noted that two different kinds of early years' service can be seen in England, which have been childcare and education (Moss, 2006). The care of young children has been understood as a way of supporting the labour market. Along with other countries, the developmental and educational needs of children have been overlooked since it centred around childcare (Bennett & Tayler, 2006). Although, there was no established state preschool until 1965, governmental support attracted the establishment of private schools in Turkey. In other words, the government failed to support state schools directly to improve preschool education (Aytaç, 1965; Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007).

Despite the slow process surrounding the early years in Turkey, the focus has always been on education due to both global and national factors. The reason for this is that "Turkey shows a different pathway than in other countries" (Kapci & Guler, 1999, p.53) because of centralized preschool education programmes by the MNE (Gören Niron, 2013); although England has a centralised system, there are also devolved roles for local

authorities. This means that there is only one Preschool Education Programme for the whole of Turkey. Turkey uses an integrated system for care and education. However, Turkey gives more importance to education than care in practice, so the programme for preschool education in Turkey mostly focuses on the developmental aspects of children (Gören Niron, 2013). Historically, England has had more early years settings than Turkey. In Turkey, the discourse of early years has been on the educational aspects rather than focusing on care issues. Therefore, most of the points on care-education is from the case of England, and there is a limited number of policy documents on care factors in Turkey. These are mostly embedded in the programmes.

As a milestone for early years' settings, England faced some important decisions in terms of public interest in 1967. *The Plowden Report* (Moss, 2006), *the Seebohm Report*, *the Urban Aid Programme* and *the Halsey Report* were all published in 1967 (Tizard, Moss & Perry, 1976). These reports underlined the provision and the development of nurseries for under-fives, in particular three and four years old (Moss, 2006; Tizard, Moss & Perry, 1976). *The Plowden Report* only had some educational aspects, recommending provision of part time nursery education for three- and four-year olds and it overlooked the care needs for full time working families (Moss, 2006). The view of the report is criticised by Tizard, Moss and Perry (1976, p.83) that “nursery education was not suitable for children under three who should be with their mothers.” Although there was an exceptional point made for under-threes, in general, these reports had an important role in contributing to the development of early years' settings. Following that, in 1972, the government published a White paper (Moss, 2006) with regard to *the Plowden Report*, which illustrated certain important priorities such as part-time implementation in the provision

for under-fives (Tizard, Moss & Perry, 1976). As a result of this report, there was an increase in nursery education in the early 1970s (Randall, 2000), and care and education were developed as separate systems, which were divided between childcare for 0-3 and education for (some) 3- and 4-year-olds.

At the same time, in the case of Turkey, the Educational council met and made a decision on the situation of preschool education in 1974, and this was followed by the council in 1981. In these council meetings, the importance of preschool education and the necessity of improvement in a number of early years settings (Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007), was discussed and in the case of teaching provision for preschool education, first language teachers (Turkish teachers) should be preferred (Deniz, 2001). These outcomes from the Council discussion indicate that the importance of preschool education increased slightly at that time when compared to previous sittings. However, the problem was that there was no special qualification route for teachers for preschool education, so the demand for teachers could only be met by teachers from other age phases. Additionally, the role of preschool education was identified, namely:

1. to support children's physical, mental and emotional development,
2. to prepare children for primary education
3. to provide equal opportunities for children who had different social backgrounds,  
[and]
4. to help children to speak in their first language properly and fluently (Ministry of National Education, 1974).

However, there was an inconsistency in terms of providing equal opportunities to all children, which was that it was open to every student except pupils with disabilities (Deniz, 2001; Ministry of National Education, 1981) in 1981 council. Before the council in 1981, the Department of Preschool Education was established inside of the MNE (in 1977), and this department aimed to improve the number of early years settings, the quality of preschool education and preschool education materials (Taner Derman & Başıal, 2010). Thus, this progress demonstrates the incremental importance of preschool education for educational authorities and the government in Turkey.

Evidence suggests that the number of early years' settings increased after 1980 in Turkey (see Appendix-2 for the number of preschool, students, and teachers in Turkey over the years) (Taner Derman & Başıal, 2010). These statements specify that even though the council decisions were not considered, some positive results such as an increase in the number of schools and importance of preschool were achieved for early education.

In 1988, the council discussed the conditions of preschool teachers and the programme of preschool education, and then established a set of criteria for becoming a preschool teacher in Turkey; including the necessity of two years of higher education (Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007). Another point the Council of 1988 made was that the preschool education programme would be revised regarding the Turkish ethos and social conditions and it was also intended to minimize the problems for children with low socio-economic status (Oktay, 2004, cited in Çelik& Gündoğdu, 2010). At a similar point in time the *Children Act* was launched in 1989 in England (McKeigue & Beckett, 2004; Page, 2010) as being the first step in policy making for regulations of early years (McKeigue & Beckett, 2004), and highlighted; parental responsibilities, special guardianship, financial



issues with children, family assistance factors, risk assessments for children, local authority factors to support children and families, day care for preschool and other children, a review of provisions for day care and child minding, care and supervision of children, protection of children, community issues and voluntary factors (The National Archives, 1989). Whilst both countries are influenced by their cultural contexts, the longer history of policy development in England, alongside their developed policy requirements mean that teachers are required to follow the both statutory requirements and guidance in their daily activity. In Turkey, the preschool education programme is more of guidance for teachers, so they are at liberty to interpret and implement the programme as they wish. These differences show the different practice in these countries, and changes in teachers' freedom to apply policy/programme.

As can be seen from the dates of milestones in 1989 in both countries, similar developments around early years started, in particular, concerning the emphasis on parental issues. This may be the effect of global factors of the era as mentioned in the previous section. The 1990s made up an important decade in England's early years services because many changes were applied. For example, the government realised the importance of nurseries (Randall, 2000) and put an emphasis on the role of local authorities (Randall & Fisher, 2001).

It was an important period for Turkey, as well. The next Council in 1993 discussed two important topics, one of which was preschool education (Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007). In this Council, it was decided that the number of preschools would be increased and the quality of preschools would be developed (Ministry of National Education, 1993). In addition to these decisions, the purpose of early years education was described as to

educate children from 36 to 72 months in preschool with kindergarten covering children at the age between 5 and 6. This means that although there was an overlap between preschool and kindergarten, and preschool could be provided in any early years setting, kindergarten was focused on improving school readiness, which might be in any early years settings or as part of primary schools. Furthermore, kindergarten could be placed inside private or public preschools, primary schools and grammar schools (Deniz, 2001; Ministry of National Education, 1993). In support of this, it was decided that the government would start working on developing the policies of preschool education, and that these would include health factors (Ministry of National Education, 1993).

The end of the 1990s were also important for both countries in a shift to support parental aspects in policy developments. In England, there was an important step in terms of the governmental authority over nurseries and policy development in 1998. As Moss (2006) noted, responsibility for nurseries, child minders and playgroups were devolved from the Department of Health to the Department of Education, which indicates that the educational part of early years' settings became more important than before when the care element had prevailed. This transition from the Department of Health to the Department of Education led early years' settings to be included in existing regular educational policy reviews (Moss, 2006). There was therefore still no clear distinction between education and care (DfEE, 1998) because of their both being associated under one ministry (Bennett & Tayler, 2006). As a result of this transition, England launched two documents in 1998, which are *the National Childcare Strategy* (Bennett & Tayler, 2006; DfEE, 1998; Lloyd, 2008; Osgood, 2006b; Page, 2010) and, *the Sure Start Initiative* (As part of the *National Childcare Strategy*). Both focused on supporting working parents and child development.

Interestingly, parent-focused aims were also considered by the Turkish Educational council in 1996. The Turkish government aimed to develop a Parent participation programme and parenting schools to improve children's environments (Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007; Ministry of National Education, 1996). This similarity indicates that both countries gave importance to preschool education concurrently in terms of parental aspects being address at the same time frame. It was likely that there was a global effect on both countries in terms of including parents into early years; however, there are notable differences in the way this was enacted. Turning to the Sure Start Programme for England, it empowered the local authorities to provide direct support to families (Bennett & Tayler, 2006; Glass, 1999). In this regard, both countries started focusing on parental factors in early years simultaneously through the council meeting in 1996 in Turkey (Ministry of National Education, 1996) and the Sure Start Programme in 1998 in England (Lloyd, 2008). It can be understood that 1998 was a key point for England's early years' services because after these policy developments, the following policies were improved and consolidated.

In England, the report entitled *Education: Nursery Education and Early Years Development Regulations 1999* was published. This paper defined nursery education and provided some developmental plans for the educational part of early years services in England. According to this paper, nursery education covers "part-time or full time education suitable for children who have not attained compulsory school age" (The National Archives, 1999, p.1). The similarities in the educational developments in both countries in the late 1990s illustrate potentially interesting points for comparison in my study because although there is no apparent influencing factor for both, there is a

similarity in terms of publishing documents at the same times and emphasising similar educational and environmental aspects.

After 2000, as a result of the effect of the EU and the increasing importance of preschool education, the Turkish government made the decision that preschool education should be compulsory. This is because preschool education allows children to have a smooth transition to primary education, and preschool education supports children's developmental aspects and skills (Sevinc, 2006) although school readiness and child development are debated issues in early years. Kıldan (2010) stated that a key factor for the EU to identify the quality of education in candidate countries is children's attendance at preschool education. The reason for this is that preschool education helps to bridge the inequality gap between children from low and high socio-economic status groups (Lloyd, 2008). Preschool education aims to minimize the educational attainment differences between children from different socio-economic groups (Sevinc, 2006).

Since 2001, there have been numerous policy developments in England including the national standards for early years' service for under-eights in 2001 (Bennett & Tayler, 2006), the *Educational Act 2002* (The National Archives, 2002), *Every Child Matters* in 2003 (Lloyd, 2008; Page, 2010), the 2004 *Children Act* (Lloyd, 2008; Page, 2010), *the Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy for Childcare* in 2004 (Bennett & Tayler, 2006), the *Childcare Bill* 2005 (Bennett & Tayler, 2006), the *Childcare Care Act* 2006 (Lloyd, 2008), *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: Making It Happen: An Action Plan for the Ten Year Strategy: Sure Start Children's Centres, Extended Schools and Childcare* in 2006 (DfES & DWP, 2006). Within each of these documents, there is a common focus on the quality of childcare and early years

services such as the importance of inspection to maintain standards and support children's well-being, and numerous workforce strategies. The policy documents indicate both the continued policy change and development within early years services and a commitment to the quality of early years services. These policies mainly mention childcare issues regarding the future labour market (Page, 2010), educational aspects with regard to special educational needs (DfES, 2002), financial issues of childcare and education provision and access, as well as inspections (Bennett & Tayler, 2006; DfES & DWP, 2006; The National Archives, 2002; The National Archives, 2006) assigned to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) (Page, 2010).

Turkish Government published the preschool education programme, which plays an important role in regulating early years education in Turkey. Although there are some similar timings on publications of early years policies from both countries, it is important to underline that England published different documents constantly to regulate the early years, and Turkey published the preschool education programme after a while. This is because there were more changes in England for practitioners to adopt while making a change takes a while in Turkey. This difference in terms of published documents reveals how early years are facing change within these countries. This is another reason to compare these countries; in order to analyse the current situations although they had variant backgrounds in terms of care and education division and different related documents.

The year 2006 is important for both countries in terms of early years policy/programme development. While the Preschool Education Programme in Turkey in 2006 had a chapter on the inclusion of parents in children's education in order to support their development

(Ministry of National Education, 2006), *Every Parent Matters* was launched to support children via their parents in 2007 (DfES, 2007) in England. This finding indicates the shared roles of both parents and government to improve children's development and provides some important points for care factors. Both care and educational aspects of early childhood were underlined by government.

From 2009 to 2013, there was a published strategic plan, for the preschool education and a radical change in the Turkish education system respectively. The 'Strategic Plan for 2010-2014' described developmental aspects and skills of children, school readiness in preschool, socio-economic conditions (e.g. supporting preschool education primarily in low socio-economic regions) (Ministry of National Education, 2009). Later in the same year, it was decided that preschool education must be compulsory to provide children with equal opportunities in the most important developmental stage (Ministry of National Education, 2013b; Taner Derman & Başal, 2010), and the age group was described as 5- and 6-year-olds (as kindergarten) in Turkey. These influences on preschool education led it to become increasingly prevalent and important, and it echoed the global picture. Turkey was on a very similar path to other developing countries in recognizing preschool education as a social investment strategy. Therefore, the similarities and differences between England and Turkey are key to why research is needed in the context of early years. This is because although there were remarkably similar developments within these countries after 2000s, the reality of practices in the early years are quite different.

In 2012, the length of primary school, secondary school, compulsory education, the age of starting primary school and curricula all changed in a very short notice and preschool education became associated with children between 37 and 66 months (Göksoy, 2013).

Despite this radical change for the whole education system, preschool education remained in the background.

Almost at the same time, in 2013, the English Government published two documents: *More Great Childcare* and *More Affordable Childcare*. These papers expand the following points: a vision for early education and care, the case for change, an action plan, and a vision for childcare (DfE, 2013; HM Treasury, 2013). These publications show that the government aimed to improve both childcare and education provisions. Although there was another transfer between departments (from the Department for Children, Schools and Families to the Department for Education), equal importance was accorded to care and education in order to support both. Arguably, the transfer was once again dividing care and education after the previous government had tried to bring them together under the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Recently, the government of Turkey announced that preschool education will be a part of the compulsory education, starting in 2017 (Ministry of National Education, 2017). This shows that the importance of early years in Turkey continues in terms of educational aspects rather than care.

The two countries illustrate both similarities and differences in their policy developments relating to early years. Within the developments, there is evidence for cultural aspects of childhood shaping understanding of early years, such as the priorities in early years (one focused on both care and education, another is only for educational parts) because of culture regulating and conducting the community (Sanders, 2009). The prime difference between the two countries is cultural influences (in terms of historical developments) for the requirement in care and education. While women are required to participate in the

labour market in England, and childcare centres are required; there was no need for a childcare sector in Turkey where children are cared for by mothers who are housewives or by grandparents when the mother is working. Consequently the educational part of early years have been emphasised in Turkey, with a focus on enhancing school readiness and literacy rates. The policies furthermore have been affected by the differences in the countries, although both have social policies aim to regulate children's life in a positive way (Kehily, 2004). These differences may have implications for my research because the ongoing approaches of these countries are likely to shape the current conditions in terms of understanding of and practice in outdoor activities.

### **2.2.3. Workforce Issues**

The different foci on aspects of care and education in England and Turkey were likely to lead to early years workforce issues because of the care and education division, and the historic pattern of policy development in each. This section elucidates the early years workforce issues for the labour market in England as well as the ECEC workforce aspects relevant to both countries. There is a historical explanation around ECEC workforce development which is not connected with timescale in the other sections but has its own periodic experience.

In the case of Turkey, workforce issues occur during the 1990s related to the labour market for teachers. The Council made a decision on staff conditions in preschools in 1993. The staff would be educated to deal with their work in preschools, and would have a certificate according to their role in preschool education such as teachers and assistant teachers (Ministry of National Education, 1993). This is the start of specialist preschool teacher training in Turkey. In the light of these points, it can be seen that preschool



education became a more important and valued topic of interest for the Turkish government after the council meeting of 1993. According to Deniz (2001), this council's decisions were considered, but only half of the target was reached within the following three years. In this context, the aim to assist teachers to gain more specialised training for early years was not adequately addressed, and it is still an issue in Turkey.

The policy developments that have taken place in England for the last 20 years as well have also included changes for the workforce. In England the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) was introduced by the government in 2007 for those working in private, voluntary and independent sectors (Payler & Georgeson, 2014). There is also another qualification, the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), which is only for the state maintained nurseries, and which shows that existing staff members are required to be trained at a graduate level (Brooker *et al.*, 2010) in England. These developments have supported early years services to provide care and education with more qualified staff although there are still huge inequalities in the system depending on where a person works. Some points included in the EYPS standards are that practitioners should supply health growth, developmental support for children by a) working with children and their families to support their development, b) supporting wellbeing of children and their safety, c) motivating children and setting higher expectations, d) fulfilling individual requirements of children, and e) enabling continuous development for children (Teaching Agency, 2012). EYPS

“required evidence of knowledge and practice with regard to the full age range from birth to five years, whereas teaching qualifications with an early years specialism generally covered three to seven years, missing out the vital birth to three period” (Payler & Georgeson, 2014, p.55).

EYPS covered the combination of care and education as well as evaluation by various factors regarding working and management (Payler & Georgeson, 2014).

However, the Review of the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) standards was established in 2012. This review offered an assessment of the criteria of EYPS. It claimed that the emphasis on children's learning needs to be reinforced in the case of care and developmental aspects, and that the safety aspects of provision need to have clearer expression (Teaching Agency, 2012). It was followed by the development of the Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT), the updated 2013 version of EYPS, for those working in the private, voluntary and independent sectors. This was intended for "both new entrants to the early years profession – for example new graduates and career changers – and to those currently employed in the sector in any early years school or other setting, including child minders" (Learner, 2015). The move towards a graduate workforce was widely welcomed, but it was identified as a process that was imposed on those working in ECEC, with political objectives in mind (Campbell-Barr, 2015; Osgood, 2006b; Payler & Georgeson, 2014).

In the case of Turkey, this issue was discussed in terms of teachers' consideration of the preschool education programme in their activities because there is no debate around working teachers and the inspection, as preschool has the same type of inspection as other teachers. Aydın (2010) found that less than half of the teachers performed their activities according to the programme, and he pointed out the problems of applying programmes and activities because of inexperienced teachers and the number of pupils being more than 20 per classroom. This represents a workforce issue in terms of quality practice in education. One of the important reasons for not implementing the preschool education

programme was identified as the number of pupils in a class, but Aydın (2010) found that suggested activities like field trips are perceived by teachers as only ‘fun’ for children. The reason for this can be that teachers think about giving more importance to skill based and developmental activities.

Therefore, teachers do not give adequate attention to the breadth of activities and do not consider the fully-recommended preschool education programme as sufficient (Varol, 2013). It has also been pointed out that science and math activities are less preferred by teachers for conclusion in their daily activities although they are specifically outlined in the preschool education programme (Kesicioglu & Mart, 2014; Varol, 2013). One reason for failing to consider different activities can be the difficulties of planning and facilitating these various activities. Most teachers fail to implement some parts of the preschool education programme. Another reason may be that teachers do not have adequate knowledge of practicing such activities or of child development (Varol, 2013). Additionally, Kesicioglu and Mart (2014) have found similar results to Varol (2013) in their research carried out with preschool teacher candidates. Pişgin Çivik, Ünüvar and Soylu’s (2015) research with teachers on the current Preschool Education Programme shows that teachers experienced difficulties in applying the programme in practice as a result of spatial limitations in classroom and outside, the overpopulation in their classrooms, inadequate materials, and insufficient guidance on how to implement the programme. These findings indicate that there are barriers to practicing some activities which in turn lead preschool teachers to not follow that aspect of the preschool education programme. On the other hand, this situation provides teachers with freedom to individually interpret and deliver the programme in order to enhance the quality of early

years, while English teachers may have less opportunity to do so. However, this does not mean that Turkish teachers are adhering to the programme, as they can also take lack of inspection as an opportunity to act freely. With increased awareness of the issues my research identifies the current teachers' perceptions of, and practices in, outdoor activities and provides the participants with opportunities for professional learning via interaction and exchange of examples with other participants.

In the light of these issues around the early years workforce, the historical and cultural differences and their variations can be better understood in relation to these countries. In particular, the emphasis of education, care, teachers' qualification and efficiencies in the practice of programme/policies are of importance. Although not all early years providers' staff have degrees in England I focus on staff in schools, who do have degrees, to enable me to draw parity with Turkey. The historical growth in the emphasis of educational aspects in early years and the requirement for qualified staffing in the schools in these countries over time gave opportunity for further curriculum development.

#### **2.2.4. Curriculum Issues**

The curricula of these two countries are constantly changing and reflect adjusting ideologies and policies over history. In the case of curriculum development in Turkey, the draft preschool education programme was initially prepared in 1989 by the government (Gelişli & Yazıcı, 2012). This programme was more like a guide book for teachers, so the Turkish teachers could engage with the aims but still experience flexibility in delivering the programme. It was recognised that in order to increase quality, there was a need for qualified teachers in the settings. The requirements in preschool education would therefore be addressed via both teacher training and the educational

programme. This issue was discussed in the 1993 council. Before this council, there was a vital development whereby the General Directorate of Preschool Education was established in 1992 by the government (Main Administrative Units, 1992), and it was announced via the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey as a new department of government (Çalışandemir, 2002). This was an important step to improve preschool education. Although this may be a result of previous councils, there is an undeniable fact that this progress played a crucial role for preschool education development in Turkey. The new formal preschool education programme was prepared in 1994 with regard to the draft of preschool education programme in 1989 (Gelişli & Yazıcı, 2012).

In 1996, the council was unable to emphasise the requirement of preschool education as compulsory. Nevertheless, the fundamental points of preschool education were discussed, and published as a curriculum (Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007). These points were;

1. School buildings would be regulated to fulfil preschool children's needs with such as a playground, a ramp, and a lift.
2. Parent participation programmes and parenting schools would be developed and enacted.
3. The establishment of preschool would start in and around low socio-economic regions.
4. After the physical requirements of schools were fulfilled, early years settings would be established, and to improve the quality of preschool education, the required study would be continued.

5. To standardise preschool education, the draft of the preschool education programme would be revised (Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007; Ministry of National Education, 1996).

Preschool education has developed since this council in 1996 (see Appendix-2 for the number of preschools and children in preschools in Turkey). In particular, the first point on school buildings is important for my research to indicate the historical background of educational expectations for preschool, as the importance of outdoors as well as school buildings was highlighted in the 1990s. This point underlines the essential nature or requirement of some materials (which can be outside), so this means that an emphasis on outdoor activities and materials started in Turkey in 1996.

During the 2000s in Turkey, as Çelik and Gündoğdu (2007) note, the government published ‘the eighth development plan for five years’ including for preschool education. In 2002 and 2006, revised preschool education programmes were published by the government (Gelişli & Yazıcı, 2012). According to Gelişli and Yazıcı (2012), while the theoretical basis of the preschool education programme in 2002 constituted a behaviourist approach, the programme in 2006 was created and recognised constructivism and multiple intelligences as well as considering the changes in primary education systems (Ural & Ramazan, 2007). The behaviourist approach focused on the behavioural aspects of teaching and learning but had some limitations in explaining social attitudes (Alonso *et al.*, 2005). Constructivism and multiple intelligence approaches build up knowledge-based information and skills using a variety of methods with regard to multiple intelligences. Multiple intelligences makes a cognitive categorization in intelligence and learning style such as “kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, spatial, logical-

mathematical, linguistic” (Brock *et al.*, 2009, p.125), style appropriate for children in their developmental stages. Nevertheless, the effect of these actions to support preschool education were still beneath the government’s target in terms of quality and quantity for expectations (Taner Derman & Başı, 2010).

In England in 2008, 2012 and 2017, the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)*, and the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfE, 2012; DfE, 2017) were launched. The first curriculum combined care and education (DfCSF, 2008), creating one curriculum for children from new-borns to five-year-olds. The curriculum was symbolic of the move to bring together the care and education aspects of early years, one focused on care for younger children, the other on education for older children. This document notes principles into practice, general points of EYFS, flexible provision, quality factors of settings, developmental factors, planning and resourcing and welfare issues (DfCSF, 2008). Included within the guidance, the importance of outdoor play as part of daily activities was emphasised. Each and every early years institution had to have direct access to an outdoor play area, or the setting managers needed to arrange a daily visit to an outdoor area for children (DfCSF, 2008). The outdoor areas needed to be well prepared for children to learn spontaneously and freely in a safe and secure atmosphere (DfCSF, 2008). As can be seen, this document clarified general developmental and care aspects of early years. Furthermore, it influenced an important point that is noteworthy for my research: the emphasis of outdoor play for children. Regarding this change, Waller (2009) claims that the policy makers took recent research and academic discussions around outdoor learning into account. This

is further evidence of how research has informed early years education, from the policy influences discussed earlier, to the curriculum being discussed here.

Following this, there were two more EYFS Statutory Frameworks published in 2012 and 2017 (DfE, 2012; DfE, 2017). These documents had slight differences comparing to the 2008 document in that some aspects were differently explained; for example, the aim of EYFS is explained as “quality and consistency, a secure foundation, partnership working, equality of opportunity” (DfE, 2012, p.2; DfE, 2017, p.5) and some aspects are detailed further such as the areas of learning and development; the early learning goals; safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment; and assessment (see DfE, 2012; DfE, 2017). The revised EYFS documents therefore sought to simplify the delivery and accountability of the curriculum, albeit with arguable levels of success. The overall context has remained similar, but the emphasis has changed in terms of outdoor learning. While the 2008 version underlined outdoor activities constantly, the subsequent ones only mentioned it a few times. Further, in the recent EYFS documents, there are some additional emphases on parental aspects, staff, premises, and the addition of a section on special educational needs (DfE, 2017)\*.

Gören Niron (2013) summarises that the preschool education programme in Turkey is developed by considering regulations of international organizations, systems of the EU countries, current curriculum in Turkey, frameworks and the conditions of Turkey as a developing country. Ural and Ramazan (2007) explain the influential aspects on the development of preschool education programme as a result of changes in primary school

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\* As this research was conducted before the recent EYFS launched, the previous documents have been addressed in the further chapters to discuss the findings and discussion



education systems. This is a recognition of the correlated educational approach in both preschool education and primary education in order to enhance learning for children. Besides this, one of the aims of the preschool education programme is to enhance children's school readiness (Ministry of National Education, 2013b). However, in 2013, the Preschool Education programme was launched (Ministry of National Education, 2013b) as a revision to the Preschool Education Programme (Ministry of National Education, 2006). In this programme, the coverage of preschool education was identified with regard to the new education system in Turkey, the developmental aspects of children were enhanced, and the importance of teacher and family relationships were emphasised. This was only revisited and updated in terms of renaming some aspects, and emphasising some activities. For example, the revisited programme renames the learning areas as learning centres and underlines the necessity of these learning centres outside as well as inside of the classroom. Between these two programmes, there are only marginal differences in terms of the emphasised activities and ways to apply them. The aims of the programmes are basically the same, but there are some updates on activities. This regulation allows teachers to practice activities as they consider appropriate, so they have liberty to an extent to apply various activities within the barriers of constraint, which are largely financial. The aims of the latest programme are to; provide enhanced learning opportunities for children, providing health development opportunities, motor development, social, emotional, linguistic and cognitive developments (Ministry of National Education, 2013b).

Clearly, even though England established its first nursery a hundred years before Turkey, the recent histories of early years' services are similar. Nevertheless, the roles and the

importance of early years services in these countries are different from each other. The most substantial reason for this is that Turkey has explicitly focused more on the educational part of early years' services when compared to England. This is because Turkey is a developing country, which means a focus on increasing the literacy levels and the quality of the support for early years education rather than the need for childcare since there was already no demand for childcare. It is possible to see there are explicit differences between these countries in terms of the focus of curriculum such that while the former highlights the importance of play the latter focuses on learning opportunities, and the former emphasises outdoors activities, but the latter does not. These differences led me to compare the perception of teachers in these two countries in relation to their outdoor activities, and to identify the impact of online interaction to development of their (the participating teachers') practices further.

Curriculum development processes are affected by diverse factors like policies, the condition of education and care in early years and workforce issues. Therefore, historically, both countries have instability in their curricula. Although there is a difference in the policy development process and curriculum for these countries, they have a common thread through the Lisbon Treaty. In the English and Turkish context, common issues arise from the influence of the EU decisions. The notable impact of John Dewey on Turkish preschool education is clarified in the next section so that the overall effort of the Turkish government to fill the gap in relation to developed countries, to join the EU community, can be illustrated. However, before that discussion, it is important to indicate the place of outdoor activities in policies/programmes.

### ***Outdoor Activities in the Curriculum***

Within the two countries (England and Turkey) owing to their different ECEC histories and cultures, different practices of outdoor activities have emerged. Turkey can be regarded as in the process of developing outdoor play, while in England it is more developed. In terms of children's learning, curriculum plays a part in organizing and supporting participation in outdoor activities including incorporating cultural aspects in activities (Gambino, Davis & Rowntree, 2009). In the case of Turkey, Gülay and Ekici's (2010) analysis of the Preschool Education Programme in terms of environmental education shows that there are some requirements on environmental aspects of programme such as an increase in the usage of environment, but the programme generally provides flexibility for teachers in order to arrange activities in relation to their aims.

However, it is vital to note that preschool education programme in Turkey was revised in 2013, and several articles have been added to support teachers' increased use of the outdoors as some of these articles stated that teachers should use outdoor activities as much as possible (Ministry of National Education, 2013b, p.42). In other respects, the case of outdoor activities in England has also had some policy support. The Learning outside the Classroom manifesto was launched in 2006 by the government and it considers outdoor activities as at the heart of the curriculum, and underlines the advantages of outdoor activities for child development (DfES, 2006). In the same year, the Office for Standards in Education published a document about safety in the early years and the importance of reduced number of possible hazards and enabling children to play in open air, and it also featured the possibilities of having a wide range of opportunities and experience in activities (Ofsted, 2006). Following these, as Bilton (2010) states, the

framework of outdoor areas in early years has been presented in EYFS guidance. EYFS shows that children must be given opportunities to play outside as well as inside (DfCSF, 2008). This situation is also underlined in the revised EYFS document in 2012 suggesting that “providers must provide access to an outdoor play area or, if that is not possible, ensure that outdoor activities are planned and taken on a daily basis (unless circumstances make this inappropriate, for example unsafe weather conditions)” (DfE, 2012, p.24). These documents emphasise that either all early years have a direct access to outdoor or if not, they need to arrange outdoor access for children’s daily activities.

In light of these curriculum issues around outdoors, there is a notable difference between these countries regarding the consideration of outdoors because while one (England) has outdoors in their curriculum as daily activities, the other (Turkey) leaves it optional. As a result there are likely to be some different practices in outdoor activities when the countries are compared; so it is important to undertake cross-cultural research in order to identify the similarities and difference in the practice and to seek a way to provide enhancement for the activities.

#### **2.2.5. John Dewey’s Influence**

Behind the political developments of preschool education in Turkey, there are also theoretical and philosophical developments influencing changes in the overall education system. One important example is the visit of John Dewey in 1924. After the Turkish republic was established, education was considered by its founders to be the most important step to develop the country (Turan, 2000). According to Turan (2000), many foreign scholars were invited to Turkey by the Turkish government in order to promote the education system. Dewey went to Turkey in 1924 to examine, and to help restructure

and reorganise, the educational system. His visit was concerned with the social, cultural and political changes in Turkey (Turan, 2000), but as a result of this visit, it was expected that Dewey would suggest some changes to the education system. According to Dewey, the purpose of education is to enable learning for community life; and it was also an aim to modernise and democratise the Turkish society by the members of the Turkish government (Ata, 2000; O'Dwyer, 2011). During his visit, Dewey suggested an advanced progressive education as suitable for Turkey (Wolf-Gazo, 1996). On the one hand, Dewey initially suggested the requirement of “careful and extensive studies” while undertaking actions to pursue educational reforms (Tarman, 2011, p.54) in order to achieve modernization in education. On the other hand, he did not mention preschool because mainstream education was seen as a priority, as there was no proper education system at that time. This visit might have stimulated the previously mentioned development of the Turkish education system, but there is no explicit source for this.

I have closely analysed the original report by accessing the online archives of the Turkish Parliament. Dewey's report contains subsections that are about; curriculum, the governance of the Ministry of Education, teacher training and promotion, school systems, hygiene and health, and school security (Dewey, 1939). These appear as regulative factors in the education system because education is “an active and constructive process” (Dewey, 1997). However, his report underlines the relationship between education and political issues in Turkey to a newly established government wishing to participate in world affairs. He argued that pupils needed to take part in life as well as having theoretical lessons, which meant that qualified teachers were needed in order to learn more than mere theoretical facts scribed in textbooks. Taking part in life and being in the centre of life

were as important as learning theories in order to apply knowledge into practice (Ata, 2001; Dewey, 1939). Dewey (1939) also claimed that schools needed to be an arena which could provide experimental skills for children. This means that schools should be arranged to improve students' professional and lifelong skills. Coincidentally this reflects the EU's short-term agenda for Turkey. Özsoy (2009) describes schools with regard to Dewey's report, as life itself, not as a preparation of life. For example, when students learn new agricultural techniques, if they think it is useful for their environment, they should find the required tools and should apply the technique in the field (Dewey, 1939). In this implementation, pupils practice real-life experiences, face real problems and solve them. Learning activities should not be a trial of real-life issues, according to Dewey, they are life itself.

Dewey (1939) clarified that a new programme was needed for 8-12 year olds and this needed to be regulated with regard to Turkey's demands and targets (related changes are mentioned in the previous section). This programme furthermore should have the status of law and it needed to be regularly revised. The Ministry of Education would need to maintain the education system, and sub-commissions should be established to do so. The roles of sub-commissions were to investigate current issues in other countries and in Turkey, and then provide specific recommendations to further develop the Turkish educational system. In addition, Dewey stated some important points to be investigated by the sub-commissions. These points are: (1) buildings, gardens and transportation, (2) the pragmatic roles of schools regarding professional/occupational activities, (3) physical training, sports and games, (4) rural schools and their evaluation of rural schools (including Denmark's Ministry of Education) (Dewey, 1939). The first point in particular

plays an important role for my research due to having direct relation with the conditions of buildings and gardens and specifically outdoor activities. However, it is unfair to claim that there is a legacy of outdoor activities as a result of Dewey in Turkey; as his related ideas seem to have disappeared from the agenda over time.

The governance of the Ministry of Education was given some specified roles in Dewey's report. Firstly, he emphasised the importance of educational publications in order that teachers could improve their knowledge and quality. He suggested foreign educational publications needed to be translated into Turkish to increase their accessibility. These documents would in particular need to be suitable for the new education system and materials (Dewey, 1939). He also suggested library developments to contribute personal development for young people by translating high-class books (Dewey, 1939) because some practical activities can be borrowed by teachers from other cultures (Tobin, Hsueh & Karasawa, 2009) as long as differing cultural needs in education are also considered. Dewey also recommended mobile libraries and the necessity of training new librarians. In response, the government sent librarians abroad to receive formal education (Ata, 2000). This shows the important influence of cultural differences and comparison, while putting in practice different examples in their context. This was discussed in the previous section on global factors for both countries. Such cross-cultural aspects exhibit the necessity of learning new ideas and practices, whilst considering the cultural differences. The third point was about building schools, whereby he underlined the necessity of the architects consulting teachers about the schools' needs, for the best education. According to Dewey, school buildings and gardens would be better used with this consultancy advice (Dewey, 1939), which is a key point in outdoor activities for schools now and plays an

important role when comparing England and Turkey in my research. The final point was about strategic communication between different departments of government, such as the identification of necessary school numbers for each location, the number of children and the number of teachers (Dewey, 1939). This point consisted of statistical analysis of people, who actively took part in education either as a teacher or a student.

Another aspects of Dewey's report was teacher training and promotion (Turan, 2000). According to Uygun (2008), the teacher training/education system in Turkey has been hugely influenced by Dewey and his influence could be clearly seen in the case of the training of rural teachers. Regarding teacher training, Dewey made further suggestions, which were; informing and equipping the current teachers and promotion of teachers as managers or inspectors (Dewey, 1939). Several urgent points needed to be fixed for teachers, including; "(1) Teachers' financial problems, (2) Pension and housing problems, (3) Problems pertinent to school administration" (Uygun, 2008, p.297). With regard to these facts, Dewey underlined the importance of qualified teachers for schools, and emphasised certain aspects. One of these is teacher promotion. In this case, the requirement of the improvement in salaries was underlined because unless teachers were happy with their salary, it would be difficult to get them engaged and deeply involved in education (Ata, 2000; Dewey, 1939). Teachers had complained about their low salary when talking to Dewey (Ata, 2000), whilst he attended the Congress of Teachers in Ankara, one venue where he had a chance to speak with them (Ata, 2001). Furthermore, he understood that the responsibilities of the school managers' job could also be improved by the contribution of people into education as teachers (Dewey, 1939).



In the case of teacher training schools, these schools needed to be unique and informed by their local environment. I therefore followed the footsteps of Dewey in my research due to focusing on the development of teachers. In this case, schools (primary, secondary high schools) would engage with local needs related to the requirement of a future workforce. Regarding this, pupils needed to have an interaction with villages and their environments (Ata, 2000). For instance, the village institutes appeared to engage with local factors such as supporting farming. These schools would be shaped with regard to improving teachers' abilities to achieve self-sufficiency in that region (Dewey, 1939). Dewey underlined the necessity of coherence of the school with social life/issues of the society (Uygun, 2008). In this fashion, trainee teachers in these schools could have a chance to learn by doing and would be more actively involved in developing the schools' curricula (Turan, 2000). This issue also matches Dewey's general perspective on education because he defends the importance of learning by doing and doing in cooperation with children in education (Bender, 2005). Teacher candidates would also be required to go to foreign countries to carry out detailed investigations. This requirement would be kept as a prior obligation for teacher candidates to be competent teachers in the future (Dewey, 1939).

The system of schools was another notable part of this report. The reason for this is that the different level schools were criticised in terms of their usefulness for academic and real life. In this case, each level of schools was needed to prepare students for both life abilities and continuing schooling. This means that for example, primary schools were needed to train students for working in a farm as well as teaching children lessons for secondary schools (Dewey, 1939) in order that children could have a choice for going on

academic life or working with their family. Besides this, these different levels of schools were needed to develop programmes that considered other levels because it was important that children could achieve the expectations for the following school levels (Dewey, 1939). For instance, in this fashion, secondary schools were required to have a programme, which addressed the primary school programme as well as preparing children for the high school curricula. In the case of programme development or curriculum, “the curriculum of the subject matters in the schools should be changed due to the local environment” (Ata, 2000, p.124-125). Ata’s (2000) statement illustrates that localization of curriculum should have been preferred instead of a standardised version. This would have been a better education strategy when the socio-economic and socio-cultural differences are taken into account. The reason why Dewey advocated such decentralisation was that his understanding of pedagogy is founded on “the principles of localization of the education system and the autonomy of the school” (Özsoy, 2009, p.1928). This approach aims to underline the possible regional differences because it is difficult to expect to provide a standardised system over a country due to the many variables affecting life styles and education. However, this argument lost support in time and left ground open to centralised educational policies for all schools (Gören Niron, 2013).

Due to the prevalence of malaria and trachoma in Turkey at that time, the importance of hygiene and health issues were also remarked by Dewey. To prevent these illnesses, schools needed to provide health lessons for at least one year in their curriculum (Dewey, 1939). Sport activities and the necessity of sport areas were also emphasised. Thus, the sports facilities and areas would be regulated to ensure students get maximum benefit from them, both for girls and for boys (Dewey, 1939).

Moreover, in the case of the school security, safety and discipline, Dewey underlined the focus on regulations inside of schools rather than the external environment. He remarked on the importance of approaches to school discipline instead of securing schools from outside dangers. The obedience of children to teachers was underlined as unnecessary, and there was no need for ordering, threatening and dominating students in schools by teachers and managers. Conversely, the students should take part in the administration of schools (Dewey, 1939). With respect to this, Dewey aimed to improve the democratic environment and liberalism in schools (Güçlü, 2014), and this still has an impact on education in Turkey (Uygun, 2008).

In the case of realising Dewey's report by the government, although his suggestions were generally welcomed initially, they were not sustained in the long-term. A possible reason for this is that the governmental authorities did not understand Dewey sufficiently (Uygun, 2008) or it may be that there were financial and cultural impediments. However, Turan (2000, p.552) claims that "the Turkish government in the 1990s re-emphasised the importance of 'the Law of Unification of Instruction' of 1924 and passed new laws to enforce better these outdated laws and approaches to education." Therefore, this report noted the same necessary issues in the school, school environment (garden), management, programmes, lessons and targets of schools. Some of these were achieved and some of them are still overlooked. In particular, there was an effect of Dewey's report on village teachers and policies in the 1940s (Tarman, 2011). As Uygun (2008) states, Dewey had an explicit effect on policy development for teacher training, and this is still visible in current policies. Besides this, according to Turan (2000), Dewey made some important suggestions for the development of Turkish education system and the promotion of

education. While Dewey was suggesting these points in his report, Güçlü (2014) clarifies that he was influenced by his pragmatic philosophy. However, Özsoy (2009, p.1926) argues Dewey's visit is "an intellectual conundrum" because Dewey visited Turkey in the summer, he was not able to see actual classroom, and teaching activities, so there are still some fuzzy points and his suggestions were substantially correlated with his pragmatist philosophy rather than a direct response to conditions in schools. This issue was expressed by Dewey himself that he was unable to examine the actual situation because his visit coincided with summer holiday (Ata, 2001). Correspondingly, his suggestions related to general beliefs about education and discussions because he was unable to work on specific observations of cultural, economic and social factors in Turkey (Uygun, 2008). Despite this, Tarman (2011) also claims that the Turkish government realised a similar development of education in the case of being a candidate country for the EU, parallel to Dewey's report, and Uygun (2008) states that Dewey's effect on Turkish education can still be recognized because policy makers still make reference to him. It could be argued that if Dewey's report had been followed tightly from the beginning, the Turkish education system might be in a better place now rather than returning to similar ideas because of the impact of seeking EU membership.

### **2.3. The Perception of Play**

The above differences within historical developments of policy/programme as well as curriculum implications also results in varied perceptions of play in these two countries. Therefore, describing perceptions of play is important in organizing the activities in early years settings. As expected, various people explain the meaning of play differently regarding various factors, such as cultural, historical and influential pioneers. However,

a commonly recognised understanding is that play can be “epistemic: play associated with development of cognitive/intellectual skills; ludic: play associated with development of social and creative skills; and games with rules: for example team sports or chess” (Hutt, 1979, p.115 cited in Brock *et al.*, 2009, p.14). This description addresses all types of play seen in early years settings.

Brock et al. (2009) listed various pioneers, who highlighted the importance of play for children and different types of play in early years. Important ones amongst this list are Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, Piaget, Dewey and Rousseau because these are prominent pioneers who make direct statements on play. These people are closely related with early years in terms of their approaches and represent cultural differences because Pestalozzi and Piaget are from Switzerland, Froebel is from Germany, Montessori is from Italy, Dewey is from the US, Vygotsky is from Russia, and Rousseau is originally from Switzerland but moved to France and reflects the French influence. In addition to this, other outstanding pioneers such as Margaret McMillan, Susan Isaacs (Tovey, 2014) and Vygotsky (Bilton, 2010) influence our understanding of and shaping of outdoor activities. All of these pioneers (and others not mentioned here) have been influential in shaping the understandings of and pedagogical approaches in ECEC. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss here the different approaches of these pioneers to play in order to reflect different perceptions of play from different countries.

### ***Pestalozzi***

Ornstein and Levine (2008) refer to Pestalozzi as a mentor of Froebel because they claim that Froebel revised Pestalozzi’s method. In general, Pestalozzi was dissatisfied with the inadequate and passive learning of children in schools. He also emphasised the

importance of using senses in education and the necessity to modify inactive memorization. With regard to this, it is claimed that “schools, if properly organized, could become centers of effective learning” (Ornstein & Levine, 2008, p.100). These statements about Pestalozzi show that he underlined active learning in schools, and in light of being Froebel’s mentor, he obliquely pointed out the importance of play.

### ***Froebel***

Froebel claimed Pestalozzi had an important influence on his early research and his practices (Adelman, 2000). Froebel (Froebel, 1887/1974, p.54-55 cited in Manning, 2005, p.372) states that:

Play is the highest phase of child development – of human development at this period. Play is the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this stage, and, at the same time, typical of human life as a whole – of the inner hidden natural life in man and all things. It gives, therefore, joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer rest, peace with the world. It holds the sources of all that is good.

This statement of Froebel indicates that play is the most important activity for children to develop themselves, and it is also a way of conceptualizing the relation between motivation and engagement with life. Outdoor play and activities constitute the focus of my research because of this understanding of the importance of play for a child’s development and their lives. Froebel is known as the founder of the nursery garden in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to support children’s outdoor play and learning (Waite & Rea, 2007), which indicates the importance of Froebel’s approach in early years. The outdoor environment and play were underlined by Froebel (Read, 2006), who believed that play is children’s way of learning, understanding and integrating to life

(Brock *et al.*, 2009); play enables children to develop their ideas, insights, understandings, knowledge and their relationship with the world.

### ***Maria Montessori***

Froebel's ideas link to the work of Maria Montessori in terms of highlighting the role of the environment of children although these two pioneers have different backgrounds. Montessori also emphasises the requirement of pretend play for children. In this case, furnishing of classrooms and the organising of the environment as a playground for children can enable children to learn with real-life materials (Montessori, 1912). Montessori discussed the spaces and materials for children's learning and engagement with life. According to her, play areas should be re-arranged smoothly when children wish to play different games (Montessori, 1912). For instance, Montessori classrooms are organised for children to voluntarily choose activities which are designed with regard to real-life objects (Feez, 2009) such as stones, sponges and socks so that children can perform real-life play. However, it is important to refer to these pioneers in terms of their philosophy, which is the basis for outdoor activities. Although both Montessori and Froebel mention the importance of environment and space in terms of real-like objects, they focused on different aspects. It may reflect specific cultural conditions (for example, while Froebel, from Germany, emphasises play as learning, for Montessori, from Italy, play areas need to be compatible with real-life experiences). This is because although there are similarities in cross-cultural contexts, it is likely that some dissimilarities in practice will inevitably occur. Due to this reason, it is essential to explain different pioneers in the field in order to execute the impact of comparative research.

## ***Piaget***

Piaget furthermore draws attention to the cognitive process while children play. Piaget (1962, p.148) states that the “child, while using the same schemas, enjoys exercising his powers and being aware of himself as the cause of the activity.” This means that a child recognizes himself/herself during play. Play also has a crucial role for children to engage with social, cultural and gender issues at the beginning of life (Brock *et al.*, 2009). Piaget furthermore mentions the spontaneity of play, so play must be unrestrained for children, and provide pleasure and immediate satisfaction. Additionally, Piaget (1962) references Freud that during satisfactory play, children get used to real-life experience as well as gaining satisfaction.

According to Piaget, children do not need to have any kind of external organisation in play. However, while play is recognized as a lack of organizational structure, in schools it is always regulated (Piaget, 1962) by adults. In this context, lack of organisational structure means there is no aimed activity while regulation emphasises some rules of play. This means that although there are some rules around play, the tasks are not compulsory to be achieved in play, so they can be flexible considering children’s wishes.

Piaget (1962) furthermore refers to Gross’s principle that play occurs instinctively and has a contribution to developmental impacts, so it does not reflect completed skills, in contrast, it contains some mistakes. These mistakes normally occur as a stage in learning and improving themselves. In other words, play instinctively appears and it improves children’s developmental functions. That is, there are always mistakes and problems in children’s play and such mistakes and problems lead children to learn various things as they gain experience in problem solving. Besides this, Brock et al. (2009) claim that child-



initiated learning occurs as a result of instinctive motivation. In the case of an overlap between Gross's principle on play and Brock et al.'s (2009) statement on motivation, play can be used as an instinctive motivator to promote learning. This idea might be argued against as they do not directly address play anymore, but it is more about how to benefit from play in enhancing learning. Brock et al. (2009, p.21-22) accentuate a similar idea for educators that "educators need to provide stimulating playful environments that promote practical activities and the use of interesting resources and so enable children to initiate their own learning experiences." The reason for this is that Piaget interprets play as behaviour, which consists of a combination of skills, knowledge and insights (Singh & Gupta, 2011). It appears from these statements that play can improve children's motivation to learn as an instinctive drive. This is highly likely to be supported by outdoor activities nowadays, but there are different practices within different countries (in this context: England and Turkey).

### ***Vygotsky***

Parallel to Piaget's explanations, Vygotsky also points out the importance of play in terms of cognitive development (DeVries, 2000; Duncan & Tarulli, 2003). The underlying premise is that play and, in particular, outdoor play is described as a pivotal activity for children's development, welfare and happiness (Vygotsky, 1978 cited in Singh & Gupta, 2011). Thereby, through play, children get to know the social roles of people and activities, which means that play caters for a deep improvement in cognitive development (Duncan & Tarulli, 2003). This development emerges because there is an interaction of multiple agents such as the perception of the child, the role taking of play partners, the theme of play, which in turn enable children to develop varied skills (Singh & Gupta, 2011). For

instance, a child can take on a role in play, and his/her behaviour can be completely different than real-life due to having an imaginary life in play (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010). It can be seen that although Vygotsky advocates play quasi Piaget, but in detail, they have various differences in the statements because of having different backgrounds and approaches to play. For example, Vygotsky attributes a greater role for the social aspects of play, and Piaget focuses on the cognitive aspects. This is another example which reveals various approaches to play and activities for various people.

### ***John Dewey***

John Dewey is one of the outstanding pioneers in education, whose influence in the Turkish context has already been stated, but his influence extends beyond Turkey. In this regard, Dewey described play in a general context as learning through doing and experiencing (Braundy, 2004) rather than memorizing. As a result learning emerges in independent learning environments, and play is an activity that organizes this kind of learning for children of preschool age (Koçyiğit, Tuğluk & Kök, 2007). As Braundy (2004) claims, regarding Dewey's work, play provides experiential and encouraging activities in the social environment, and in consequence of the social activities, some features such as academic, critical and practical skills are improved during these play activities. Children's play is described as a valued work of childhood, which needs to be performed (Braundy, 2004). The ideas of Dewey are discussed in the previous section with regard to his visit to Turkey and Dewey's suggestions on the Turkish education system reveals his philosophy in education.

### ***Jean Jacques Rousseau***

Another theorist relevant to outdoor play is Jean Jacques Rousseau (previously his ideas on childhood were briefly mentioned). His ideas relate to the approaches in early childhood education as Rousseau also defended child-initiated or child-directed play (Schwarzmueller & Rinaldo, 2013). However, Rousseau (1956) advocates the importance of experiencing knowledge via real-life games by children themselves in a teacher-constituted environment (cited in Nair, Yusof & Arumugam, 2014) which is parallel to Montessori's pretend play approach with regard to using real-life materials and activities. While describing such different perceptions of play, the emphasis in looking at different theorists is about the potential impact on current practice because the knowledge background of teachers may be based on these theorists as well as cultural influences. As I have noted, Brock et al. (2009) state that play is a kind of learning tool and appears impulsively, but the role of educators is (but not limited) to provide playing opportunities that will help children to learn. In this case, teachers, or adults, are there to provide enhanced opportunities and guidance for children as "play is the ideal tool for children's learning" (Wood, Bruce & Baxter, 2012, p.161). It can be profitable for children to play and learn (McInnes *et al.*, 2011), but it is necessary to remember that a planning, organisation, implementation, assessment and evaluation cycle should be followed enabling children to play (Brock *et al.*, 2009). The sub-text of this statement is the requirement for teachers to control the process as an outsider. However, this is highly likely to restrict children's play because of the domination of an adult in the field, so it may result in limiting the idea of Rousseau's child-initiated play (Schwarzmueller & Rinaldo, 2013), and change it from play. In the context of play and assessment, Brock et al. (2009, p.26) claim that "the Plowden Report gave play a strong endorsement." It can

be obviously seen that such reports have an effect on the perception of play as well as policy development. However, Lifter et al. (2011, p.225) indicate that researchers, policy makers and practitioners have a consistency about play that it is a part of the preparation for “school readiness, literacy development and self-regulation.” Therefore, it is likely to lead to more adult-centred activities. This may be as a result of cultural differences in the understanding of childhood because play and, in particular, risky play depend on cultural factors in connection with perceptions and differences of cultural backgrounds (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012). In a similar fashion, Anthamatten, Wee and Korris (2013) confirm that culture has another decisive role in play, which is with whom children play and where. For example, the trust of children may vary according to the cultural approaches to foreign people; while playing hide and seek with a new peer is acceptable in one culture, it might not be considered safe in another culture. Therefore, children play differently in different cultures because of having various socio-historic backgrounds despite other similar conditions. In the light of this example, the practice of outdoor activities within different countries is likely to vary even where commonly based on a theorists’ ideas such as Rousseau for example.

As can be seen from pioneers’ opinions, there are various understandings and interpretations of play as a result of historical and philosophical differences. Fundamentally, although they all emphasise the importance of play, they also note various forms of play such as outdoor play and structured classroom plays. In addition, as mentioned above, the perception of play is changeable with regard to culture, country and policy developments. For example, while some pioneers see children as needing to be socialised into good behaviour patterns, others advocate that children are born innocent.

As a result, these philosophers' different explanations of childhood and play indicate that there are some differences in the case of assigning a meaning to play in childhood.

It is apparent that adult planning may also constrain children's play as well as other constraining aspects of gender in play (as mentioned above). With respect to these statements, Gabriel (2010) claims that children were outside more between 1800s and 1900s than now because they are now perceived as more vulnerable by adults; this demonstrates one way that adults can constrain children's outdoor activities. This statement indicates changes in societies' understanding of childhood and changing behaviour in children. These phenomena have various effects on children's play and places where they play. Regarding these differences in play, there are also some differences in outdoor activities with respect to countries and their cultural backgrounds (i.e. how they see the educational approach in practice and impacting norms on education). Some differences in outdoor activities are likely to happen as a result of various perceptions of play because outdoor activities involve play as their foundation. In the reflection of cultural differences in play between these countries, the given roles to children are varied in daily activities, so while play in educational contexts in England is structured by EYFS (DfE, 2012; DfE, 2017) and regularly inspected by OFSTED (Page, 2010), Turkey has more flexibility as a result of the programme (Ministry of National Education, 2013b) and lack of inspection of its implementation. This difference is likely to lead various enactments of outdoor activities as well as exhibiting the overall difference between these countries which underlines the value of this research. This research arises from this identified need to determine the perceptions of teachers, and their practices

across the two countries, and to support positive changes as a result of the teachers' interactions with other teachers from different contexts.

## **2.4. Outdoor Activities**

From the discussion about cultural differences around different aspects of early years, different national approaches in outdoor activities are highly likely to arise, in particular in England and Turkey. Outdoor activities can cover many different forms and settings; for instance, school gardens, playgrounds, field trips, forests, outdoor areas, and these outdoor areas are highlighted as children's favourite places, according to US-based research (Wells, 2000). Therefore, different approaches from different countries are accommodated for outdoor activities, and they are discussed further in this study because they underpin this research due to the increasing importance of outdoor activities internationally. This section reviews some points as off-stage factors for my research through different foci: the context of outdoors, academic learning, adult and child role, risky play, landscape, and drawbacks in outdoor activities considering the cultural differences.

Initially, the importance of outdoor activities originated from their developmental contribution to children because they enable children to improve their health (Waters & Maynard, 2010), intellectual (Azlina & Zulkiflee, 2012), moral (Gair, 1997), cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and physical (Bilton, 2010) development. However, this argument is criticised by some researchers that some skills (fine motor skills) may not be addressed (Suggate, Stoege & Pufke, 2016) and that further in-depth research is needed to identify the impacts of the outdoor environment for development (Moser & Martinsen, 2010). Being outdoors provides children with a wide range of options to make favourable

contributions to their entire development, in particular social and personal (Aasen, Grindheim & Waters, 2009). Susan Isaacs furthermore underlines the experiential aspects of outdoor learning, so it is claimed that “vivid first-hand experience outdoors nourishes early cognitive and affective development” (Garrick, 2009, p.18). Regarding this, outdoor activities play an important role for children’s development because engagement with nature encourages them to participate in motor activities due to having slopes and rocks so that children engage with such natural materials (Fjørtoft, 2001) and the outdoors enables children to have a wide range of play activities (Fjørtoft, 2004). Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the possible outcomes of outdoor activities further.

#### **2.4.1. The Context of the Outdoors**

It is important to identify the context of the outdoor activities and outdoor play, which are used in previous literature, in this research and the context within these terms. The context of outdoors is based on various approaches which are conducted outside of classrooms. In this case, Aasen, Grindheim and Waters (2009) emphasize that outdoor play is an informal experience for children to learn as it is instant and casual with a wide range of opportunities. As is expected, such opportunities occur in the outdoors. These opportunities can help to achieve educational targets too. This is because some pioneers (mentioned in the previous sections such as Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, Dewey and so on (Davis, 1998; Maynard, 2007a)) consider the child “as intrinsically curious and capable; (who) values free play and first-hand learning” (Maynard, 2007b, p.380). These pioneers perceive children’s learning as based on experiential activities and first-hand experience (Davis, 1998). This is because outdoor play provides a sustained and instant impact on child learning and experience, unconsciously (White & Woolley, 2014).

Outdoor activities further provide a wide range of freedom for children compared to indoor activities (Waite, 2015). However, the importance of outdoor play emerged as a result of a fall in children's participation in the outdoors as well as its decreasing importance in educational settings (Maynard, 2007a). This decrease is directly related to the cultural issue that cultural density plays a decisive role in structuring outdoor areas (Waite, 2015), which can be utilized with either its positive or limiting aspects. Although the pioneers and research literature highlights the positive impact of outdoor activities for children and education, the past approaches of authorities, and countries, have been a limiting factor, acting against some changes. In this regard, cultural density may cause conflict between outdoor activities and educational opportunities (Waite, 2013) as educational aspects are based on traditional aspects like adult domination. The core idea of outdoor activities highlights the importance of the active role of children.

The importance of outdoor activities emerges from some theoretical approaches. As the outdoors have social foundations in activities, learning in the outdoors is based on a socio-constructivist approach (Aasen, Grindheim & Waters, 2009) because

“children playing outdoors have the space and freedom for extended negotiation and varied meaning-making experiences; participation in such activity can be the first step in the development of a democratic community” (Aasen, Grindheim & Waters, 2009, p.10).

During outdoor activities, with the help of social aspects, the natures of children are moulded (Waite & Pratt, 2011). In another case, Maynard (2007b) claims in her research that the traditional sense of some norms can be contrary to the values in the outdoors, so innovative thoughts can be shaped during the practice of outdoor activities. This is because children have a wide range of opportunities with various materials and contents in order to enhance various theories on area, nature and interaction so that children can



overcome their limits (White & Woolley, 2014). In this regard, Waite and Pratt (2011) emphasise the outdoors as a place to enhance the quality of social interaction and awareness. In addition, outdoor play provides risk-taking opportunities in order for children to learn, handling them in parallel with their developmental nature and abilities (Maynard, 2007a) through having various types of materials for outdoor activities (Waite, Huggins & Wickett, 2014). However, risky aspects may limit the impact and importance of outdoor activities (this is discussed in the following sections).

Outdoor play “is also used as a source of ideas, inspiration and materials for the creative arts” (Davis, 1998, p.120). “It also demands that learning goals are focussed on social competencies and democratic understandings; learning lies within the context and the relationships of the situation” (Aasen, Grindheim & Waters, 2009, p.11). In this regard, outdoor play induces influential and qualified opportunities for children (White & Woolley, 2014) because of providing exploration, amending, conceptualizing, and producing various opinions for children during activities (Tovey, 2007). However, “clear and shared values and cultural expectations of staff and children created a strong basis for outdoor learning” (Waite, 2015). In other respects, “risk, which can significantly affect how they approach outdoor play” (Waite, Huggins & Wickett, 2014, p.79), may limit such opportunities for outdoor activities, and may cause adverse effects on opportunities in the outdoors when compared to indoors.

In general, outdoor activities and play are regarded in previous literature and by pioneers as a unique opportunity for children to gain socio-constructivist, experiential and first-hand experiences; although there are possibilities for cultural misguidance and limitation as well as possibilities for risky aspects.

#### **2.4.2. Academic Learning**

Outdoor activities play an important role in the learning processes because children spend most of their time with artificial materials nowadays (Huggins & Wickett, 2011), and the outdoors supplies diverse, adjustable (Waters & Maynard, 2010) and natural materials. Maynard and Waters (2007) encourage the idea that the outdoors is a way to improve children's learning. Consistent with Maynard and Waters (2007), Bilton (2010, p.31) states that there is a need for outdoor activity that it is also a "learning and teaching environment" rather than merely a specified area for physical activities. Thus, the general understanding of outdoor activities as simply a physical activity is not valid (Gair, 1997) although there is research proving the importance of the outdoors for motor development (e.g. Fjørtoft, 2004; Fjørtoft and Sageie, 2000). However, it is important to clarify that outdoor areas provide self-learning opportunities unlike structured indoor environments (Wood, Bruce & Baxter, 2012). Moreover, Waters and Maynard (2010) claim that outdoor spaces give teachers some opportunities to fulfil children's developmental requirements through such as cognitive and physical encounters.

Aasen and Waters (2006) remark that learning is actualized via both formal and informal ways in outdoor spaces because play, interplay and daily activities lead to learning for children during outdoor activities. Although these types of learning occur simultaneously and spontaneously, they have nevertheless some educational goals such as values, rules and regulations (Aasen, Grindheim & Waters, 2009). During such learning, teachers can harness children's curiosity and enable them to take responsibility (Beames, Higgins & Nicol, 2012). Correspondingly, outdoor areas provide a wide range of learning experience for children's cognitive development, so the outdoors helps improve "children's

imaginations, inventiveness, and creativity” (Ernst & Tornabene, 2012, p.645) because outdoor activities are described as transforming of schema for children (Garrick, 2009). During outdoor activities, children face various and unexpected challenges, and they look for possible solutions to them, which eventually provides them wider perspectives.

### ***Experiential Learning***

Experiential learning is described as “a mindless recording of experience” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p.193). This means that individuals learn new things unconsciously while doing something else. Experiential learning is an increasingly accepted fundamental understanding of education, since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, because some researchers such as John Dewey and Jean Piaget emphasise its centrality for learning and development of children (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The foundation of the importance of experiential learning is emphasised by John Dewey (mentioned in the previous section about Turkey) such that “each experience may be lively, vivid and interesting” (Dewey, 1963, p.26). The reason for this is that learning occurs during hands on activities (Davis, Rea & Waite, 2006) and the physicality of material learning can contribute to conceptual learning and skill development.

Fjørtoft (2001) states engagement with outdoors provides a vast range of opportunities for learning compared to other play areas. Additionally, outdoor spaces provide children with experiential learning opportunities (Gambino, Davis & Rowntree, 2009; Waite & Pratt, 2011) which are important educationally. Children can face various situations in the outdoors; applying knowledge and skills in diverse contexts helps their learning to become more embedded, leading to an increase in permanent understanding. Barton (2006) believes that outdoor activities are strongly associated with experiential learning.

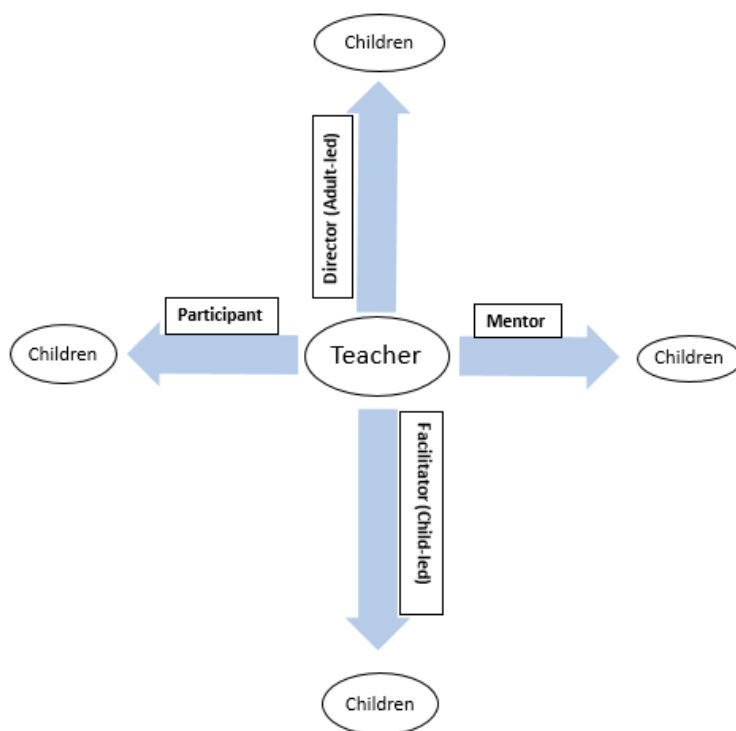
Supporting this Mart and Bilton's (2014) research shows that teachers also point out the positive influence of outdoor activities on children's learning via experience. Waite and Rea (2007) remark that the outdoors can be used to teach science and geography through using experiential aspects to support concept formation.

#### **2.4.3. Adult and Child Roles**

Wood, Baxter and Bruce (2009) state that play in the outdoors is generally formed in two ways, which are child-led and adult-led activities. In child-led activities, children organize and direct the activities with less disruption by adults, but adults still get involved in activities as a group member. In adult-led activities, adults are in charge and they manage and affect activities. Outdoor play, in relation to child-led activities, was first mentioned in *the Plowden Report* in 1967 (Maynard, 2014) because "...children do not merely internalize adult culture, they become part of it..." (Rogers & Evans, 2006, p.44). This means that children are keen to participate in activities actively rather than only pursuing adults' ideas. As outdoors is usually associated with providing child-led activities, Aasen, Grindheim and Waters' (2009) research study shows that children are likely to play outside rather than inside as the preferred play area in their kindergartens. In child-led games, children learn some aspects of socialization such as consultation with each other (Wood, Bruce & Baxter, 2012). It is necessary to avoid the domination of adults during outdoor activities (Waller, 2007) in order to provide freedom to children and enhance the opportunities for interaction. Linking with this, it is known that outdoor experiences of children depends, to some extent, on adult behaviour since it is the adults who are responsible for the classroom as the organizers of the environment for learning (Ernst & Tornabene, 2012). Bilton (2012) states that although outdoor activities offer a chance for

language development, adults can make an important contribution to this development. Bilton (2012) conducted observations in early years settings in the UK noting a tendency for adults to restrict communication with children during outdoor activities because they took an organizer role rather than assisting communication to support their language development. Correspondingly, Waller (2007, p.405) contends that to avoid such restriction “[p]ractitioners co-construct knowledge with a group of children.” This leads to improved outcomes of outdoor activities.

However, teachers have variable roles and approaches to activities and children, and it



**Figure 2.1: The Role of Teachers during Outdoor Activities (diagram developed based on (Huggins & Wickett, 2011))**

need to be arranged by teachers considering the circumstances. Therefore, Figure 2.1 illustrates the four main roles of teachers during activities: director of activities, mentor of children, facilitator of space and activities, and participant in children’s activities. This is important to balance the roles of teachers as Dewey

claims that the roles of teachers are only being a mentor in activities rather than being a

director (Dewey, 1963). Regarding this, the European Commission on Education and Active Citizenship has a statement on the roles such that

“The teacher’s role becomes one of accompaniment, facilitation, mentoring, support and guidance in the service of learners’ own efforts to access, use and ultimately create knowledge. This means that learners become active participants in their own learning process, which they learn to negotiate and co-manage together with their teacher-guides and with their co-learners” (European Commission, 1998, p.15).

This statement exhibits various roles for teachers, the aims of these roles, and the impact of these roles on children. In addition to this, Guldberg (2009, p.88) notes “the increasingly interventionist role of adults in children’s disputes, which could be limiting children’s opportunities to form lasting friendships.” This means that when adults get involved in children’s relations and activities, it prevents the children from enhanced relationships and engagement. These two statements exhibit the importance of teachers’ roles during the activities.

If the role of the adult exceeds the optimal threshold between these roles of director rather than facilitator, the games turn into adult-led play and can lose the social aim; thus there is a tension between supporting learning and freedom for the child to explore. With respect to this, “children learn how to obey rules, and the notion of competition is introduced” (Wood, Bruce & Baxter, 2012, p.161). This means that when an adult takes part in games under his/her supervision, the joy and free exploration of games may disappear as the activities change into planned learning. Raban, Ure and Waniganayake (2003, p.72) describe the role of the adult from Vygotsky’s approach, and they remark that “the role of adult as one of engaging with and interacting through action and/or dialogue” rather than controlling the learning process. Wood, Bruce and Baxter (2012) also underline that an important method of learning is to play through enduring enjoyable

activities. This aim is achieved only in the absence of dominant adult supervision in activities. However, there is a need to have some adult-led activities in order to prepare children for school because it is indicated that the purpose of early years is also to increase school readiness within the respective government's policy/programme.

Nonetheless, teachers as adults, have a strong role in outdoor activities due to their main role as organizers of activities. Therefore, they need to have sufficient theoretical knowledge and practical expertise to apply outdoor activities successfully (Öztürk, 2009). Teachers have a role to arrange daily activities and to guide children on daily basis. In relation to this, Tovey (2007, p.120) states that

“Knowledge of what promotes and restricts opportunities for rich play and learning outdoors allows us to take more responsibility, to intervene more actively and to reflect more critically on adults' roles in enriching play, for example, the way time and space are structured, the provision that is made and how adults interact with children's play.”

While the outdoors mostly is associated with and provides child-led activities, the role of the adults is changeable, for example; they can either be facilitators of activities or restricting factors for children. This is parallel to Figure 2.1 from Huggins and Wickett (2011), which exhibits four main roles of teachers: director, mentor, facilitator and participant.

These roles are likely to be shaped by; the approaches in early years, the focus of early years as well as cultural background and how the adults position themselves towards outdoor activities. Correspondingly, Mart and Bilton (2014) point out the influence of teacher perception on outdoor activities via their comparative research on cultural differences, in terms of time spent outdoors and the reasons for outdoor activities. As Öztürk (2009), and Mart and Bilton (2014) mention, outdoor activities are shaped by

factors such as the knowledge and perception of teachers. Teachers' attitudes may have a positive or negative regulative impact during outdoor activities, so the attitudes need to be managed at an optimal level. Besides this, while Mart and Bilton (2014) critique the role of teachers in outdoor activities both in the UK and in Turkey, they also point out that there is a more important role for outdoors in the UK as the allotted amount of time and resources spent on outdoor activities indicate.

Another distinct adult factor is parents because, as Kos and Jerman's (2013) research illustrates, some parents do not bring proper clothes and shoes for children's outdoor activities, and they may over-react to risky situations. In this regard, Mart and Bilton (2014) state that parental factors restrict outdoor activities. In light of these parental issues, implementing outdoor activities in the daily routine can be a problem, which needs to be managed, and which might reduce the amount of time spent outside. This is another point to consider in research as a reflection of cultural issues.

In light of these aspects, in terms of roles, teachers have a responsibility to organize and to decide the activities and roles during outdoor activities. These roles (director, mentor, facilitator and participant) can be shaped considering other factors around them like outdoor areas, environment, materials and so on. Because of variables around roles, it is important and relevant to identify teachers' perceptions and practice in outdoor activities via cross-cultural research.

#### **2.4.4. Risky Play**

Another role for adults in settings is about both facilitating and protecting children against risk. Although risk is understood as an unfavourable safety issue for the outdoors (Elliott,



2013), an important aspect of outdoor activities is to provide positive risk-taking opportunities, which has a notable role for children's welfare and growth because "it allows children to learn how to manage risk and hence understand safety" (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012, p.300). Correspondingly, Waite, Huggins and Wickett (2014, p.76) state that "a 'no-risk' approach may endanger the child's sense of him or herself as a learner and as a capable person." Meanwhile, while providing positive risk-taking regarding safety affairs, the opportunities of materials, articles and play areas for children are remarkably limited (Kos & Jerman, 2013). Despite such limitations, it is claimed that risky play has a notable role in children's development (Niehues *et al.*, 2013) because every activity has some developmental effect on children. Being successful or unsuccessful does not matter through this because children can learn to become an adaptable individual in order to deal with new but challenging situations (Niehues *et al.*, 2013). Life already has various risky facets, so children can learn how to handle such possible situations during risky play (Waite, Huggins & Wickett, 2014).

Besides these considerations, the results of Little, Wyver and Gibson's (2011) research show that there is a conflict between parents and teachers' beliefs about risky outdoor play which lead to constraints in outdoor activity areas. This is because although the approaches of teachers to risky play are favourable, the perceptions of parents may lead them to limit the opportunities in some contexts. In addition to this, in the case of risky factors, Little's (2015) research has some supportive statements about adult factors that although parents emphasise the importance of risky play opportunities outside, they underline the importance of safe play areas for their children. Sandseter, Little and Wyver's (2012) research illustrates that although teachers' sense of risk-taking during

outdoor activities are similar in two different countries (Norway and Australia), the level of the relationship between belief and implementation is different for teachers from both countries. The reason for this is explained as cultural tendencies to avoid risky situations, so such avoidance limits children's play experience in Australia compared to that in Norway (Waite, Huggins & Wickett, 2014; Wyver *et al.*, 2010). However, it is claimed that "well managed outdoor environments [should] include some risky elements such as heights to climb that children are able to self-assess relative to their own competence and confidence" (Waite, Huggins & Wickett, 2014, p.75).

Furthermore, travelling to areas around the school for field trips can require access to appropriate resources, the transportation to such places may increase the risky aspects of outdoor activities, and the regulations of such distant activities differ across countries. Teachers may also avoid tackling issues, which are likely to occur during these activities. Türkmen (2015) suggests in his study that schools can be encouraged to have their own vehicles and additional workers to ease the process for teachers. These cultural attitudes play an important role in the regulation of risky aspects in outdoor play and can restrict activities. Mart and Bilton (2014) point out the importance of parental consent for outdoor activities. It is recognised that some risky aspects are desirable for child development so that children can acquire some risk-taking skills via challenging physical activities, and as a result there is an increasing interest in outdoor activities in the early years in England (Waller, 2009). In view of the above explanations about risky play, it is necessary to regulate outdoor activities properly. In the context of this research, the approaches of English and Turkish teachers to outdoor activities could vary in practice.

#### **2.4.5. Landscape**

Landscape is an important element in outdoor learning but the usage of the term needs to be identified as some studies the term is used to mean the school-yard, while others use it as the outdoors in general. However, “there is an important continuity in the emphasis placed on the garden and its identification as a special place for young children’s play and learning” (Garrick, 2009, p.14). Additionally, Beames, Higgins and Nicol (2012) claim that the outdoors refers to ‘outside of the classroom’ and this understanding can be shaped by educators, so they can choose either the local neighbourhood or any outdoor environment. Regarding this, “there is ... a sound case for defining ‘outside’ the classroom in physical education as being ‘off the school site’ either in the immediate outdoors of the local community, or further afield” (Sime & Taplin, 2011, p.134). Clearly outdoors includes school gardens, parks, woodland areas and playgrounds.

Besides this, “museums, local businesses, parks, [and] factories” can be examples of outdoor areas (Beames, Higgins & Nicol, 2012, p.4). Cultural aspects and natural factors regulate the activities as a broadening of the classroom (Beames, Higgins & Nicol, 2012) by considering the differing cultural densities of environments within and outside the school, which shift pedagogical patterns. These examples can be linked to pioneers mentioned earlier because they underlined the importance of experiential learning outside the classroom (e.g. Dewey, 1963; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). However, the focus of this research varies regarding the preference of the participating teachers. “There is a strong relation between the structures of the landscape and the functions of play” (Fjørtoft, 2001, p.118) and children regulate their activities depending on the play areas. When children

are outside, they opt for more physical activities and physical games (Bilton, 2010) because they have a wider area in order to participate in such activities effectively.

Although the importance of outdoor activities is emphasised in England and around the world, Öztürk (2009) examines the case of Turkey and she states that it is nearly impossible to see conveniently designed school gardens for outdoor learning in Turkey. Öztürk makes this interpretation in comparison to Scotland, and she emphasises the school garden because there is no specifically divided playground from the school garden in Turkey. School grounds in Turkey are used as a playground. For the distinction between a school ground and playground, a school ground is the whole place which belongs to the school, and the playground is the outdoor area where children play. The lack of separated playgrounds is also discussed by Mart, Alisinanoğlu, Kesicioğlu (2015). It is important to note that opportunities for outdoor play are also subject to the construction of areas and materials within that space. Therefore, the school garden is perceived only for children to use for fresh air when the weather is sunny, and used as a playground for children rather than outdoor learning activity areas in Turkey (Öztürk, 2009). Öztürk also states that even some school gardens in high socioeconomic areas have similar type of gardens used as a park and playground for outdoor areas. This particular research study shows that the usage of outdoors is not related to socio-economic situation because it is more about perceptions about their appropriate use.

Therefore, Acar (2014) underlines the necessity and effect of a well-designed school garden for child development in her study conducted in Turkey. Acar suggests a well-designed outdoor area allows children to interact with nature hence provides learning opportunities. Öztürk (2009) furthermore claims that the reason for such weaknesses in

outdoor areas is the lack of outdoor context in the educational programme in Turkey because the programme emphasises indoor activities. However, field trips in the programme provides some extended chances for outdoor activity (Öztürk, 2009), and it widens the perspective to outdoor activity areas. Field trips are defined as visits to places which are interesting local areas for children to learn cultural, vocational and up-to-date important knowledge in context, which are natural learning environment for children (Ministry of National Education, 2013b). Apart from these issues, current research findings show that physical activity materials (teeter totter, swings etc.) used for outdoor activities and the lack in the design of grounds (Mart, Alisinanoğlu & Kesicioğlu, 2015) are challenges for teachers conducting outdoor activities in the Turkish context. Some previous research was conducted by researchers from an architecture background (e.g. Acar, 2014; Ozdemir & Yilmaz, 2008), but there is lack of sufficient data from educational researchers in this case in Turkey.

However, in the UK

“Nature Study was part of the curriculum through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in some cases school gardens provided a site for this; children studied the life cycle of creatures such as frogs and butterflies, grew vegetables ..., learned about pest control to protect their crops and drew pictures inspired by the changing seasons” (Passy & Waite, 2011, p.163).

This quotation from Passy and Waite represents the condition in the UK context. Thus, these situations from both countries illustrate the differences of landscape usage in early childhood. It is additionally explained in the Methodology chapter that these differences were considered during the research process while illustrating how teachers’ perceptions of and practice in outdoor activities are shaped, as such differences make up for another important aspect to be analysed in cross-cultural research. Even at the beginning of my

research, I anticipated that it is highly likely that varied practices would exist in terms of outdoor areas within the countries compared.

#### **2.4.6. Drawbacks for Outdoor Activities**

Despite the evidence for the benefits of outdoor play, there are barriers to implementing outdoor activities. In this regard, there are some obstructive factors such as attitudes, funding (Waite, 2009), risk and bureaucracy, teacher training, schools, costs, centres, operators (Dillon, 2010), government (Waite, 2010) and obtaining permission and equipment (Kandır, Yurt & Cevher Kalburan, 2012).

These may or may not regulate teachers behaviour because it is underlined that “some teachers are not as ready and willing to commit to the outdoors as their pupils are” (Sime & Taplin, 2011, p.142). This is related with Waite’s (2009) observation about attitudes. This obstacle may stem from either teachers’ attitude or societal external regulations (Soysal & Radmard, 2017) because both regulate the implementation of outdoor activities. Dillon (2010) underlines the importance of in-service training for teachers to overcome any emergent issues. One of the possible problems claimed by Kesicioğlu and Alisinanoğlu (2009), is that parents’ educational backgrounds have an influential effect on children’s attitudes to the environment. This means that if parents have a higher educational background, they can support children more to go outside or vice versa. Therefore, it may be seen as a drawback for teachers working with some parent groups, or a motivation for others to provide this access through schools. These drawbacks teachers face are likely to result from various background issues (Soysal & Radmard, 2017). Because of these various issues, different outdoor activities in these countries (England and Turkey) are likely to occur.

Besides this, Öztürk Aynal (2013) highlights the necessity to use some areas like school yards and parks as outdoor activity areas for educational activities in Turkey. Çelik (2012) points out the outdoor areas of schools are not used effectively because they do not have adequate physical arrangements, or that teachers ignore the arrangement of outdoor areas, and even if arranged, the relevance of various activities has not been considered well. Therefore, the location of materials in the outdoors is not regulated effectively during or at the beginning of the design stage. Another study about physical/spatial conditions of early years setting illustrates that garden and play materials are deficient for preschool education in terms of safety and it is suggested that there are no distinct school garden arrangements (Arslan Karaküçük, 2008). It is important to note that Arslan Karaküçük's research is only about the context of Turkey. In contrast the Norwegian context shows unfenced outdoor areas encourage children to explore independently (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012). These are the examples of differences in varied countries because what is deemed suitable for outdoor activities in terms of material provision and pedagogical support clearly differs among countries due to cultural factors.

There are also problems with organizing such spaces for children as Arslan Karaküçük (2008), and Ozdemir and Yilmaz (2008) underline. A notable barrier of finance and maintenance is a disincentive in all schools in Turkey. Finance is also mentioned by Mart and Bilton (2014) as restricting the implementation of outdoor activities in Turkey, but funding restrictions potentially also apply to every school and country, so similar problems may also occur in England. However, it is important to clarify that some aspects related to materials, finance and maintenance are about the affordability of the countries, which depends on education budgets. This is likely to lead to some varied practice in

outdoor activities considering the barriers in the context of England and Turkey. Therefore, this ethnographic research can provide an in-depth identification of the drawbacks of outdoor activities from a comparative perspective as well as providing an opportunity for reflective criticism of their own practices for teachers.

#### **2.4.7. Conclusion Regarding Outdoor Play**

Although there is a belief that the outdoors has an affirmative effect on various aspects of children's learning and development; the context of outdoors, academic learning, adult and child roles, risk management, barriers and cultural factors and the importance of the outdoors in the curriculum and programme result in some differences among countries. The importance of outdoor activities are not the same in every country; for example, some countries such as the Scandinavian countries, the UK, the USA and Germany have strong outdoor histories (Beames, Higgins & Nicol, 2012), but others have only recently started to put emphasis on outdoor activities. Certainly, in the context of Turkey, the concern with outdoor activities has been below average when compared to countries mentioned above. Associated with this, it is important to underline that "culture acts as a source of continuity and as a brake on the impacts of globalization, rationalization, and economic change" (Tobin, Hsueh & Karasawa, 2009, p.224). This deduction occurs via Tobin et al.'s longitudinal research about preschool in three cultures. In this research, they also underline the covert influence of beliefs and practice because of being under pressure from governmental effects, regulations and educational statutes. Another recent research study using a similar method for data collection to that of Tobin, Hsueh and Karasawa (2009), confirm the cultural influences on outdoor activities (Nah & Waller, 2015). Nah and Waller claim that there are some similarities and differences in outdoors provision



between two different countries (England and South Korea). In exploring these similarities and differences, the dialogue between these countries provided an improvement in both their motivation in outdoor activities and exploration of the outdoors (Nah & Waller, 2015). However, cultural aspects have influential roles to regulate the perceptions of tools used in the engagement with nature (Fiskum & Jacobsen, 2013).

In light of such explanations and issues, cultural perceptions play an important role in outdoor activities in terms of affecting factors of implementation, the role of the outdoor environment, materials, regulative aspects and restrictive aspects along with several others. This review of literature and historical and cultural contextualization influence my design and analysis because the current issues around outdoor activities in both countries requires a new research to identify particularly these countries' similarities and differences so as to explore possible ways to enhance their activities. As a result, this research is designed to address the aim of identifying teachers' perceptions of and practices in outdoor activities, and to enable them to interact with others. In this way, teachers, themselves, can find ways to apply different activities in their context.

## **2.5. Professional Learning (PL) in Early Years**

PL can be understood in multiple ways according to the situation and the context. For this reason, PL in early years offers complexity in terms of defining it (Dalli, 2008). Despite the variable interpretations of professional learning, it is continually emphasised within ECEC due to the central influence that professionals have on the quality of services. In other respects, the indefinite meaning of capable and high qualified practitioners leads to variation and difference in practice (Urban, 2014) and practitioners. Professional learning is about training to gain new information (Nasser *et al.*, 2015). Since the sense of quality

for teachers is comprehended differently according to context, there is always the potential for open-ended learning opportunities from other colleagues as part of individual PL. If this process is sustained for a long period, the higher influence of PL will be inevitable (Ross & Bruce, 2007). “Professional learning is therefore a central aspect of an educator’s engagement in the profession as well as in everyday practice as teachers of young children” (Hadley, Waniganayake & Shepherd, 2015, p.191) because “learning to teach is a complex and lengthy process and that professional learning is vital in this process” (McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006, p.110).

Professional learning has a presumed interactive and social aspect to it whereby PL can enhance the quality of the practice along with re-assessing current practice (Hargreaves, 2000). Lazzari (2012, p.254) defines PL as “the concept of collegiality which is defined in terms of sharing responsibility for the full education of the child.” This means that PL reflects a close relationship between colleagues in order to get better results for the children, but this does not mean that there will be direct enhancement of the conditions (Gomez, Kagan & Fox, 2015). Professional learning embraces various aspects in addition to collaboration with others, such as the educational backgrounds of teachers, in-session courses, personal endeavour to learn and provide learning opportunities. In this way, teachers gain ownership of skills, consolidation and comprehension of different approaches to apply to their practice (McLeod, 2015; Nasser *et al.*, 2015; Nolan & Molla, 2016), and are able to practice what they learn, evaluate their efficiency, and demonstrate their activities (Hargreaves, 2000; Nasser *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, social aspects play an important role on PL in terms of getting formal and informal support from colleagues.

PL is also subject to the socio-economic and historical background and current conditions as well as cultural influences (Lazzari, 2012; Osgood, 2006a). Oberhuemer (2000) criticises professionalism activities in terms of being influenced by western cultures and pedagogies. Therefore, while the perception of professionalism is shaped through the practitioners' experience with the community, professional identity influences the community as well (Chalke, 2013). It is important to remark that "qualified educators have undertaken professional learning and development designed to enhance their professionalism and to achieve appropriate and approved graduate status" (Waters & Payler, 2015, p.162). This quotation shows that professionalism and professional learning are different terms, and it needs to be considered that PL serves to enhance professionalism. However, such factors depend on the personal tendency of the teachers (Lazzari, 2012) as well as the cultural impact on defining and assessing the notion of information and practices (Oberhuemer, 2000). This is based on the same idea as Balduzzi's (2011) research that continuous development for teachers can be maintained by their being open to applying new experiences. This is the result of practitioners' position on reflecting on their practice and improving themselves (Nolan & Molla, 2016; Osgood, 2006b) so that this is a reconceptualization of teachers' practice (Dalli, 2008). Teachers are the key people in education and the change starts with them, so the quality improvement of early childhood education is directly related to the qualification of practitioners (Urban, 2014). Therefore, the necessity of gaining moral values and qualifications should be stressed by practitioners (Brock, 2006) in order to have a permanent impact.

Likewise, PL is influenced by some other factors like parents, society and local authorities (Lazzari, 2012) so as to promote the association with harmony and confidence (Balduzzi, 2011). In addition to this, the relationship between different colleagues consistently is one feature of PL (Colmer, 2017; Oberhuemer, 2000). Regarding this, Oberhuemer (2005, p.12) remarks that “an individual and collective repositioning can be best achieved in a collaborative culture” because encouraging and associative relations derive constructive and continued learning (Cherrington & Thornton, 2015; Philippou, Papademetri-Kachrimani & Louca, 2015). This means that cooperation between colleagues and other agencies provide a direct or an indirect impact on the professional learning of individuals or groups (Admiraal *et al.*, 2016). This is because “the information necessary for behavior change or professional growth comes from external authorities, imparted through lectures, readings, demonstrations, and verbal advice from peers, supervisors, coaches, or consultants” (Sheridan *et al.*, 2009, p.380). Such environmental factors play a role in PL. Hence, PL activities affect teachers’ competence, attitudes and habits (Sheridan *et al.*, 2009), and there is a purposeful potential for improving the outcomes (Nasser *et al.*, 2015) in teachers’ activities with the impact of PL. Ross and Bruce’s (2007) research also highlights that PL activities enhance practitioners’ confidence, and there occurs behavioural change via recognising different practices in an ongoing process (Elfer & Dearnley, 2007).

Therefore, Urban (2014) points out that such professional learning aspects are intrinsic and should be reflected through all stages of the education, because PL is based on notions, issues, habits, and willingness of teachers, which are structured by personal enactment and opinion (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). In the context of early years, Oberhuemer (2000,

p.5) explains that “... early childhood practitioners can contribute actively, not only towards reconstructing their own professional role, but also towards raising the visibility and status of early childhood education and care in the public domain.” This quotation shows that the active participation of practitioners supports both their professional learning and the level of support for them from their environment. In other words, the positive effort of teachers to develop themselves will be visible from agencies like parents, society and local authorities around them, and the required support will be provided by them.

The importance of PL is originated from the impact of teachers’ PL on their practice so that this can provide strengthened learning opportunities for students (Sheridan *et al.*, 2009) (Admiraal *et al.*, 2016). In other words, if teachers’ professional learning is supported, their practices and teaching activities will be enriched, which causes a better learning experience for children. In addition, PL activities affect practitioners’ perceptions, self-consciousness and comprehension (McLeod, 2015). Therefore, the ongoing interaction between teachers and their colleagues on their activities provides appreciated and practical contribution to their activities (Shannon, Snyder & McLaughlin, 2015; Sheridan *et al.*, 2009). Although Elfer and Dearnley (2007) claim in their research that the process of PL can be challenging for participants, the process offers enriched and sustained opportunities for improvement. Due to this reason, PL is needed by both novice and expert teachers (Hadley, Waniganayake & Shepherd, 2015) because PL provides learning opportunities for all teachers.

Based upon all discussed points, PL is to “turn more to each other for professional learning, for a sense of direction, and for mutual support” (Hargreaves, 2000, p.162). This

quotation summarizes the main aspect of PL, and the relative practice in my research. In my research, the online interaction tool (a Facebook page) aimed to provide continued relationship with all participating teachers from both countries: England and Turkey. This relationship is based on sharing and discussing the participants' current outdoor activities. This is because there is highly likely to occur different types of outdoor activities between teachers in the same country as well as teachers from different countries, so the participating teachers can be inspired and get some information (Marklund, 2015) from each other to apply in their future practice. The participating teachers find a chance to critically reflect on their own practice (Macfarlane *et al.*, 2015) so that PL can support the development of education in outdoor settings as well as other settings (Sumsion *et al.*, 2015).

My research provides an “explicit and intentional connection between evidence-based practices and the classroom context to increase effective implementation” (Shannon, Snyder & McLaughlin, 2015, p.306) so that Hargreaves's (2000) suggestion from his research can be achieved via designing PL and impacting on the working environment in order to strengthen children's learning. PL traditionally focuses on colleagues, although in England there are also some professional development networks. However, my research looks to create an innovative PL model that utilises the advantages of social media with cross-cultural aspects. As such, the collaborative networks of colleagues can be extended in support of their PL. In particular, my research provides opportunity to see whether cross-cultural PL could work.

## 2.6. Chapter Conclusion

It can be seen from this review that there are some notable points regarding outdoor play and learning over the history of education in England and Turkey. As discussed above, there are historical differences in the development of early years for these countries deriving from their being either a developed or a developing country as well as from cultural backgrounds. As a result of their historical and cultural variation, their policy/programme development, care-education division, workforce and curriculum issues diverged for a long time, but there is a possibility of some global influencing factors for both countries such as the Lisbon Treaty (Arslan Cansever, 2009; Penn, 2013). Based upon the impact of the EU, it is expected that these countries will more closely resemble each other in future, but there are still certain differences because of the impact of culture (Anthamatten, Wee & Korris, 2013) while regulating the practicability of common factors in these countries.

In light of the developmental process of early years in these countries, the perception of play is influenced by discourse. Thus, the understandings of play are likely to vary regarding the cultures from all over the world although there are some outstanding pioneers whose ideas are widely accepted. To indicate the different paradigms from previous pioneers, Loreman (2009) presents examples of whether children are seen as empty vessels or not. Play has diverse explanations that are differently enacted in Turkey and in England. While some pioneers like Montessori (1912) highlight play in terms of learning experiences, some others like Piaget remark the effect of play in social, cultural and gender issues (Brock *et al.*, 2009). This leads to different interpretations and

emphases on education and care throughout the development of early years in the two countries.

In addition to similarities and differences in the historical development of early years, the perception of play affects the nature of early years provision including the interpretations of and priorities for outdoor activities. These differences principally occur in academic learning, adult and child role, risky play, landscape, and barriers to using outdoors. From these overall approaches and different approaches to implementation of outdoor activities, and based on previous research (Mart & Bilton, 2014), which compares the perception of English and Turkish teachers, cross-cultural research can provide an enhanced comparative opportunity (Tobin, Hsueh & Karasawa, 2009) and contribute to understanding of formative circumstances (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006).

Therefore, the identification of the current situation in outdoor activities needs to be explored in-depth in order to ascertain possible ways to learn from cultural differences, barriers around outdoor activities and how to improve practice. In this research, I aim to identify the similarities and differences in outdoor activities in England and Turkey at the beginning of the research process, and then to enable teachers to communicate with each other using an online sharing platform (Facebook group) to exchange opinions on how they can improve their practice. This process promotes the development of education and training opportunities in relation to PL (Mitchell, Riley & Loughran, 2010).



## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1. Chapter Introduction**

This chapter introduces and critiques the chosen research techniques regarding my research methods. As discussed in the Literature Review chapter, this research needs to take account of some cultural aspects within these countries, such as historical developments, perceptions of play, and the approaches to outdoor activities. This requirement led my research towards ethnography, so I could focus on the participating teachers' attitudes to outdoor activities, particularly on their understanding and their everyday practice. Ethnographic research examines people in their daily life (Brewer, 2000) with regard to cultural aspects, and as my research investigates two different countries' early years settings an ethnographic approach including observation was appropriate. Ethnographic research and qualitative methods lend themselves to the depth of analysis required to answer my research questions. However, it is important to clarify that the second stage of the research involved an intervention with social media that aimed to improve professional learning by sharing practice across the two cultures. My research can thus be considered as an innovative combination of ethnography and intervention. My research is explained in detail in the following sections about identified beliefs, practice and their relationships.

As the previous chapter has shown, England and Turkey have different early childhood histories, but still share certain commonalities especially for their recent background such as being influenced by the EU. Given this, my research will focus on the question: What are the perceptions of outdoor play held by Early Childhood teachers in Turkey and England? To answer this main question the following questions are asked:

- What shapes these teachers' understandings?
- How do teachers enact these understandings into practice?
- How does sharing ideas between Turkish and English teachers influence their understanding of the importance of outdoor activities?

To consider the research questions above, I begin by presenting my positionality before continuing to discuss the philosophical paradigms that provide the foundation from which I consider the research process.

### **3.2. Positioning**

*Positionality* is a fundamental factor that makes every research study *unique* (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012) as whilst the literature determines the overall perspective of the topic, my position provides ownership of my research, including my perspective on it. It is therefore important to determine my own perspective and beliefs within the research because reflecting on my position enables me to be more aware of how I may influence the research process, so this helps me to acquire more insightful outcomes.

Being a man in early childhood education can sometimes cause trouble as men are generally regarded as strangers in this context (see Sargent, 2005). One reason for this is that a common understanding of early childhood education is that teachers are in the position of motherhood relations with children. Therefore, during my research, it was likely to have several setbacks such as constructing me as someone out of the ordinary. I however aimed to handle this issue at the beginning of my research by spending time in settings to decrease such possible problems whilst drawing on my experience of being a kindergarten teacher in Turkey. Consequently, I spent a considerable amount of time in

settings with teachers and children in order to familiarise myself with them and wider cultural features so that I would collect data first-hand.

Additionally, given the cultural focus of my research it is important to establish that I am more familiar with the Turkish context than the English. Therefore, it was possible for me to fail to notice several important aspects during this comparative study because on the one hand, the Turkish context was so familiar to me; on the other, I had to familiarize myself with the English context, which I initially perceived as unusual. Cultural factors may influence the perception of differences in roles of teachers in settings, specifically during the management of class while orchestrating group activities, so it was a key point for me to be aware of these challenges in order to decrease the likeliness of inconsistent interpretation in the two settings.

In the light of these anticipated challenges, I aimed to follow the requirements (keeping the same position in both countries and having equal distance to teachers in both contexts) to keep the level of such problems to a minimum. To achieve this, I strived to identify possible issues, and talked with teachers in order to understand the reasons for issues during the time spent before data collection. Besides this, another reason for early communication with teachers was to engage with possible cultural differences so that I would have a chance to discuss and understand issues such as types of outdoor activities and their timing. In this way I had a chance to reflect on the background of differences in my research prior to data collection. The procedure for data collection and possible considerations are explained in depth in the following sections; but first, an explanation of my underlying philosophical approach is required.

### **3.3. Philosophical Paradigm**

It is important to indicate philosophical approaches in order to provide a clear understanding of any research. The literature shows possible similarities and differences around the research context regarding the countries. Therefore, implemented outdoor activities may be interpreted differently by everyone because the conditions can be perceived differently according to the position of the people concerned. In particular, outdoor play can be comprehended diversely in different socio-cultural aspects because there is no one certain true or false correct application in terms of chosen activities, as they are contextually constructed.

Consequently, it is difficult to criticise and to evaluate outdoor activities as good or bad because that judgement depends on one's own ontological positioning. However, given the cultural differences previously identified and their implications for outdoor activities, the research provided the teachers with the opportunity to critique their own implementation of outdoor activities, and possibly provide different perspectives and approaches to deal with specific restricting aspects in each context. During this process, I aimed to reveal different implementation of outdoor activities visible in order for teachers to reflect on these. This is because some of the restricting aspects might be overcome with adaptation of a different strategy from the other country. Tobin, Hsueh and Karasawa's (2009) research underlines the advantages of seeing different approaches from different cultures in order to change current practices. This means not merely copying another approach but broadening one's own vision and adapting different approaches in their own context open-mindedly.

In terms of epistemology, the current conditions of outdoor activities are the results of shaped demonstration of teachers' beliefs because they are influenced by different factors such as parental beliefs, the view of school management, materials used for outdoor activities, teachers' understanding of the importance of outdoor activities, and history and politics as discussed in the previous chapter. It is likely that teachers may be unable to apply their pure knowledge into the field because of external factors (Nag, Corley & Gioia, 2007). Therefore, teachers' beliefs, knowledge and justification of outdoor activities cannot be observed directly. As a result, I have chosen semi-structured interviews to identify their understanding of outdoor activities. In addition to these interviews, I used observation as a method for two reasons: first, to identify the nature of outdoor activities and second, to compare teachers' views with their actual practice in outdoor activities.

Most philosophers belong to a school of thought to answer their questions related to research knowledge, research groups and theories of research. These schools are based on different trends such as positivism, empiricism, phenomenology (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003), critical theory and post positivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A paradigm can be seen as a belief and the relationship between this belief and an understanding of the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), so differences between research paradigms are usual due to diverse personal perspectives. Positivist, interpretive and critical theorist paradigms are presented as major paradigms (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). As Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) point out, in addition to influences of such philosophical paradigms on researchers, ontology, epistemology, and methodology have a role in shaping how researchers see and understand the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Epistemology is the nature of knowledge (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Merriam, 2009) or the theory of knowledge (Creswell, 2003; May & Williams, 1996). May and Williams (1996, p.197) define epistemology as the component of philosophy which provides answers to the question “how we know what we know and justification for claims to knowledge”, and Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.91) explain that “epistemology asks How do I know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?”

Ontology and epistemology have a relationship that feeds into each other in the field (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). May and Williams (1996) and Mason (2002) describe ontology and epistemology alongside each other although the meanings and foci of these philosophical branches are different. Ontology and epistemology therefore have a close relationship and provide complementary information; while epistemology emphasises the question ‘how’ we can know, ontology is focused on “what is knowledge[?]” (Creswell, 2003, p.6). It is also necessary to describe ontology to clarify the differences between paradigms. Ontology underpins research about the social world, constituted by humans regarding geographical and political conditions (Mason, 2002), and it has been explained that the focus of ontology is the “nature of reality” (Creswell, 2003, p.27; Merriam, 2009, p.8) or the nature of existing things (May & Williams, 1996). Therefore, my ontological approach is based on the current practices in outdoor activities between these countries because as it is discussed in the Literature Review chapter, there are various important points impacting early years, and those are likely to influence the Early years teachers’ perceptions and practices in outdoor activities. Because of this, the research process aimed to identify the initial practices, and then to intervene to enhance opportunities via online interaction for teachers in order to improve the nature of knowledge. My epistemological approach is about how to make similarities

and differences more visible, which will enable teachers to reflect more on their own practice around outdoor activities.

That is why, the importance of my research is based on the fact that the differences in implementing outdoor activities in two countries is the ‘current conditions’ that I focus upon, and as a researcher, in my belief, that the enactment of outdoor activities is restricted by certain factors (as discussed in the literature). I investigate how we know, developing activities via enabling teachers to interact and see different implementations. Thus, my research aims to identify the understanding of teachers and their practice, and to explore the possibility of enhancing the practice of teachers through online interaction from cross-cultural practices.

In the case of paradigms, the main types of positivism, interpretive and critical theory are featured in Cohen, Manion and Morrison’s (2011) seminal work which shows that the positivist paradigm is constituted of generally quantitative, hypothesis testing, surveys, and experiments; the interpretive paradigm is comprised of components such as qualitative, interactionist, humanistic, phenomenological, ethnographic, naturalistic, ethnomethodological, existential, action research; and critical theory has components such as critique of ideology, feminist research, participatory research, political research, participatory action research and critical ethnography. Amongst these genres, my research is best suited to the interpretive paradigm, as it is based on qualitative methods with ethnographic research carried out in the natural environment of participants to exhibit their current and modified behaviour. As the nature of outdoor contexts is shaped by different factors, it cannot be identified by observation or interview alone, so it was

necessary to examine and interpret the circumstances using a mixture of qualitative methods.

Consistent with Cohen, Mason and Morrison's (2011) statements, it is claimed that qualitative research has an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the research context because researchers investigate settings in their natural context in order to comprehend situations, and understandings of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This parallels my focus on teachers' behaviour during daily outdoor activities in their usual environments. Howell (2013, p.25) therefore states that it involves "interpretive perspectives of theory which emphasise understanding and the relationship between interpretation and the phenomenon under investigation."

In the interpretive paradigm, researchers are able to investigate experiences in, perspectives of, and factors around situations via interviews, observations, document reviews, reports, personal diaries (Merriam, 2009) supporting a process of comprehending the explicit situations of human behaviour and experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Besides this, Merriam (2009) also expresses interpretive research as the location of qualitative study in general, with an underpinning assumption of social truth, because there is no true and directly observable actual situation. I investigated more than one school in each country to interpret contexts for countries considering the participants. Researchers are highly likely to find out more than one piece of truth about a specific issue or to comprehend specific situations and events differently in terms of variances in interpretation of situations. This outlook gave me a chance to understand, comprehend and interpret the behaviour of different teachers, experiences, and the understandings of teachers while carrying out the research. That is why my



research is in harmony with an interpretive paradigm because I conducted interviews and observations to collect data, and it led me to interpret the participating teachers' understanding and practice of outdoor activities. However, during this process, the meanings of actions are produced by researchers and it is possible to be affected by the researcher's position regarding the situation, his/her understanding and mindfulness at that particular time period.

### **3.4. Ethnographic Research**

My research is a longitudinal ethnographic case study, using the same data collection tools at two data collection points, and consisting of two international cultural groups. It also includes a point of intervention aimed to improve professional practice. Ethnography is described as “writing about groups of people” (Creswell, 2012, p.461), “a family of methods” (O'Reilly, 2005, p.3), and the foremost of qualitative research (Brewer, 2000) because ethnographies provide the opportunity to frame understandings and activities of groups (Mason, 2002). In the case of such perspectives and activities, cultural aspects are difficult to overlook, and this is central to my research. Mason (2002) states that research presents the components of cultural backgrounds (like customs and norms). In addition to these, ethnography is defined as;

“The study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally” (Brewer, 2000, p.10).

This quote emphasises the importance of my participation in the field. Thus, my research and ethnographic approach have commonalities in terms of cultural aspects because I sought to understand the perceptions of outdoor activities held by early childhood

teachers in Turkey and England. Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, p.3) points are summarised below to underline some characteristics of ethnography;

1. The research is carried out in the field. This means that the researcher uses the real-life environment to collect data rather than creating a setting for data collection.
2. The collection includes a few different sources such as observation, informal conversation, interview, and etc.
3. The data collection process is shaped by the outcomes of data analysis rather than by using a structure, indicated at the beginning of research.
4. It is focused on a limited number of participants or cases. The reason for this is to collect profound data about the unit(s) of analysis.
5. The interpretation of meanings, functions, and the results of the action of people are part of data analysis procedure. Additionally, data analysis includes how these are related with the research focus and context.

These points provide a framework for the data collection process in terms of fieldwork, data collection tools, the process of data collection, focusing on specified group of teachers (Bell, 2005), which is discussed in the following sections.

The length of ethnographic research is longer than several other types of research (Sangasubana, 2011). My research was carried out over a long period (one academic year). I carried out interviews and observations in two different countries and at different points in time to explore similarities and differences, and to provide opportunity to have different perspectives on outdoor activities because it may be beneficial to see different cultures'/countries' implementations of outdoor activities so as to improve one's own activities. This is because people, in examining and criticising a phenomena in another

country, may improve their perspectives on their own situations (Andkjær, 2012), thus apply different approaches in their practice. As a result of this understanding, my research was identified as ethnographic research in order to determine the initial and final everyday perceptions and practices of teachers. This was combined with a direct intervention to change/improve the current situation. The Online interaction process aimed to provide a wider perspective for teachers across the two cultural contexts and the effects of this were studied in the second part of the research. However, Bell (2005, p.17) describes longitudinal data collection tools in the context of ethnographic research as “time-consuming.” This is one limitation of ethnographic research because timing issues are likely to limit the sample group for the researcher.

Further, when the researcher spends quite a lot of time with groups, it is possible to engage with settings and fail to notice some important points, or participants can become aware of their observed behaviour/issues and they may act in an uncharacteristic way. In this regard, Bell also emphasises the problem of spending a long time with a group of participants because if the researcher spends a long time as a participant, this group is highly likely to become different from others in terms of typical aspects of the group (Bell, 2005). This can influence the research process. With regard to timing factors, I predetermined the number of participants; four teachers from each country, and constructed a timetable for data collection to decrease the level of possible pragmatic problems. However, it is important to note that spending plenty of time with participants allowed me to engage more deeply with the aspects of my research foci. Participation also provides researchers with a better understanding of the group, and better experience of their behaviour first hand (Merriam, 2009; O'Reilly, 2005). Thus, I chose observation as one of the methods for my study.

Apart from the focus of my research, being a participant observer was indispensable for my research because it involved children. As a researcher in the classroom, I was aware that I might be thought of as an outsider and the children might not act typically. Thus, in order to decrease the level of being seen as an external person, it was necessary to spend a certain time in the classroom and to be a participant of the classroom to acclimatise them to me during my presence. This was an important part of my research because children could feel anxious when there was a stranger watching them and taking notes. Correspondingly, Creswell (2007) points out that if the researcher spends time with participants in the field, s/he becomes an 'insider', because spending quite a lot of time in the field is likely to develop a rapport between researcher and participants.

Ethnographic research is however criticised by Brewer (2000) when researchers are part of the research for a long period because researchers become involved in participants' activities and lives during the data collection process. This is likely to develop a relationship through the research process, as explained above, which might influence behaviour of both researcher and participants. The degree to which I became an insider varied in the two countries. This was partly because the ratio of children to adult was different in these countries, and teachers in Turkey had lower adult: child ratios than English teachers. While teachers in Turkey were alone in the classroom, there were one or two teaching assistants with a teacher in England. Thus, I was called upon to help with the class more frequently in Turkey. Another important point is that unless there is participant observation, children and teachers might fail to act normally, so teachers could not reflect their usual behaviour, activities, and ideas into outdoor activities. During the process of ethnographic research, building informal relationship between researcher and

participants is highly likely rather than a formal agreement (Bresler, 1996). In this regard, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) place emphasis on the importance of systematic and open-minded observations. In order to decrease such possibilities, the researcher carrying out ethnographic research needs to clarify his/her approach and method in the case of his/her own research context (Malinowski, 1966) to minimise vague points, which can be misleading during the analysis and the writing up process.

As ethnography is a multi-method approach, I also completed interviews and discussion groups, which allowed me to understand the groups' attitudes, conviction and language (Creswell, 2012). These tools also use interpretive epistemology methods, which are mentioned in the previous section. Grounded in the interpretivist epistemology and ethnography, I used the findings from such discussion groups from the English and Turkish participants to illustrate the similarities and differences between these countries, and in this way, the cultural, ideological and implemental exchanges are presented to the other country's participants to develop their understanding. In the cultural evaluation process in ethnographic research, these data collection tools are only a part of the whole, so in addition to these tools, textual analysis and diaries of participants, as a way of data collection, are given as examples (Gray, 2003) as they are accessible to smaller number of groups. Such data collection tools facilitate one goal of ethnographic research; that the researcher can draw conclusions about people's behaviour in the scrutinised situation via analysis in the specific place and period (Fife, 2005). As Creswell (2012) states, these focus groups can consist of teachers, students and staff. Ethnographic study furthermore comprises of scheduled and planned recordings of people's behaviour and activities (Willis & Trondman, 2000) by the researcher regarding the research context. I used disciplined and deliberate data collection methods in parallel to my ethnographic research.

The data collection of my research was processed overtly as an outsider in the settings. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) claim that to collect data, the researcher takes part in the daily life of participants overtly or covertly in the ethnographic research for a certain time period because it is important to interpret their behaviour, which can be better understood only after a certain time period is spent with them. Thereby, ethnographic research enables researchers to produce, clarify, and analyse group behaviour and thinking (Pole & Morrison, 2003; Willis & Trondman, 2000). The reason for me to use ethnography in my research is that I aimed to compare cultural approaches and identify the perceptions of and practices in outdoor activities for both participating English and Turkish early years/kindergarten teachers. Correspondingly, it needs to be explained why there are two steps in the research and that the main aim of the research is to determine the situations from before and after the interaction with others. With this approach, I aim to illustrate the initial and final (as a result of online interaction) perceptions of and practices in outdoor activities so that if there is or is not a change in their perceptions and practices, the reasons can be examined in-depth considering the impact of the professional learning aspects of their online interaction.

In other respects, Fife (2005) points out that it is unclear how much context researchers need to gather and how the researcher can identify the important points during ethnographic research. The implications are variable regarding the context of the research. Generalization from sufficient context or number is therefore difficult (Fife, 2005). Ethnographic methodology nevertheless is likely to provide a crucial understanding (Willis & Trondman, 2000) of the group of people because the stages of ethnography involve the realisation and depiction of experiences, and a vivid description of the cultural group, who has these experiences (O'Reilly, 2005). In addition to this,

Malinowski (1966, p.24) indicates three important points for researchers who carry out ethnography;

1. “*The organisation of the tribe, and the anatomy of its culture* must be recorded in firm, clear outline. The method of *concrete, statistical documentation* is the means through which such an outline has to be given.
2. Within this frame, the *imponderabilia of actual life*, and the *type of behaviour* have to be filled in. They have to be collected through minute, detailed observations, in the form of some sort of ethnographic diary, made possible by close contact with native life.
3. A collection of ethnographic statements, characteristic narratives, typical utterances, items of folk-lore and magical formulae has to be given as a *corpus inscriptionum*, as documents of native mentality.”

These points are important to carry out successful ethnographic research. Briefly, they emphasise the importance of taking field notes, collection of data in the field, which is difficult to measure, and reflecting the narrative background to issues (Malinowski, 1966). The researchers therefore need to consider these points to get clearer outcomes from their studies because these key elements provide a wide range of understanding of the research context. In this regard, my research addresses these main aspects of ethnographic research in terms of focusing on in-service teachers in two different countries. If researchers follow this, it is hoped that they will achieve the following;

- The extensive and significant figuration of the social roles in the field,
- The reflection of social participants of event or field regarding the social issues
- The comprehension of social situations via determined field (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p.4).

These achievements illustrate that a wide range of social actions can be described via ethnographic research if important principles are followed by the researcher. It is certainly easier to say than do, but it is of paramount importance in any ethnographic research.

In the case of my research, my focus was to examine teachers' outdoor activities in England and Turkey. During this process, I examined the overall practice of implementation of outdoor activities, and then sought to comprehend these issues from the teachers' perspectives. In this respect, my research resembles the ethnographic case study design in general. I used a limited number of people, as a group, to collect data via observations, interviews and discussion groups to investigate the participant teachers' understanding and practice of outdoor activities.

In addition to the above explanations, it may be stated that a case study is a part of every ethnographic research (Brewer, 2000) and cultural study (Gray, 2003). Correspondingly, Bell (2005) indicates that the case study approach offers the opportunity to examine a problem or situation in detail. My research therefore is an ethnographic case study as it has a pre-determined topic of interest to investigate; which is the outdoor activities of teachers in specific schools from Southern Turkey and South-West of England. Ethnography was chosen to comprehend the initial and final situations in detail. To achieve this detail the following research methods have been selected.

### **3.5. Research Methods**

Interviews, observation and group discussions were chosen as the primary data collection tools for this research which aimed to determine English and Turkish early years/kindergarten teachers' perceptions and practices of outdoor activities. My research process was based on two steps. In the first step, interviews were held and observations undertaken; these were followed by discussion groups (with the participating teachers in the same country) and online interaction (between the all participating teachers). In the second step, there were interviews and observations again (see Appendix-10). In this case,



the first interviews and observations informed me about the initial circumstances of the teachers. I conducted interviews and observations with the same group for the second time, to determine the differences in their perception and practice of outdoor activities during the period of research. The second period contained discussion groups in both countries at which I presented an analysis of similarities and differences between these countries. Following these steps, I launched a Facebook group to enable participants to directly exchange views in accordance with their activities, ideas, resources used to enhance outdoor activities. This online group operated for two months to limit the period of data collection within one academic year. This is further explained in the timing section. Then, a second group of interviews and observations were conducted following the Facebook exchanges to explore the influence of the sharing processes.

As I have discussed, the epistemological position of the researcher, ethnographic aspects and qualitative methods are all integrated and have a close relationship with each other, so it can be claimed that these terms feed each other regarding the context of research. In my research, they all helped me attain clearer outcomes out of the data collection procedure. The interviews, observations, discussion groups and Online sharing (Facebook group) were all of importance for my research to gather appropriate data. As the first tool to be used in data collection, interviews had the major role in determining teachers' understandings of outdoor activities throughout the research process.

### **3.5.1. Interviews**

Interviews are an important tool in this ethnographic research. In order to detect changes in the teachers' understanding of outdoor activities, two interviews were conducted at the beginning and at the end of the process. Well-directed interviews provide qualified data

about participants' perspectives, understandings and behaviour (Gray, 2014). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) state interviews are an appropriate way to explore participants' perceptions of the world and to consider the conditions from their own perspectives. These statements are supported by Punch (2005) who asserts that some types of information about humans' understandings, interpretations, description of circumstances and the constitution of authenticity can be explored via interviews. Furthermore, interviews provide such types of information through their flexibility during data collection (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The reason for flexibility is that interviews provide the interviewer and the interviewee with a communication space to reveal the participant's interpretation of social life/world (Miller & Glassner, 2011).

It is important to specify the type of the interview carried out in this research because there are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Bell, 2005). I used semi-structured interviews due to there being cultural differences, and a need to be responsive to them. The questions were therefore shaped according to the responses of the participants aiming to express cultural aspects throughout the interviews. A structured interview might have overridden these cultural insights. An unstructured interview, on the other hand, might have failed to focus sufficiently on the topic of interest.

Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to collect data via open-ended questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) so that the researcher can steer the interviewee toward exploring hidden facts about the topic. During the period of interview, semi-structured interviews are intended to feel like a purposeful conversation (Mason, 2002). They include predetermined questions about a specific theme (Berg & Lune, 2012).

Furthermore, “these questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order but interviewers are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact, expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared standardized questions” (Berg & Lune, 2012, p.112). Bearing all in mind, I chose semi-structured interviews to collect data before I started making observations. I wanted to explore the teachers’ understanding and practice of outdoor activities, so semi-structured interviews helped me interpret their understandings. While there was a specific topic and some aspects to examine, some unexpected differences in teachers’ understanding, regarding cultural issues was highly likely to occur. Therefore, I used a predetermined and piloted set of semi-structured interview questions twice (see Appendix-4). The process of data collection followed this pattern: (1) interviews, (2) observations, (3) discussion groups, (4) online sharing, (5) interviews, and (6) observations. Within this process, another important method therefore was observation.

### **3.5.2. Observations**

Participant observation was one of the important data gathering tools for me due to my focus on practices in outdoor activities. The reason for this is that observation is a data collection tool, which provides a generalizable insight into participants’ behaviour, and teachers’ behaviour during outdoor activities, and using participant observation allowed me to see the details of teachers’ activities. Observation also formed an important aspect of the wider ethnographic research and research method. Marshall and Rossman (2011) state observation is an essential tool to collect data for qualitative research because it enables researchers to collect data about a wide range of activities. Creswell (2012, p.213) claims that “observation is the process of gathering open-ended, first-hand information

by observing people and places at a research site.” This provides a concrete experience of the current situation for researchers. However, it is important to be aware that systematic observation requires careful note taking to record the activities and attitudes (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), otherwise some important aspects of the observed situation may not be unearthed.

Furthermore, the observation process accommodates different types of challenges for the researcher, regarding his/her role as participant, nonparticipant and changing roles (Creswell, 2007). No role is appropriate for all research circumstances due to issues around rapport between researcher and participants (Creswell, 2012). It is therefore important to decide on the appropriate role to carry out a successful study. I used participant observation with four teachers from each country because it was a way to become more familiar with both contexts and interpret teachers’ practice on outdoor activities for my research. It also conformed to ethnographic research practice mentioned in the previous sections. Because it was active participant observation, note taking would be difficult during activities, so were made at the end of activities. Creswell (2012) advises the researcher may need to wait to take notes after visiting the setting. Therefore, I used my voice recorder during the session as it was easy to carry and record my voice. Then, I used the recording to write more complete notes from my observations soon after my visit.

Participant observation therefore can provide factual records of the context, and is an excellent resource to comprehend people’s behaviour and reflection on their perceptions of their activities (Creswell, 2012). This is because the researcher spends a long period in the cultural group, and investigates the situation through hands-on experience (Marshall

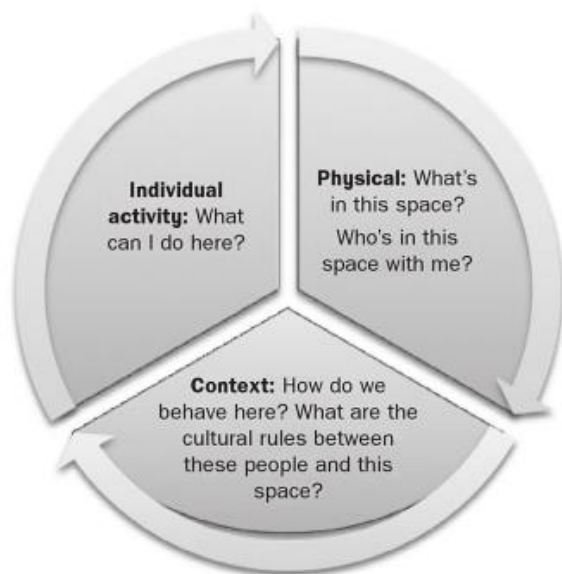
& Rossman, 2011). Observations provide an additional perspective to understand how participants handle real-life issues. Thus, participatory observation entails consent to take an active role in activities, Creswell (2012, p.215-217) outlines essential steps of observation as;

1. "Select a site to be observed that can help you best understand the central phenomenon...
2. Ease into the site slowly by looking around; getting a general sense of the site; and taking limited notes, at least initially...
3. At the site, identify who or what to observe, when to observe, and how long to observe...
4. Determine, initially, your role as an observer...
5. Conduct multiple observations over time to obtain the best understanding of the site and the individuals...
6. Design some means for recording notes during an observation...
7. Consider what information you will record during an observation...
8. Record descriptive and reflective field notes...
9. Make yourself known, but remain unobtrusive...
10. After observing, slowly withdraw from site..."

These were the guidelines that informed me during the research process.

However, it is also important to have some predetermined observational aims in order to avoid any possible misdirection and to decrease unfocused observation. Therefore, during the observation process, I especially focused on specific aspects of outdoor activities in England and in Turkey. I was influenced by Waters (2013) who proposes three aspects: individual, physical and contextual, that regulate outdoor activities for children.

This figure (3.1) introduces the key aspects for practitioners. It is important to explain



these aspects briefly.

*Individual activity*

is defined as each

child's activities in

terms of

engagement with

the environment,

opportunities, and

**Figure 3.1: Individual, Physical and Contextual Aspects of a Space (Waters, 2013, p.22)**

etc. during outdoor

activities. The *physical* aspect centres around existing objects and people at that moment.

*Context* is about the regulations of social aspects in terms of children's behaviour,

expectations, and so on (Waters, 2014). I therefore, primarily, observed how Turkish and

English kindergarten/early years teachers organised and used activities, the physical

space, and the context to determine possible similarities and differences in outdoor

activities. Nonetheless, some problems of losing focus and missing related information

whilst conducting participatory observation are likely to emerge. In order to avoid this, I

kept in mind this figure during the observations (see Appendix-5 for the frame of

observation notes).

### 3.5.3. Discussion Groups

Discussion groups were another important part of my research as they provided an

exchange of ideas about the present situation within the two teachers' groups and were

congruent with my ontological position of socially constructed realities. The discussion

groups in my research consisted of four English early years teachers and four Turkish kindergarten teachers. These groups were divided into two groups because it was difficult to gather all eight teachers together due to geographical constraints. Discussion groups result in a general perspective rather than individual because there is an interaction between participants, not simply between the researcher and the participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Also, Gray (2014) states that discussion with a determined group of people can detect their perspectives on a specific situation. During discussion groups, discussions about predetermined topics or situations (Wilkinson, 2011) provide participants with opportunities to reconsider their beliefs and attitudes (Flick, 2009).

Ordinary discussion groups are formed from a small number of individuals with the management of a *moderator* (Berg & Lune, 2012). It is important to claim that although discussion groups, focus group interview and group interview terms are generally used interchangeably (Punch, 2005). Discussion group was not my primary data collection method. I aimed for participant exchange of ideas via these group discussions, and to clarify how this might support improvement in outdoor activities. In both of the groups, I introduced the similarities and differences of outdoor activities between the countries, which were determined through my analysis of the first interviews and observations. Then, each group had a chance to discuss outdoor activities, and how they would like to improve their activities. These discussion groups had a direct relationship to my research aim and constituted the basis of understanding of the other country's implementation, and of seeing possible different activities, in the context of the outdoors and of putting forward an idea to implement new activities proposed by the other group. This also delivered an opportunity for participants to provide the basis of the shaping of ELT for the following

steps. Within the discussion group, the participating teachers had a chance to start thinking about the following steps in order to reflect on their approaches and to interpret different examples. These discussion groups furthermore prepared participants for the Facebook sharing group because they helped participants to construct and express a basic set of knowledges in advance before directly communicating with their colleagues sharing experiences from the other country.

#### **3.5.4. Intervention: Online Sharing (Facebook group)**

Another important idea and exchange mechanism for me was the use of Facebook because online systems are an important technology for researchers to use in their research as they offer access to a wide range of information via the internet (Gray, 2014). I therefore established a secret\* Facebook group for all participants (four English, four Turkish teachers and me) in order to share memorable outdoor activities, ideas and articles that are influential for individuals along with photos and videos. This secret Facebook group assisted participants to share things without anyone else seeing it, in accordance with the ethics consent. The aim of this process was to provide common ground so that teachers from different countries could have a chance to share their activities and ideas and to see each others' activities and ideas in return. It formed a mechanism to share ideas and was an intervention aimed to help teachers in their professional development.

Regarding my aim, Marshall and Rossman (2011, p.180) underline three main usages of computers in research: (1) using the internet to collect data, (2) using software to transcribe and analyse the data, (3) using the internet as a field for ethnographic research.

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\* There are only three types of Facebook group: public, closed and secret groups.



However, the internet was used as an idea-sharing platform in my research as it is a means to communicate with other people via various aspects such as email, blogs (Merriam, 2009), Facebook groups etc. (Wilson, Gosling & Graham, 2012). In particular, Facebook was a useful tool for me because as Wilson, Gosling and Graham (2012) remark there are several reasons for the relevance of Facebook in social science such as its popularity, the active reflection of population's activities, and its handiness in terms of accessibility. These reasons led me to use Facebook as a data sharing platform for participants because as Wilson, Gosling and Graham (2012) furthermore state, the number of active Facebook users was over 800 million in 2012, so it was highly likely that participants would have an easy access to Facebook rather than other online tools.

It is however important to underline that teachers maintained the responsibility for copyright and consents for sharing. This issue was indicated in the ethical material, teacher information and consent forms, which they signed at the beginning of the research process (discussed further in the ethics section). This Facebook group was used for two months after the last discussion group in England. At first, teachers did not post so I started the process by posting some photos from the settings explaining the activities in order to encourage participants to post. Then, the teachers started sharing photos from their activities accompanied by written descriptions. In this case, the participating English teachers shared their activities once a week as they arranged the outdoor areas and activities on weekly basis, and the Turkish participants shared once they had outdoor activities (not on a regular basis). The shared photos have been used to support the data from interview and observations so that the readers could visualise the statements from interviews as well as observation notes.

### **3.6. Data Collection**

The above mentioned research methods were part of the overall data collection process within the ethnographic study which required a long period of engagement and diverse research methods such as interview and observation (Creswell, 2012) to address my research questions. Within this research process, I first conducted interviews in England with four English early years teachers to determine their understanding of outdoor activities. Secondly, after completing interviews, I started observation in these teachers' schools. During the observation process, each observation for each school was designated different days of the week. In other words, I observed the first teacher respectively on Monday, Friday, Thursday, Wednesday, and Tuesday. The second teacher was observed in the days following the first teacher, so respectively Tuesday, Monday, Friday, Thursday, and Wednesday (see Appendix-6). This means that I observed the teachers on different days of the weeks. This system was intended to help me to observe teachers with reliable and valid outcomes because I had a chance to see their activities on each day of the week and in different weeks. In total, there were five observations for each teacher over a month. The aim of this schedule was to decrease the effect of weather conditions on implementation, and to see teachers' activities over a long period, as ethnographic research requires, while keeping the total field work period to a minimum in order to accomplish all the stages of the research.

After completing this process in England, the same procedures were applied in Turkey. The first part of data collection was thus completed. All these interviews and observations were analysed to compare the similarities and differences comprehensively in Turkish

and English kindergarten/early years teachers' understandings of and practices in outdoor activities.

In the third step of the research, these initial findings were discussed in discussion groups in Turkey and England, including all four Turkish teachers in Turkey, and all four English

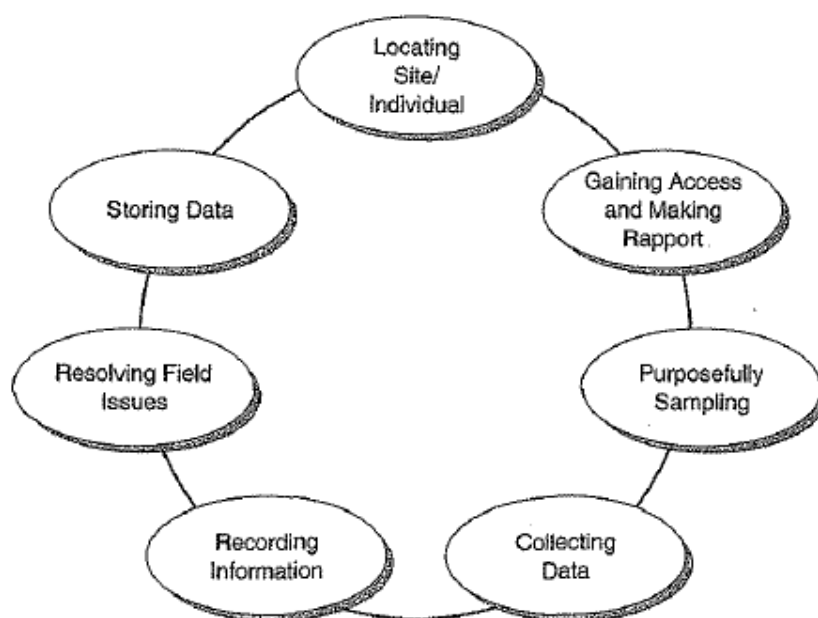


Figure 3.2: Data Collection Activities (Creswell, 2007, p.118)

teachers in England. The role of these discussion groups is mentioned in the previous section. After group discussion, the Facebook group, which was

comprised of all eight teachers (four Turkish and four English teachers) and me as the group administrator, was set up so that teachers could directly share their views regarding activities, ideas, and etc. with each other. This exchange in the Facebook group lasted two months. At the end of this period, as at the first stage, interviews and observations were carried out using the same strategy (see Appendix-7 for second observation timetable).

The reason for this detailed planning of data collection is that, as Punch (2005) claims, the careful planning for data collection is an important aspect to increase the quality level of research. Creswell (2007, p.118) has suggested a data collection circle, see Figure 3.2,

to illustrate the important steps of the data collection procedure. These steps are described in different sections for my research because it covers ethics, sampling and analysis (see Appendix-8 for the relationship between this cycle and my research). Furthermore, during the process of conducting research methods, the researcher faces two difficulties, which are (1) on-site research with real people, (2) being both a researcher and a participant in the group (Sangasubana, 2011). It is therefore important to be clear about the data collection as well as sampling, which was an important aspect as my study was informed by longitudinal research.

### **3.7. Sampling**

Sampling is a considerable factor in research. Mason (2002) explains the reason for this asserting that sampling and selection are essentials of research and should allow a clear procedure to access and collect accurate data. However, it depends on the chosen data collection tools. This is why a clear rationale for sampling is needed to reflect how it fits with the research aims (Mason, 2002). Convenience and voluntary sampling were important for my research, because a convenience sample contains participants, who are the easiest people to access, and can be extended until the required sample size is reached (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). It therefore provides logistical sampling for my research because I carried out ethnographic research, which took a long time to collect data. For this reason, the choice of the nearest willing participants was important to use my time effectively. Furthermore, during a long research process, it is vital to have enthusiastic participants to see the research to the end successfully as drop out could be an issue. Because of this, voluntary sampling is used as the sampling strategy because this consists of volunteers such as friends, friends of friends, and participants who have shown interest

in taking part in the research study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Again, these participants will be more likely to stay with the project.

Mason (2002) emphasises the necessity of strategic purpose in sampling because the relation between sample and wider generalization cannot be accidental or left to good fortune. Similarly, it is claimed that the sample selection is non-random, purposeful and small in qualitative research because the researcher spends quite an amount of time in the field with participants to collect data (Merriam, 2009). Bell (2005) explains that it is difficult for researchers to cover the whole country or generalized participants in terms of practicality because accessing every person in the context over the country is impossible. At the same time Creswell (2003, p.18) states that:

“In many experiments, (...) only a convenience sample is possible because the investigator must use naturally formed groups (e.g., a classroom, an organization, a family unit) or volunteers as participants in the study.”

The convenience sample and voluntary sampling are non-probability sampling approaches, which enable researchers to collect data from targeted groups (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

In my research, I used both a convenience sample and voluntary sampling because my context covered two different countries and based on ethnography, thereby using standard sampling techniques would be inappropriate in order to access representative participants. The sampling methods chosen may be unable to offer generalizable data, which is a limitation of the research.

However, it is important to remark that my sampling method introduced some limitation in terms of representing the general situations. The schools might have higher quality than

average in each country in terms of materials provided for outdoor activities, or teachers might be more ambitious than average for outdoor activities, so these possibilities may make up for another possible limitation in my research. Nevertheless, in order to seek a reasonable representation of the average conditions within the settings, I chose teachers who were currently working in reception class/kindergarten with children aged five and carrying out outdoor activities regularly in the convenient area, and who volunteered to take part. The reason for this is that my focus was to understand differences between teachers' outdoor activities and the role of idea sharing (interaction between groups) in terms of improvement to outdoor activities, which required actual practice.

### **3.7.1. Sample Size**

My research was a longitudinal ethnographic research study, so it was impossible as a sole researcher to choose a large number of participants. The reason for this was that I personally carried out interviews with teachers, observed them, and discussed about the initial findings of research. There was also a second cycle of interviews and observations, all of which I conducted by myself alone. As I had anticipated this long process, I decided to carry out my research with four English and four Turkish teachers (see Appendix-9 for the details of participants). It is important to state that there were two teachers, working in the same school in England occasionally, so although I had worked with them both, I counted them as one teacher, and used their overall responses and approaches as examples (although, I have identified which one's quotations I have used in the text). If I had carried out this research with more than four teachers from each country, it would have been unlikely that I would be able to finish my fieldwork within a year. In addition, if the data collection process had encompassed two academic years, it would have been impossible

to retain the same teachers and their classrooms. Thus, this would have added more complexity. Besides, although the focused participants were these eight teachers, there were more than eight people involved during the process because there were some teaching assistants (TAs) with teachers, so the number of adults present in observations might be twice this number. I focused on TAs, when they were in charge in terms of seeing the overall approach of children with and without teachers. In addition, English teachers were chosen from the south west of England and Turkish teachers were chosen from southern Turkey in order to represent average social status and outdoor materials in their regional contexts (country). While choosing these participants, each teacher was chosen from different schools to exemplify similarities and differences, and to provide more validity to the research. Choosing teachers from different schools allowed me to explore practices (Mason, 2002) more effectively within each country.

With these concerns borne in mind, Mason (2002) states that sample size is not only about the representation of community or population, but it also helps the researcher to comprehend the process of research. It is claimed that there is no definitive sample size for research; it is concomitant to the research aim of the study, participants' situation, variables covered by research, and design of research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Merriam, 2009). In other respects, there is no certainty that a large sample guarantees representativeness (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Hence, Mason (2002, p.139) highlights the importance of determining sample size with the intention of "making meaningful comparisons, developing and testing your explanations."

### **3.7.2. Timing**

As this is a longitudinal research, I needed to consider timing because of public holidays and term dates in both countries since the researcher needs to spend a certain time with the group to comprehend their activities (Merriam, 2009). It is obvious that accessibility is essential to carry out interviews and observations. Therefore, the research process started in England with interviews and observations in September and October at the beginning of the academic year of 2015-2016, with the interviews and observation in Turkey following immediately during November and December of the same year. After completing the first step of research, the data was analysed. Following analysis, discussion groups were carried out, and later the Facebook group for teachers had been established in England and Turkey by January, 2016. These steps constituted the first half of my research. English and Turkish teachers were then given two months to exchange their ideas about outdoor activities. In the second half of the research, the process of data gathering started in Turkey, with the second interviews and observations in Turkey in April 2016. As the final phase of research, the second interviews and observations in England were carried out in May, 2016 (see Appendix-10 for research timetable).

The determination of a timetable for longitudinal studies is a vital issue to avoid failure due to lack of access during data gathering; as Mason (2002) remarks, time is an important facet, which should be planned carefully in advance. Scheduling a timetable for research and checking it regularly can help to control the process of research (Bell, 2005). As Flick (2009) states, setting a time table is important for a qualitative researcher to evaluate conditions, and in particular, researchers carrying out ethnographic study need to spend a



long time to observe the development of an event in a group to analyse. Thus, I determined the above-mentioned process to ensure better research outcomes.

### **3.8. Data Analysis**

The aim of this study was to examine the similarities and differences in Turkish and English kindergarten/early years teachers' perceptions of and practices in outdoor activities. To obtain such an outcome, sixteen interviews, collected from eight teachers (four English and four Turkish early years/kindergarten teachers), and observation notes from eight teachers' classrooms were gathered. Then, these notes were coded, and I undertook a thematic analysis focusing on my specific research questions. Ethnographic researchers are not able to finish their research as soon as data collection ends because the research includes not only the process of fieldwork but also its ongoing analysis within related theoretical frameworks (Fife, 2005).

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), data analysis in ethnographic research is not a separate part of the research process because ethnography covers numerous ways for data analysis, and it generally starts before data collection and continues throughout data collection and beyond. It is furthermore claimed that it begins taking form within the researchers' thought and foresight (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) because interpretation has an importance in ethnographic research in order to gather meaningful outcomes of fieldwork (Brewer, 2000). Moreover, it is essential to specify that ethnography does not have a certain regulated form of analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; O'Reilly, 2005).

I chose to use thematic analysis from the following three main approaches for qualitative research: content analysis, thematic analysis and grounded theory (Gray, 2014). This is because “content analysis takes texts and analyses, reduces and interrogates them into summary form through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes in order to generate or test a theory” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.476), and “grounded theory is an important method of theory generation. It is more inductive than content analysis, as the theories emerge from, rather than exist before, the data” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.491). Thematic analysis is a way to encapsulate the themes regarding the research questions and the inference of the data (Gray, 2014). Because of its iterative design, thematic analysis addresses the requirements of my research well. The reason for this is that “thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). My research therefore was constructed on specified research questions, and these research questions were addressed referring to emergent themes in research, which then informed the later stages of the research.

In addition, “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents a level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data” (Gray, 2014, p.609). These quotations illustrate that thematic analysis is a way to organize and analyse the data via categorising them according to themes. During thematic analysis process, Braun and Clarke (2006) note six phases of thematic analysis that are: (1) familiarizing yourself with your data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. These stages mean that first; the researcher needs to engage with collected data

via transcribing and reading them. Second, the researcher needs to constitute general codes. Third, the researcher needs to gather codes regarding the themes. Fourth, the researcher needs to revise the coding and themes, and consider whether they work. Fifth, the researcher needs to generalize and define the themes. At the end, the researcher organizes the coding and themes according to research question(s), and finishes the analysis of data.

Parallel to Braun and Clarke's (2006) process, the emergence of themes are dependent on the identification of main aspects that are noteworthy and relevant to the research questions (Gray, 2014). The outcomes of analysis are therefore produced by the researcher regarding their potential to make a contribution to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, my research is structured as an ethnographic study and thematic analysis is one technique that can be used to analyse ethnographic research. Creswell (2003) associates qualitative techniques and thematic analysis with ethnographic research. Because of the importance of the emerging themes, from the first part of the research, a long list of initial themes (see Appendix-11) were identified, which described the current perceptions and practices of outdoor activities from these countries. In order to get the core of cross-cultural context in the next step of my research, I focused on four of the emerged themes: barriers, freedom, pedagogic roles and professional learning (see Figure 3.3).

During the analysis of my research, to organize and detect the main themes in my data, I also used NVivo 10, which is a computer software to analyse qualitative data as it is claimed that

“The efficiencies afforded by software release some of the time used to simply ‘manage’ data and allow an increased focus on ways of examining the meaning of what is recorded” (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p.2).

NVivo is a tool to organize data during the analysis period. In addition to this, Marshall and Rossman (2011, p.209) remark that there are seven steps to be achieved during the analysis procedure of qualitative research, which are:

“(1) Organizing the data, (2) immersion in the data, (3) generating categories and themes, (4) coding the data, (5) offering interpretations through analytic memos, (6) searching for alternative understandings, and (7) writing the report or other format for presenting the study.”

These steps are important factors in acquiring better analytical outcomes. Regarding these, Brewer (2000) and O'Reilly (2005) claim that analysis is an ongoing process to be thought about even during the data collection. It therefore can be expressed that there is no distinction between data collection and analysis in ethnographic study because I had some questions and frames guiding my data collection and analysis, but some emerged solely from the data. However, thematic analysis is a convenient analytical approach for such research in general because research is constructed around themes. Thematic analysis relies on coding (Punch, 2005).

While choosing these themes, NVivo 10 was used as a tool to decide the important themes regarding the initial interviews analysis (which is rough analysis in order to understand the disposition of the teachers). As it is mentioned in the data collection process, there was time to initially analyse the collected data from both English and Turkish teachers (see Appendix-10 for the assigned dates during data collection). After the first data collection in England, as you can see in Appendix-16, the dominating themes (nodes in NVivo) are drawbacks (7 references, with child nodes: 48 references), freedom (2 references, with child nodes: 46 references), and roles in outdoor (revised as pedagogic

roles) (9 references, with child nodes: 43 references). As there were various occurring themes, the other themes were seen as insufficient to focus on because of difficulty in observation, or the practical changes over the research process. For instance, the themes like; curriculum, benefits of the outdoors, or development can only support the other themes rather than being focused on them.

During the identification period of the themes, the research questions, the inspected literature considering cultural aspects, and the theoretical aspects\* were used to home in on what was most significant. The themes (nodes in Appendix-16) provided me a general perspective through my data in terms of dominant aspects in outdoor activities. As it is illustrated previously, the main research question aims to identify the perceptions of teachers to outdoor play, so the interview questions were based on this aim. The statements of the participating teachers were considered throughout the observations in order to determine the activities in relation to the sub-research questions as to how teachers enact their understandings in practice.

In addition to the initial analysis, the aim in the second phase of the research was to focus on the emergent themes in order to comprehend any possible changes stimulated by the online intervention. In the final stage of analysis, as there is a sub-research question on the impact of the sharing of ideas between Turkish and English teachers, the focus was to determine and compare the participating teachers' perceptions of and practices in outdoor activities with their former conditions. However, in the final phase of the data analysis, it was also important to understand the data in the light of the influential theories. As I have

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\* Theoretical aspects in the analysis are explained in the following chapter because of being used for meaningful representation of the data.

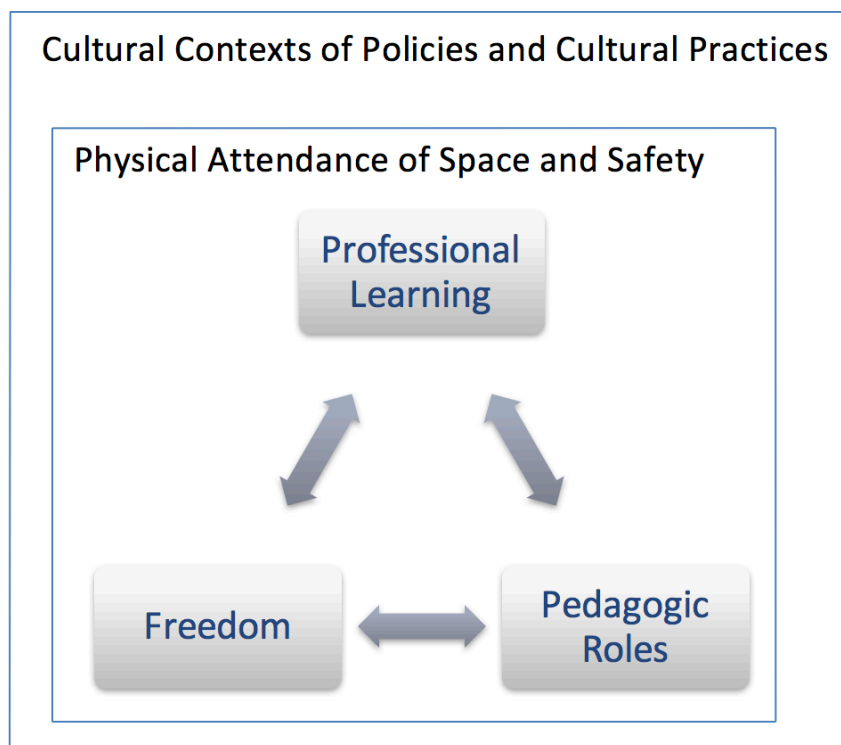
been influenced by the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) to design my research, I looked for the related themes and aspects through each phase of the research. First interviews, first observations, second interviews and second observations were directly related to one stage of ELT\* (see Kolb, 1984). For each phase of the research, ELT's stages were a useful guide to comprehend the data. For instance, the data from the first interviews was examined considering the meaning of Concrete Experience, the data from first observations was examined considering the aspects of Reflective observations, and so on. This theory and its relationship to data are exhibited in the following chapter and converted into a new model in order to provide a wide perspective on comprehending the research process and professional learning.

During the process of addressing themes from the data, each interview was closely examined to identify the important aspects, considering the emergent themes. Therefore, as can be seen in Appendix-17, the highlighted places in the interview transcription with different colours are related to different themes. On the right-hand side of the screenshots, there are list of nodes as extracted from the exemplified interviews. These few examples show how to address the related themes and nodes from the data. In addition to this, during the analysis, the theoretical aspects mentioned in the Literature Review chapter were considered, such as the Experiential Learning Theory, Dewey and so on.

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\* ELT is discussed and explained in-depth in the following chapter due to revising it considering the research process.

Multiple emerging themes from the first part of the research were sufficiently congruent to give rise to four overarching themes, which shaped the focus of the second part. This



**Figure 3.3: Relationship of the Influence of Themes within Physical and Cultural Contexts**

described considering the impact on ‘freedom’ or/and as ‘drawbacks’; ‘ratio’ and ‘factors’ were related with pedagogic roles; and so on. However, the theme of ‘barriers’ reflected the relationship between barriers in outdoor activities and the other three themes rather than being an independent one. As Figure 3.3 shows, the freedom and pedagogic roles themes, pedagogic roles and professional learning, and freedom and professional learning have two-sided relationships. In addition to this, while barriers: space and safety influence these three themes, the cultural contexts of policies and cultural practices have regulative role on these themes. The cultural contexts of policies and cultural practices have been discussed in the Literature chapter. The barriers theme is mentioned in chapter five considering the impact of the barriers through each theme. Later on, the findings of the

is because during the process of analysis of the data, other initial themes were feeding into these four themes. For example, the theme of materials was

two main themes are exhibited and discussed, considering the research process individually. In each findings and discussion chapter, I discuss whether these aspects of the research changed throughout the research process, and how barriers such as space and safety applied to these themes in the first stage. In addition to this, the theme of professional learning is particularly separated as another chapter, due to the research having a focus on possible professional learning opportunities as well as developing a new model from the research process.

To understand the analysis, it is necessary to describe coding before explaining thematic analysis in more detail.

### ***Coding***

An important part of my research was coding as needed to execute data analysis of qualitative data. During data collection, I needed to code my notes on a daily basis to avoid the accumulation of too much work before the discussion groups took place, and being up-to-date with codes was necessary to determine the relation between interviews and activities. Thus, I had an initial coding frame, which had been organized according to Waters' (2013) Figure (3.1) about aspects of a space, and included themes related to my research questions based on previous studies in the field about regulatory aspects of outdoor activities such as materials, playgrounds, activities and field trips.

Coding formed a key aspect of my data analysis because “codes are tags, names or labels, and coding is therefore the process of putting tags, names or labels against pieces of the data” (Punch, 2005, p.199) and this enabled me to keep tabs on the development of themes throughout the research process. Regarding this, Gray (2014) highlights that there is no



swift method for data analysis because coding enables researchers to have an index of data, and therefore to summarize and organize the data (Punch, 2005). Coding of my data helped me to find out the themes in my research along the way, and then to relate them with each other in order to find main themes to focus in the second stage of the research.

During coding, field notes from observations and interviews can be arranged; possible issues can be identified; some interesting points can be focused upon; codes can be modified; and possible connections between the data can be realized (Gray, 2014). Furthermore, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) remark that researchers are able to detect similarities across pieces of information, and coding enables researchers to focus on these identified categories. These categories were determined by me vis-à-vis salient themes. Therefore, I used coding at every step of my research because I focused on two different countries' teachers' outdoor activities, so it was important to bear in mind the similarities of countries, and realize the circumstances actively and systematically. The greater number of codes generated during the process ensured that subtleties were not lost before patterns emerged and the overarching themes could be determined from a larger data set.

Moreover, I conducted discussion groups in Turkey and England as soon as the observation process was complete, so it was crucial for me to code day by day, so I could report on these initial findings. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) separate coding into three different types: open coding, analytical coding and axial coding. From these coding types, the most suitable one for me was analytical coding. The reason for this is that analytical coding provides researchers with explanatory and critical perspectives during the investigation of behaviour in the light of the subject and issues of the research (Cohen,

Manion & Morrison, 2011) while “open coding generates categories and defines their properties and dimensions. Axial coding works within one category, making connections between subgroups of that category and between one category and another” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.488). In further analysis, I made use of axial coding as well in order to correlate sub-themes and generate the main themes.

### **3.9. Ethical Issues**

Because my research included teachers and children, it needed to carefully consider ethical implication, but, my research was focused on the teachers rather than the children, and this influenced the design of my ethical materials. Ethical factors are important to carry out successful research and ethical literature is steadily increasing to regulate such issues during the research process (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Congruently, ethical aspects are explained as:

“Ethical practices of the researchers recognize the importance of the subjectivity of their own lens, acknowledge the powerful position they have in the research, and admit that the participants or the co-construction of the account between the researchers and the participants are the true owners of the information collected” (Creswell, 2007, p.24).

This quotation from Creswell (2007) shows that ethical practice provides the researcher and participants with ownership for the research and confirms the validity of data. The necessity of ethical codes occur because of the misuse of experiments (Flick, 2009). As Creswell (2007) claims, the researcher carrying out qualitative research may experience many difficulties with ethical dilemmas in the process of data collection, analysis and reporting. To manage such issues, ethical protocols are generated to organize and make explicit the relationships between researcher(s) and participants regarding situations in the field in order to prevent any harm to participants by respecting and considering their

demands and concerns (Flick, 2009). Ethical factors are involved in the whole research process because of the importance of clarity, sensibility, trustworthiness, precision and academic neutrality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Besides these important components, it is claimed that there is no certain rule to regulate research but ethics provides guidance for what is decent or not for ethical research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) and must be considered carefully for every research context.

As a result of the above explanations, and considering the greatest possible protection to participants in this research, I considered several measures to compare ethical forms and regulate my research. I considered the participants' rights with regard to European Research Association's Ethical Code for Early Childhood Researchers (EECERA, 2014), and Plymouth University Ethics Policy (Plymouth University, 2013). In the light of these regulations about ethical aspects, I compiled head teacher information and consent forms (Appendix-12), teacher information and consent forms (Appendix-13), and parent information and consent form (Appendix-14). In addition to these forms, ethical approval forms (Appendix-15), and interview questions and prompts were submitted to the Plymouth University Ethics Committee to acquire permission for the research. These forms confirmed informed consent about gaining access to and acceptance in the settings, the process of research, the benefits of research, the potential issues and solutions as well as the confidentiality and anonymity of the research. These points are also emphasised by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) as initial considerations for researchers.

In the context of anonymity and confidentiality, while doing interviews, the participants' specific consent had been obtained to record conversations digitally. It was confirmed that school names, head teacher names, teacher names would not be used in the

presentation of research. In order to provide this, pseudonyms would be used to recognise teachers' confidentially. Besides, such collected data was kept in a password-protected computer, and was not shared with any third party. With regard to Plymouth University ethics policy, these data (digital recordings of interviews and observation notes) are required to be kept securely for "a period of ten years" (Plymouth University, 2013, p.11). In addition to this information given to participants, the information sheets informed head teachers, teachers and parents about the reasons for choosing their schools, the results of taking part in research, the risks and benefits of taking part, and how they could get further information about research. These issues and ethical aspects were directly addressed in the head teacher, teacher and parent information and consent forms to acknowledge the ethical considerations of research.

Apart from these, as I was spending time in the company of children due to focusing on early years class teachers, I obtained a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, as this was necessary when working with children in England. This is a requirement to protect children from possible harm, and regarding this, it is also stated on the ethical documents that "I will spend time in schools beforehand to develop a rapport with the children and teachers in order to decrease the possibility of nervousness and anxiousness." However, the case of Turkey is different from England that although there was no need for anything like DBS check, I was obligated to obtain permission from the MNE in order to gain access to Turkish schools regarding the context of my research. To obtain the permission, I provided the Turkish translation of data collection tools with an explanation of research process.

In practice, head teachers and teachers' consents were obtained, and parent information forms were sent before starting data gathering because it is important to inform and obtain the consent of participants in advance to reduce possible misunderstanding during the process. This research required a long period to gather data, so teachers were informed about it and the process of two interviews, two observation periods, discussion groups and an interactive Facebook group to share their ideas with teachers from the other country.

The important component of ethical issues is the consideration of the possibility of potential problems during the research. While spending time at the beginning of research process and observation period, researchers could reveal rapport with teachers, so this might lead to misjudgement of the data in research. In addition to this, researcher and child interaction might influence the conditions during the process. To decrease such possible issues, it is important to conduct a proper pilot study, to help me, as a researcher, to determine potential issues, and generate mitigating approaches for them.

### **3.10. Piloting**

Piloting provides an opportunity to test the strategies used in data collection and endorses the fundamental reasons for choosing tools and methods (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Therefore I visited other early years settings to test my observation method and conduct a few interviews with teachers in order to optimise the clarity and relevance of my interview questions. This enabled me to enhance the quality of my questions as a consequence of piloting and feedback (Creswell, 2012). Piloting also provided experience that in return improved my ability to conduct research (Mason, 2002).

According to Brewer (2000), piloting is also a way to gather primary data and to sensitize the tools for actual data collection via the illustration and evaluation of other possible tools (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Marshall and Rossman (2011) emphasize that this preliminary test of research prevents possible drawbacks in the research process and reinforces appropriate methods because it promotes the testing of reliability and validity (Bell, 2005; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) and that the tools are fit for the purpose. However, to achieve such things, it is important to allocate adequate time for piloting because it entails both organizing the pilot study and evaluation of outcomes (Mason, 2002). As a result of piloting, researchers can also infer possible results of a study (Creswell, 2012).

In this way, it enhances the strength of research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) as a consequence of testing of data collection tools beforehand (Oppenheim, 1992). However, Oppenheim (1992) highlights that although piloting can be costly for researchers, if it is skipped, the outcomes can cost more than the piloting because there is a possibility of failing with the intended main research. Correspondingly, well-organized and piloted research design is likely to be more expensive but more efficient in collecting relevant data (Bell, 2005). Because of this emphasis on significance of conducting a pilot study, I too placed importance on this, as the research process would take one academic year to collect data, so if there was any problem during data collection, it could threaten the outcomes of my research. As a result of the piloting of my proposed methods, I redesigned the research process to avoid possible issues; for example, I added some sub-questions for interviews in order to have detailed explanations, and clarified my role in the two different contexts because while I was expected to maintain my distance from practice as

a researcher in the English context, there was the opportunity and expectation that I would help teachers in the Turkish context. These changes in interview questions were important for me to gather comprehensive data; and realising my role in different contexts helped me understand teachers' expectations from me, which might avoid misunderstanding and any distracting situations for my participants in the main research process.

### **3.11. Validity and Reliability**

Validity is the ability of research tools to achieve the intended aim of research, reliability is the consistency of findings delivered through the research tools. To achieve validity and reliability, I used the triangulation technique because;

“Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data (e.g., observational field notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. The inquirer examines each information source and finds evidence to support a theme.” (Creswell, 2012, p.259)

Linking with my research, these terms, validity and reliability, are generally used together in critiquing research, which needs to be carefully conducted. Thus, validity and reliability are sometimes considered as ways to exhibit the ideas and consequences of a study in a way purged from any effect on an examined situation or theories in the field (Merriam, 2009). Regarding this, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) claim that the risks to validity and reliability cannot be prevented completely in a research study, but validity and reliability in research require careful planning, ordered data collection, data analysis, data interpretation and the presentation of findings (Merriam, 2009). That is why, validity is described as “the optimism of perfection” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.133).

Merriam (2009) claims that the different hypotheses about and understandings of circumstances should be considered while evaluating validity and reliability in terms of compatible philosophical paradigms. The reason for this is that qualitative research is open to interpretation. Participants' ideas, behaviour and understandings lead to misinterpretation at some level, so validity is intended to minimize the level of such issues (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Possible issues in my research occurs by the nature of social research, and ways of preventing it were mentioned in the previous sections. Ways to prevent issues also serve to increase the level of validity and reliability of my research. However, it is emphasised that validity cannot be considered as an outcome of something because it is a goal to be achieved during research, and corresponding with previous statements, it is not a thing to be elucidated via research or that is easy to provide (Maxwell, 2012). Furthermore, in qualitative research, validity is more often expressed as trustworthiness because while validity requires consistent results from the research tools once it is applied repeatedly, trustworthiness provides an acceptable range in social sciences as it focuses on human beings.

According to Flick (2009), validity is emphasised more than reliability because the conclusions can be researchable, reasoned and justified. Merriam (2009, p.213) states that "validity ... must be assessed in terms of something other than reality itself (which can never be grasped)." The relationship between validity and reliability may be understood as follows: while reliability is a required prerequisite for validity of research, validity is not a requirement for reliability. In addition to these understandings, it is important to emphasise that reliability is a precondition but not an adequate circumstance in study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Nonetheless, it is claimed that the use of



triangulation is the most common way to increase the validity of research (Merriam, 2009).

I used different tools (interview and observation) to collect data from teachers because as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) state, triangulation is a usage of at least two different data collection tools in the same research to reveal some human attitudes and ideas. I also focused on triangulating the usefulness of these two methods during the pilot stage in order to test whether there were any emerging issues. By doing so, as mentioned in the data collection section about my research, I carried out the interview at first and then observed teachers' outdoor activities both at the beginning and at the end of the process. The first aim of conducting both techniques was to compare teachers' understanding and practice of outdoor activities, and the second aim was to verify the findings. As a result of using these techniques (interview, observation and discussion groups) and analysing them in harmony, I aimed to increase the trustworthiness of the findings of my research. To do this, during the data analysis period, I took any contradictions into account in the results generated by different tools. If there was any contradiction found, reasons were sought to explain it. Apart from these validity and reliability aspects, the whole research process is influenced by the researcher, so it is important here to make some remarks on the reflexivity of researcher.

### **3.12. Reflexivity**

Reflection on the role of the researcher is necessary because, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) claim, reflexivity is an issue influencing all research. In agreement with this, Creswell (2007) points out that reflexivity is a particular field issue during the data collection process for ethnographic studies. The reason for this may be explained in the

way that researchers are an indispensable part of social research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) because they take an active role in the data collection process. Researchers need to spend considerable time in the field during the data collection period, so it is important to underline the researcher's position, which links to my research remarks about positionality. Linking with this issue, the place of reflexivity may be clarified as follows:

“Reflexivity suggests that researchers should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in, or influence on, the research” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.171).

This means that researchers need to clarify their position and conditions within the borders of the research. Correspondingly, reflexivity is to think critically about what your roles, understandings, ideas and judgements are, as well as how you frame the study throughout the research (Mason, 2002). In the light of these statements, my role was to identify the differences of outdoor activities in both countries. During this process, I tried to minimise my impact, acting differently in each setting regardless of the country because I knew Turkish culture and their expectations from me as a researcher. Also, I somewhat knew how children would react to me when I communicated with them. However, I tried to decrease the level of communicative issues in England during the research because English is my second language, and I am therefore not as fluent in it as I am in Turkish. Thus, it was likely to have been easier for me to collect data in Turkish context. Understanding the relationships with teacher and children was predicted to be more difficult in England because I was not familiar with English culture as much as I was with Turkish culture. The reason for this is that the understanding, feeling, discomfort of researchers on their notes about observation and during interviews may manipulate the gathered data (Flick, 2009), so researchers need to recognize their background, sense,

selectivity, which in turn, develop the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Besides this concern, such issues can lead to misinterpretation of data because it is possible to miss some important data in England, due to my not being fully familiar with English culture. Conversely, I may not have noticed various aspects in Turkey because I was so familiar with the culture there.

To handle these differences regarding countries, I spent a certain amount of time in settings in both countries, and I aimed to keep my behaviour similar for both during data collection process. As a result of the above aspects, it is emphasised that the reflexivity of researcher is an important consideration because it has an influence on the final report of study as the researcher holds the right to voice in the description and discussion of problems (Creswell, 2007).

### **3.13. Chapter Conclusion**

This comparative research focuses on English and Turkish early years/kindergarten teachers' understanding and practice of outdoor activities. To address this focus, ethnographic research was carried out for one academic year with four teachers in different schools from each country. Several research methods including interviews, observations, discussion groups and an online sharing platform were selected and used to determine the change of teachers' understandings and practice throughout the process. The reasons for these choices are that the practice of outdoor activities and teachers' understandings are variable in accordance with cultural, regional, religious, practical, and other related reasons. During the research process interviews and observations were used to identify teachers' initial understanding and practice then, utilising the findings from analysing these first steps, discussion groups were arranged in both countries to discuss

how outdoor activities can be improved in the light of these early identified similarities and differences. This was followed by a Facebook group intervention to exchange their ideas directly with teachers from the other country with the hope that this would contribute to their professional development. Finally, second interviews and observations were conducted to determine any change in teachers' views during this process. Throughout this research, these different research methods were likely to provide valid and reliable research results since I have had careful checking mechanisms between interviews and observations.



## **Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion: Professional Learning in Early Years**

### **4.1. Chapter Introduction**

The first theme of the research process is ‘professional learning in early years’, and the emergent themes are ‘barriers’, ‘freedom’, and ‘pedagogic roles’. The first theme reveals the impact of the stage two research intervention on improvements in professional learning. Professional learning seeks to provide a shared support from others in order to enhance the quality of a professional’s practice by re-assessing their current practice (Hargreaves, 2000). However, it is important to discuss this theme first because some aspects from this chapter explain the changes for the following emergent themes. This theme also explains the research process because there is a direct relationship between the themes as illustrated in the Methodology chapter with Figure 3.3. This research was designed to provide online Professional Learning (PL) opportunities for the participating teachers within a cross-cultural context as PL is the most constructive aspect to enhance the output of education (Burn, Mutton & Hagger, 2010).

The impact of the research from the participating teachers’ perspectives, and their practices, suggests practical implications for the research. Over the course of the research, there were some notable changes in teachers’ statements and practice, which were attributed to the research process as well as to their learning as an ongoing process. This is also found with the participating teachers’ responses to PL. The process of the research was important to enhance the participating teachers’ perceptions and practice in outdoor activities because “this is a demanding role for the practitioners as it requires competence

in professional care and knowledge about children's interactions and friendships" (Aasen, Grindheim & Waters, 2009, p.11).

Professional learning was a main aim of this research because of having two variant countries to compare and through providing the interactive opportunity. PL is based on the impact of collective working so as to enhance personal and collaborative development (Oberhuemer, 2005). This research provided an online opportunity for the participants to interact with their colleagues from the same and another country so that the participants found a chance to evaluate their practice in light of different practices. Such different practices can provide a different perspective for participating teachers like awareness and understanding (McLeod, 2015), and another aspect of professional learning, critical reflection of the practice, (Macfarlane *et al.*, 2015) occurred throughout the research process. This is because;

“[C]hildren tend to sit, stand, walk, run and children need us to be there and arrange the environment so it is safe. With regard to the fundamental stage our role is hugely significant and we need to teach, encourage, help and support so children move forward in their abilities and skills” (Bilton, 2010, p.176).

This expression illustrates the general perception of children and teachers in settings. Therefore, PL is important for teachers to enhance the range of options in their practices.

This chapter exhibits the developed theoretical method for this research, and discusses the impact of this new theoretical aspect on the second part of practice of the participating teachers. To provide professional learning for the participating teachers, the existing theory, the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), has been revised in this research through adding multimedia tools from a Facebook group. In order to determine the impact of this developed model, the impact of the research was explored with the participants in the

second interviews, and the participants' practices were observed considering the initial observations.

## 4.2. Theoretical Frame to Interpret the Findings

Theoretical aspects play a key role in identifying the structure of research and the ways to explain the meaning of findings. In this case, there is one main theory used in this research: Experiential Learning Theory and the new model helped to explain the impact of additional tools during the research process. Therefore, a new model has been developed over the research process in order to describe the impact of online interactive tools in addition to Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). It is important to outline the meaning and the process of ELT and the new model.

### 4.2.1. Experiential Learning Theory

The first is Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which describes that “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.

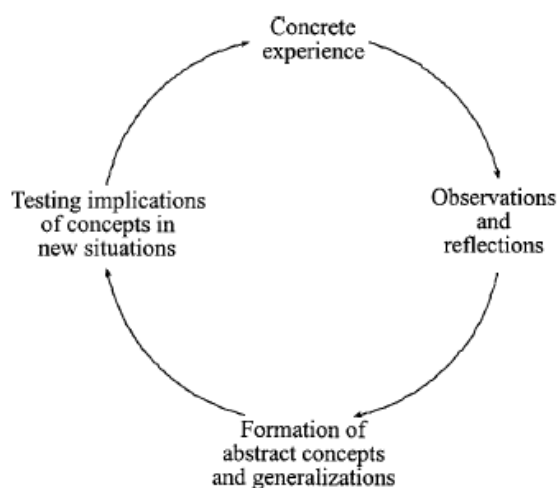


Figure 4.1: Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984, p.21)

Knowledge results from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it” (Kolb, 1984, p.41). ELT is underlined as a contemporary paradigm of the experiential approach of Dewey, constructivism of Piaget and humanism of Kurt Hahn

(Seaman, 2008). In particular, Dewey’s approach is similar to Kolb’s learning cycle as

Dewey indicated the importance of experiencing during learning (Braundy, 2004). Within the role of previous paradigms, this becomes a prominent theory as it involves humanistic, practical and intuitional aspects (Seaman, 2008). ELT explains this process as a cycle, and Figure 4.1 shows the Experiential Learning Cycle. In this theory, there are four main aspects: Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC) and Active Experimentation (AE).

“This process is portrayed as an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner ‘touches all the bases’ – experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting – in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learned. Immediate or *concrete experiences* are the basis for observations and *reflections*. These reflections are assimilated and distilled into *abstract concepts* from which new implications for action can be drawn. These implications can be *actively tested* and serve as guides in creating new experiences.” (Kolb & Kolb, 2009, p.44).

This statement from Kolb and Kolb points out how this cycle clarifies experiential learning, which provides in-depth comprehension of and flexibility in learning (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2000). In other words, CE stands for learner’s current condition, RO is for expressing and accepting the current situation to change, AC is for new knowledge or inputs for knowledge, and AE is to put the concepts into practice. The cycle of ELT therefore represents the process of learning in the light of this theory, and this cycle overlaps with my research from beginning to end (CE is associated with first interviews, RO is with first observations, AC is with second interviews, and AE is with second observations).

However, ELT is criticised by Seaman (2008) as it is associated with personal progress, and it is difficult to maintain the basic process of experience-reflect-learn. Yet, these points are associated with the aim and process of this research because each sequence of this theory coincides with one step of my research to help explain the learning process of



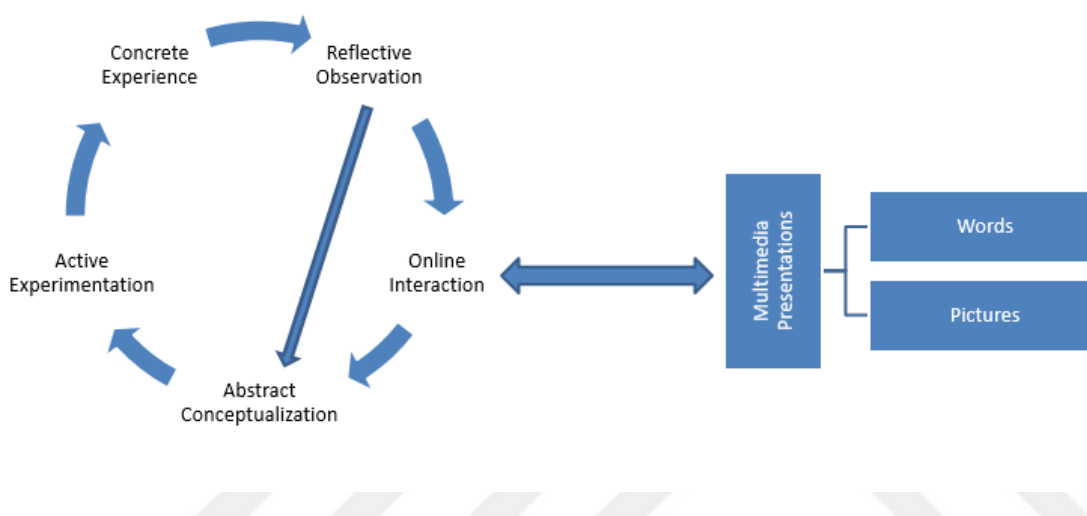
teachers (see Appendix-3). There is, indeed, an additional part in my research for teachers, which aimed to have an impact on the functionality of this cycle.

#### **4.2.2. The Developed Model with the Impact of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)**

The design of the research has been led to the development of a new model, which raises the impact of ELT for teachers in terms of Professional Learning (PL). The first descriptive part and the whole research process were clearly associated with ELT, but there were additional aspects which enhance the process, which are multimedia tools from online interaction. The ELT frames the stages of the research, and each step of ELT is associated with one step of this research in terms of identification of the learning and practice process of participants. For example, the first interview is for concrete experience and the first observation is for the reflective observation steps of ELT (see Appendix-3). However, there is an additional factor, which enabled participants to change their next steps by online interaction. This is because the shared practices with words and pictures on Facebook provided an enhanced learning opportunity for people. On the other side, “ELT provides a holistic model of learning process and a multilinear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with what we know about how people learn, grow, and develop” (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2000, p.228). The newly developed model plays a role in explaining the second part of the research process because it is used to enhance the transition of participants’ ELT cycle from Reflective Observation to Abstract Conceptualization. This occurs via advanced learning opportunities for participants from others. In this regard, Fenwick (2001, p.11) explains that in Kolb’s theory “the learner uses insights gained through the reflective observation to create an abstract conceptualization.” To explain this, Figure 4.2 can be used to describe how ELT is adapted

in this research. There was a need to develop a new model to enhance the impact of ELT in this research in consideration of PL for teachers. This is because the online interaction feature added a rich value for the impact of ELT.

Figure 4.2 shows the relationship between ELT and additional interactive tools to achieve PL for the participating teachers in this research. In this new model, learners have two alternatives to move from Reflective Observation step to Abstract Conceptualization: One



**Figure 4.2: The Online Interactive Professional Learning Model**

is the usual ELT process, and the second is to share online, interact with others and to gain new insights in order to use in the Abstract Conceptualization phase. The new model is based on ELT with the online tools for participants to learn in-depth through words and pictures. Therefore, the effectiveness of ELT can be enhanced with such shared materials in order to exhibit their current practices. The cross-cultural context enriches such opportunities (see Tobin, Hsueh & Karasawa, 2009). The multimedia tools: words and pictures address various perceptions of the persons. Using the online interaction aspect leads participants to critically approach their practices, where Reflective Observation occurs, and which is parallel to PL's features (see Hargreaves, 2000). This is because PL

“is what teachers gain from the process” (Warren & Miller, 2013, p.95), and the new model provides an enhancement for the ELT cycle in order to support learning for teachers.

Furthermore, online interactive aspects of the new model provide an opportunity for participants to see practical examples (Nolan & Molla, 2016). Besides this, multimedia tools (words and pictures) speak to various senses. Pictures address the eyes as visual materials, and words appeal to eyes and ears. This latter appeals because words are read by the participants, and there occurs voicing internally, so there might be internal dialogue to criticise their current practice. This also emerges while sharing pictures and explaining the activities online for others. For this reason, the impact of multimedia sharing is valuable for the process as the impact of multimedia presentations enriches the learning opportunities. Readjusting this theory enriches the research process and the outcomes because each participant considers their practice while taking pictures, sharing them and explaining the activities once more as well as seeing others’ sharing and trying to understand the aims. Thus, all the research process overlaps with the new model in terms of being based on ELT and providing a critical approach to the activities.

Given that Dewey emphasised experiential learning, his theoretical ideas are also drawn upon in the analysis because Dewey’s approach is directly related to the development of ELT as well as his influence on the Turkish education system (as mentioned in the Literature Review). These integrated theoretical aspects required well-determined methods in order to be used in this research, so the new model was used to explain the second part of research in connection with PL. In this way, the impact of ELT has been raised with online interaction and the impact of the new theory has been revealed over the

research process as the impact in practice and teachers' statements are discussed in the following sections considering the preliminary practice of the participating teachers.

### **4.3. The Changes in Teachers' Statements through Research Process**

As discussed in section 2.2 and the context of the research in section 5.2, teachers in Turkey are required to hold a degree in Preschool Teacher Training, whilst those in England have a degree in Bachelor of Arts and followed by Post Graduate Certificate in Education or the Graduate Teacher Programme. Teachers in both countries tend to be female (be preferred by mostly female), and kindergarten and reception class are perceived as a first step of education for young children. Teachers in England are expected to undertake professional learning, and this will often be a combination of in-school, local authority and private delivery, whilst in Turkey, there are no requirement to follow professional learning opportunities, but there are some in-session courses for teachers and they are optional. However, for both countries, recent austerity measures have seen professional learning opportunities decline, particularly in relation to funding. Therefore, my project focuses on specifically professional learning for the participating teachers.

With the impact of the new model, the research aimed to identify some changes in the statements of participating teachers compared to their initial thoughts on outdoor activities. Therefore, a question was added to the second set of interviews about the impact of the research process intervention and interaction with other participants in order to see various practices. From the second part of the research about the effect of the process, while the participating English teachers claimed general criticism and revision of their implementation, the participating Turkish teachers specified the ways in which they performed their implementation. These changes in teachers' statements show that "the

educational changes as a shift of values, beliefs, and strategies that has occurred simultaneously across multiple social domains, from economics, to politics, to child rearing” (Tobin, Hsueh & Karasawa, 2009, p.225-226). This statement underlines the role of social and cultural aspects on educational progress, and the likelihood that different variables for teachers might operate. These variables were observed as personal approaches and some common barriers like space, materials and safety concerns. While personal approaches have changed, the barriers remained the same. However, in spite of barriers, the participating teachers made some changes in their activities. Therefore, this research provides a solution to “...how ingrained attitudes and practice might be modified” (Waite, 2011, p.79). In this case, the statements from teachers confirm how the process was useful for them. As an example, Emma claimed that

“It has made me think a lot more about what we do outside and how we use our resources to support them. And I think when you are focusing on it, and taking photographs, and posting photographs of them, you’re thinking more carefully about what the purpose is, how it has been used whether it is effective rather than thinking I’ll just put that outside.”

According to this quotation, she had a chance to self-evaluate herself with the help of being a part of the Facebook group, where she shared her practice and ideas with others. This is the additional outcome of this research process. In the design of the research, it was expected to provide a different perspective and learning from others’ posts, as PL emphasises mutual learning for teachers (Colmer, 2017). It was anticipated that the learning would be particularly for the Turkish teachers given the lack of outdoor play identified in the literature, but examples of a two-way impact from this approach have

been identified over the research process. In this case, English teacher Emma furthermore gives the example that

“We’ve done more as whole class than we would do before. And because of how we worked here, we do a lot of small groups or one to one whereas it’s made us feel to do more as whole class and work all together rather than being with a few children at a time.”

These remarks from Emma show that this process encouraged her to make changes in their activities as well as providing wider perspectives on practices in early years. However, a reflective self-criticism mechanism also operated to improve their practices as well. This supports the idea of ongoing learning within the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). In the early stage of this research, the participating teachers started taking photos of their initial activities, which provided additional material for critical perspectives for the participants. Regarding the ELT, this may be defined as stimulated Reflective Observation because the teachers started reflecting on their practices (Deryakulu, Büyüköztürk & Özçınar, 2009) from different perspectives. This process was also useful for the participating English teachers to review their own practices, which was an unexpected outcome of the research process. As mentioned in earlier chapters, I had mainly anticipated a development for the participating Turkish teachers, but the research process influenced the participating English teachers’ practices as well. Another teacher, Alex stated that

“I think it is useful because it gives me ideas on things I could do here, I haven’t done before. So maybe using resources that children have to collect rather than things already given to them. Which I noticed lots of the schools

in Turkey, they are doing [so]. Children gather their own resources, and they do things.”

This quotation reflects the effect of process on teachers in terms of activities, and shows that it was useful for them to gain different perspectives on the implementation of outdoor activities.

The reason for both statements is that teachers considered and revisited their daily activities in order to share and explain them in the Facebook group to other participants. In addition to this, the requirements of sharing pictures, and describing the activities to others led them to think one more time about the aims of their activities and materials used. Therefore, the initial outcome of the research process was to provide self-evaluation opportunities to teachers, and the participating English teachers emphasised the importance of this in the interviews. The shared and explained pictures provided a multimedia learning for others as well. This is related with the Abstract Conceptualization step of ELT that is, the analysing in order to plan ideas and activities systematically (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2000).

However, the participating Turkish teachers expressed that they were able to learn or to look for possible solutions to some barriers as well as having an improvement in ideas and in perspectives. With this regard, Derya expressed that

“To be honest, I can’t give you any percentage but we weren’t going outside. I was saying; the ground was not good, other students came over to our area, cars passed through etc. I don’t know if these were excuses, but these were the issues. At the time you weren’t here, we still went out. It is not an

obligation anymore, it is my and children's willingness to go out ... it was really effective, and it was really good for us to go out."

This quotation illustrates how their implementation changed through the process and how they learnt. "The learner's job is to make sense of the presented material as an active participant, ultimately constructing new knowledge" (Sorden, 2012, p.156), which is parallel to the expected benefits of PL in terms of improving notion ideas and expertise in their practice (Admiraal *et al.*, 2016). The statement from Derya indicates that they achieved the expected outcome, and there was learning from the process as far as their situation allowed. Derya also describes the conditions and criticises to what extent she was keen to apply similar activities to the participating English teachers:

"In England, the teacher was not dominant, and children were active more. For this reason, I sit back and let them to be active. Of course, it [our activity] is not like theirs [English teachers' activities], I am not keen to be like them, I can say that I aim to get their knowledge, and philosophy, and to apply in here. Of course, I try to use their better practice in here because there is a cultural difference."

In this utterance, Derya highlighted what she understood and saw from the examples of England, and how she started applying them in her practice. She furthermore pointed out that she did not aim to apply every single activity as the participating English teachers do, and aimed to adapt the activities by considering the cultural backgrounds (in terms of their norms and customs). This statement suggests that knowledge can be acquired rather than constructed. In other words, the participating Turkish teachers embraced the activities as long as they were perceived as suitable to their cultural background (values, norms and



customs). For instance, piggy themed outdoor activities (this could be any activity emphasising pigs in it) were considered inappropriate for Turkish culture because pigs are religiously associated with pork (which is a forbidden food product in Islam). Thus, this research process enabled them to accomplish different approaches in their settings, as a result of interaction with their Turkish and English counterparts via the Facebook group where every participating teacher had a chance to share their activities, ideas, and make comments about others'. Correspondingly, another Turkish teacher, Neva stated that

“Indeed, my self-confidence to work with the outdoors has increased, and it is thereafter on my mind. You know, I was thinking how the outdoors can vary at the beginning. But I have some ideas now ... this research led me to think about it more, and made my perspectives improve ... in brief, I've learnt to give prior importance to child development rather than other aspects. For example, the limitation of weather is not a drawback anymore. We would normally excuse that the weather is bad, parents may not be happy with the situation etc. In fact, we are responsible for this as teachers. I wouldn't know about the way to change, and I didn't have information on the outdoors. Thus, this research has improved my perspective, and helped me to find ways to overcome such issues.”

The quotation shows the participated teachers' past and changing perspectives to outdoor activities as they alter throughout the research process. When I asked English teachers if there is an improvement in their practice, Sam expressed that

“I don't think we have, I don't think it is directing to a massive input [or] impact. I think it is just more kind of a smaller impact. In the fact that you

might tweak an activity as just something you've seen. You might borrow an idea, so I don't think you can measure an impact straightaway. I think it is just more to do with that provision, we provide that. Obviously, there is an impact over the time, so it is very hard to measure that, I can say, I can see a definite impact. I think actually the impact is the provision, it helps, supports the provision being varied really."

The general view of teachers is similar to Sam's expression about the process and the observable impact of it. She remarked that the effect of the process may be unobservable in the short term as it is based more on opinions. Neva highlighted similar aspects to the same question that

"In our practice, it is not very much observable. It is more about personal approach. The reason is that opinion should be changed first before changing the practice. After we improve our perspectives, then we will put it in practice."

Although there is a common sense from both English and Turkish participants on the immediate influence on practice in terms of being measurable or observable instantly, another participating Turkish teacher expressed the effect of process in their perspectives and practice throughout the process. In this aspect, Deniz stated that

"I have learnt, and am learning to be brave to go out, and to bring materials [from inside] because we are hesitating to go out and put materials out from inside ... I've learnt to prepare the outdoor area in advance, so they can choose and play ... In the example of England, the outdoor area is prepared

in advance, and materials are out. We weren't doing like that. But I am thinking to make this applicable here ... as I said, we need some time to overcome the issues [coming from current practice].”

This utterance shows the affirmative influence of this process on teachers' practice. It is important to explain that while taking out some materials is perceived as taking the classroom out there with them, the aim of this statement and their implementation were about enhancing the outdoor space with some materials to enable children to create various activities themselves. This teacher also pointed out the need for time to see an actual impact. Correspondingly, Derya claimed that

“There is an adaptation period, isn't there. Primarily, there is a need to have some information about it. It is like toddlers to walk properly; falling down and trying back. Now, we've achieved this during this period ... we have some ideas about it, and I think we can apply ... the examples from England were clues for us. We've got different perspectives to outdoor activities. For example, sand tray, water tray etc. I talked to my colleague to bring a washbowl to use as water tray etc.”

As can be seen, the participating Turkish teachers underlined the influence of the process for them. The teachers are not copying each other, but inspiring each other in developing their professional practice. This example can be seen in their pictures shared on Facebook as well. The statements indicate the ongoing process, so the impact of this process is likely to occur later on. ELT also manifests progressive learning in the learning cycle of this theory (Kolb, 1984). Therefore, the appearance of this stage of the learning cycle varies as a result of cultural density (see Waite, 2013) because change is more difficult to affect

where the norms are more fixed and embedded. However, the teachers from both countries were willing to make changes, as they were open to interchange and development via taking part in this research. This is parallel to the aim of PL in terms of collaboration with others (see Colmer, 2017). There is more chance for change in Turkey because the teachers had less experience of outdoor activities and the expectations of research were different at the beginning. Regarding this, I expected the participating Turkish teachers to learn from the participating English teachers, so the participating teachers might have had similar assumptions about the research process. Nevertheless, the research process provided two-way progressive opportunities for all participants, and both participating English and Turkish teachers learnt something from their counterparts over the process.

#### **4.4. The Changes in Practice through Research Process**

The practical aspects considering the other two main themes are represented and discussed in the following chapters. In this section, the impact of the research process on teachers' practice is critiqued with the use of observation notes from the second part of the research as well as interpreting the shared photos on the Facebook group with others. In the second part of the research, there was some improvement in the participating teachers' practice as a result of online interaction with others. This is the result of PL, which requires teachers to revise their implementation (Timperley *et al.*, 2007), so the impact of process is inevitably considered by the participating teachers, as mentioned in the previous section, which is about teachers' opinions on the impact of process.

From the shared photos, the examples illustrate how to overcome barriers for outdoor activities because some photos are explicit examples for others to indicate that space is not a problem, and some other photos show the immateriality or a lack of materials for outdoor activities. In this regard, Photo 4.1 from English School-3 illustrates an example



**Photo 4.1: English School-3**

for Turkish teachers that there might be a limitation on space, but it is not an insuperable barrier. This photo shows a limited area that is full of

materials such as a sand tray, water tray, writing materials and natural materials. Therefore, the mentioned barriers can be considered as manageable barriers with the help of PL, which highlights the importance of the inspiring role of PL for teachers (Cordingley, 2015). This photo is the example that the various materials can be used in a limited, but well-planned space.

The participating English teachers furthermore started applying more adult-led and structured activities in addition to their previous activities so that both the role of adult and children changed over the process in these activities. It was observed that the

participating English teachers pointed out a traditional game for them to play when they were in the playground. She told me that they started using this after seeing the example from the Turkish participants using traditional games more as outdoor activities. These examples show how the modes of interaction have changed over the process because this English teacher and the children had structured interaction with their environment and peers during traditional games. The reason may be that they pointed out more small changes in practice and their perspectives rather than underlying changes. The social and cultural aspects may limit people's concern and consideration (Dewey, 1997). This means that people's background knowledge and experiences, which are related to culture, are highly likely to play a restricting role on their approaches to novel situations as resistance to change is an effective defence mechanism. This exchange between teachers with the impact of the online interaction was not expected because the participating English teachers already had wider opportunities for outdoor activities in terms of existing materials and outdoor spaces. However, Emma explained this situation as a result of seeing the examples of Turkish participants online because the participating English teachers considered some adult-led and traditional activities as essential.

In other respects, there are some considerable examples from the Facebook group and observations, showing a direct change in the practice. Photo 4.2 was shared by Derya on the Facebook group, who was inspired from water tray examples in England. As can be seen from the photo, the teacher brought a piece of nylon to unfold on the ground, and to make a small pond for children to sail paper ships and leaves. With this activity, (as Derya stated) children spontaneously took part as they enjoyed it while interacting and engaging



**Photo 4.2: Turkish School-2**

with nature more than usual. This practice is a way to respond to one aim of the programme, which is to address multiple intelligence (Ministry of National Education, 2013b). It is also a creative and imaginative activity. As Derya stated during observation (because I did not observe this activity in person), she gave children the materials, let them set it up themselves, and finally

she played with them. Therefore, they had a chance to express themselves and cooperate with others. This practice generates sustained learning for teachers with responsibility



(Burn, Mutton & Hagger, 2010) as a result of the research process in terms of having online interaction.

Photo 4.2 also confirms participating Turkish teachers' statements that they gained different insights into the outdoors, and they started finding different sources to address similar learning outcomes with the examples from the English context. In this context, the participating Turkish teachers sometimes organised activities together (with children), while some other times they prepared a few different activities for them to choose. This is the outcome of PL of teachers as questioning their initial teaching beliefs (Nolan & Molla, 2016). Regarding this change, Photo 4.3 shows an art activity outside. The teacher, Neva,



**Photo 4.3: Turkish School-3**

only gave children paints and some ideas for this activity, then children decided what to do. I observed that children looked around first, and some of them found

nice shaped stones to colour. Then, they started painting. Children were mostly free to choose what they wanted to paint. After a while, the teacher found a big stone to work on together. She started painting it as a ladybug. She painted the borders of the ladybug, and then children completed the rest. During this activity, she listened and respected children's



voices more compared to the first part of the research. This activity was also useful for children's social engagement.

Regarding this, "adults have an important role to play in supporting these emergent social skills" (Garrick, 2009, p.29). This teacher changed her role to provide skill development as a result of seeing others' posts, which were accompanied with photos and descriptions. With these activities, the teacher took a passive role after providing children with materials, and also took a participatory role in the activity with children. This change in the role of teacher is parallel to Figure 2.1, which shows different roles of teachers. This teacher's role changed from director to facilitator and participant. Before the research process, the art activities were always carried out inside, and they were applied with pre-determined materials as highly structured. In another example of participating Turkish teachers, Umut stated "actually, having no separated space is a problem." The reason for this is that she had to design the activities regarding the condition of space, and she had to find out and arrange materials for activities accordingly. From the photos, it can be seen that the participating Turkish teachers learnt how to handle the 'barriers' (which is described in the next chapter) that they mentioned at the beginning of the research. With the impact of online interaction and seeing different examples, the participating Turkish teachers have developed new ways to enhance the quality and the context of outdoor activities in their settings.

When these pictures were shared on the Facebook group, it prompted others think about how they could plan, implement and organise outdoor spaces and activities. Photos of the group were shared with a description to explain the context to others. In terms of reflecting their learning through the research process, while the participating Turkish teachers

demonstrated the stages of the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT): Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation, the English teachers mostly reflected it as Abstract Conceptualization, but also used Active Experimentation (see Miettinen, 2000) in some activities.

For the impact of the research process, one explanation could be that “socio-cultural factors may be influencing the actions and interactions of teachers in the outdoors” (Humberstone & Stan, 2011, p.539) and “the same input will not necessarily lead to the same output in different organisms” (Biesta, 1994, p.314). While Humberstone and Stan’s point remarks the role of culture on educators, Biesta remarks the pedagogical side of affecting factors for teachers in order to describe possible differences in the practical side of activities. This can be also explained by PL that “affordances the school context provides for teacher learning might work out differently for teachers of the same school” (Admiraal *et al.*, 2016, p.284). This means that the opportunities in the schools influences the teachers’ professional learning in order to apply new ideas into practice but also that each teachers’ interpretation of the affordance will lead to different responses. However, the participating English and Turkish teachers expressed the affirmative effect of the process for them. In this regard, they pointed out the effectiveness of the research process in gaining different insight, such as in using different resources and activities.

All participating teachers from England and Turkey also had a chance to self-reflect during the process via seeing others’ posts or sharing their activities. The second interview comments about improvement of their perspectives is correlated with observation notes about the changing aspect of freedom in both countries. The participation in common activities for all leads them to amend their opinions and feelings (Biesta, 2010). For

instance, while the participating Turkish teachers started providing various activities with enhanced materials, the participating English teachers started borrowing some hints on activities from their colleagues. For example, Alison asked Emma about ‘large numicons’ used in outdoor activities, and shared photos of them “where she got it from” and “if it was pricy.” In this way, teachers had a chance to enrich their activities. This is about sustained PL for teachers to learn from each other (Mitchell, Riley & Loughran, 2010).

#### **4.5. Chapter Conclusion**

The new model based on ELT is a way to explain the development of the participating teachers’ understanding and practice. This change is described by the help of the Deweyian approach that “if learning takes place in and through participation and communication, then the role of the learner changes from being a meaning-taker to being a meaning-maker” (Biesta, 2006, p.35). In this way, the participating teachers from both countries made progress in their outdoor activities in terms of changing the roles of adults and children. This is because the new model affiliates PL with ELT in order to increase the impact of research process, and in order to explain it. Within this model, the efficacy of ELT has been improved because “professional learning of teachers, involves teachers in self-reflection as they trial approaches and resources in their classrooms to improve the quality of their teaching practice” (Warren & Miller, 2013, p.96).

Overall, the quotations above from teachers, observation notes and photos from Facebook group indicate the impact of the research process on the changing of approaches to and practices in outdoor activities. In conclusion, all teachers claimed the effectiveness of the process for them to make some changes, but the practices of participating English teachers did not reflect this change very much in the second observations. Cultural aspects (e.g.

policies, developmental levels of countries) play a decisive role (Sandseter, 2014) on how teachers make use of the process. Dewey also explains similar facts as “since education is a social process, and there are many kinds of societies, a criterion for educational criticism and construction implies a particular social ideal” (Dewey, 1997, p.99). This social ideal stands for cultural constructions on whether practices can be improved, and what learning opportunities are, and so on. Hence, Dewey’s statement reflects the effect of culture on teachers and the reason for differences in the impact of the process although the same theoretical aspects apply to all participating teachers. This means that some points, which are contrary to the culture, might be difficult to overcome, or to apply in practice.

However, this cross-cultural research process provided an opportunity for the participants to approach their daily activities critically. Besides, it helped them reconsider these activities in terms of including wider opportunities for children to enhance the learning intentions, and to overcome barriers by adopting different activities from each other. In this way, the effectiveness of outdoor activities can be enriched via the impact of an online interaction process for teachers. Such online interaction tools might be used further for teacher development and training programmes as they can provide wider perspectives to support critical reflection at a relatively low cost. In light of these mentioned aspects, the following chapters increase in value because the following chapters exhibit and discuss the initial circumstances and the impact of the new model in the final part of the research.

## **Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion: Contexts and Barriers**

### **5.1. Chapter Introduction**

This chapter and the following two chapters analyse and discuss the main themes that emerged during data analysis. This chapter focuses on one of the emerging themes from the first part of data collection: ‘barriers’ and contexts of the participating schools, and the positive use of these barriers. As mentioned in the Literature Review, barriers restrict the democratic approaches in education (Dewey, 1997) because when there is a barrier in an educational setting, the conditions around them regulate the focus of teachers. In addition to these barriers, Dewey (1963) describes the traditional teaching methods as potential limiting factors on education as well. This criticism includes, but is not limited to, adult-dominated, teacher-centred and unidirectional teaching methods. Therefore, barriers in relation to outdoor education will combine with more general barriers. However, the participating teachers in my research indicated the main barriers in their outdoor activities as space and safety issues.

Therefore, in this chapter, the barriers to the following two main themes (freedom and pedagogic roles) are described by teachers’ statements from the first part of the research and the impact of the barriers on their practices is discussed in the light of the relevant literature. However, the context of the research is described initially in order to exhibit the circumstances of the participating teachers.

### **5.2. The Context of the Research**

The research includes two variant cultures in terms of understanding of and practices in outdoor activities for kindergarten/early years teachers. As Appendix-9 shows, each

school had different outdoor areas within the two countries. The schools were representative of each country: the participating teachers were from one rural school from each country as well as three urban schools. I will shortly give a picture of a typical school in Turkey and a typical school in England because the provided spaces in education is the reflection of cultural aspects like values and norms (see Moss & Petrie, 2002). In Turkey, kindergartens are decorated to excite children with various educational materials in most cases, and the materials are placed near the walls for children to visit and play independently when they are free, so this provides a wide empty area in the middle of the classroom for teachers to conduct their daily activities. The classrooms have tables and chairs for all children, but these are used only when they have art and craft activities, and there is no direct access to outdoor. When it is needed, children should be supervised by the teachers, and pass through a few doors. In the preschools, the gender of teachers is mostly female, and all TAs are also female if the school has any, mostly there are no TAs. Additionally, most preschools have no separated outdoor area, so there is no access to outdoor resources. In their daily routine, there are activities respectively; free play, storytelling, play, science, art-craft and music. During the day, while children have freedom to wear whatever they want, teachers are mostly obligated to wear suits or proper formal clothes. Such clothing rules and the required daily activities aims to enhance school readiness, and to help children be accustomed to their relevant future formal education.

In England, there are similarities to Turkey in terms of classroom and materials. There are materials in the classrooms like in Turkey, but the classes are separated into a few different places with materials rather than having one big empty area, so children can

focus on different materials and activities in independent areas in the classroom. However, they still have a common area for the whole class activities like story telling. Basically, England has similar activities as Turkey on daily basis, but they additionally have outdoor activities as part of their daily routine. England has desks and chairs for children as well but they are not for all classroom activities, they are used during the free play alongside art and craft activities. As outdoor activities are part of the daily routine, most of the settings have a direct access to separated outdoor area with the necessary materials (the difference between the two countries can be seen in Appendix-9). Although there is commonality in the domination of female teachers in early years in England, all teachers in England have at least one TA in their classroom, and there is no strict regulation on the teachers' clothes, but some schools require school uniforms for children.

In light of these general descriptions of the two countries, there are some similarities and differences in their context. Different approaches and conditions lead to various practices within the countries with the impact of cultural norms and values. Particularly, in the research context, the conditions of the outdoor areas and the role of outdoor activities in the daily routine play were required to be considered. Because each school had different types of outdoor areas, it was likely to shape the curriculum considering their opportunities. In the case of England, the most recent EYFS highlights that teachers are required to facilitate children to have an access to outdoor areas or, to consider outdoor activities in their daily activities considering the conditions (DfE, 2017), while the recent Preschool Education Programme in Turkey identifies the outdoor activities as an option for teachers (Ministry of National Education, 2013b). Therefore, such differences in the policies cause variable outcomes in the practice of teachers.

The most obvious difference between the two countries was having a separated outdoor area or not having separated outdoor area for kindergarten/early years, in addition to the impact of the policies. Cultural attitudes to children and the outdoors shape these decisions, for example in Turkey children are considered as being there to be educated in the early years settings, and free outdoor play is seen a luxury or an additional method but not a necessity. This might occur due to the differences in the socio-economic situations as well because this is directly related to the conditions of education (see Penn, 1996). In Turkey, socio-economic situation is generally low as a developing country, so the country experiences economic problems, which limits the funding for schools, particularly, schools in the rural areas. Besides this setback, Turkish society is becoming more urban, and the conditions lead parents to think that education is more important to have better life opportunities in the future compared to past. As it is mentioned in the Methodology chapter, cultural contexts of policies and cultural practices had an impact on the practice of outdoor activities, and in particular, on the main emergent themes (see Figure 3.3). For instance, the idea of teaching in school between these countries varied because while England aims to keep pace with contemporary educational approaches, the Turkish education system still adheres to traditional methods, so these aims are reflected in early years/kindergarten contexts too. For instance, the participating Turkish teachers tended to apply adult-dominated activities both indoors and outdoors. Teacher education in Turkey is based on traditional methods, so early years teachers are supposed to know the developmental pedagogies and the philosophies around childhood. In the typical schools from each country, while the schools had regular outdoor activities in their daily activities in England, the situation was not regular in Turkey and the activities were shaped considering the circumstances of daily activities. This is the outcome of cultural



differences because the regulatory impact of policies/programmes is considered differently in the two countries. In England there are rules that must be obeyed. In Turkey there is no strict systems like OFSTED to check whether government advice is followed. This is because as there is a longer history in England in comparison to Turkey, Turkey is still developing the inspection systems in early years, whilst England has a strong control mechanism. However, although all schools had various outdoor areas and contexts for outdoor activities, there were two main barriers: space and safety, which are described below considering the emergent themes.

### **5.3. Barriers Influencing Freedom**

The main restricting aspects to outdoor activities were space and safety which were identified as barriers to outdoor activities by all participating teachers during the first interviews. In the context of freedom, safety concerns played an important role in terms of the the amount of freedom offered to children. Regarding this, Sam (from England) stated that

“I think obviously we have to provide children with freedom in outdoor environment. I think there is obviously health and safety risk, so it is kind of freedom within kind of restrained. You are kind of giving them so much freedom, you also kind of making sure of them, you’ve still got to have safeguarding around the children.”

This quotation reveals the view of the teacher on the boundaries of freedom for them.

This was seen clearly in observations in that all outdoor areas in England were fenced,

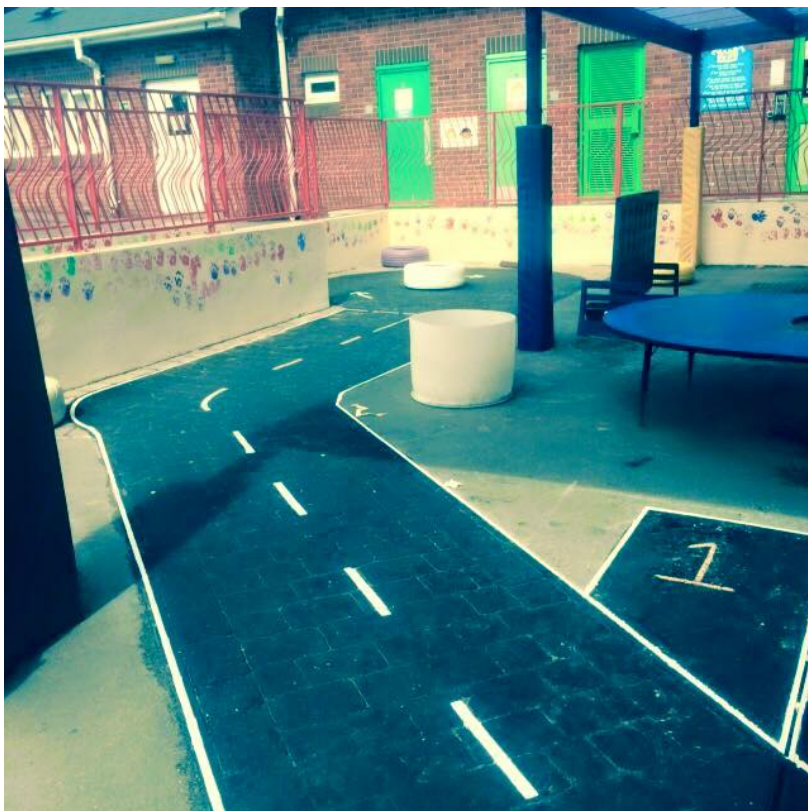


Photo 5.1: English School-3

and the potential of risky situations were reduced to the minimum level via preparing the outdoor area with safety in mind. On the contrary, Little, Sandseter and Wyver's research (2012, p.307) reveals a completely opposite finding from Norway:

“An unfenced playground which was considered important for the children's freedom to move around as they liked.” The boundaries and the definition of freedom evolved respecting the cultural backgrounds (e.g. educational approach and conceptions of activities) because there are two variant countries in terms of their current outdoor areas, and the opportunities they had. As can be seen from Photo 5.1 of Sam's school, the outdoor area was surrounded by fences in order to assign an area for children, and to maintain them within this area as well as keeping external potential harm out. This photo illustrates that participating English teachers had a separated outdoor area, and there were a number of available materials for children. Although some of the materials were temporary, they had some permanent resources like a sand tray, water tray, writing

materials, and so on. Another aspect of freedom becomes evident in light of this statement, that freedom means children have a chance to make mistakes, to face bullying and so on. The process of working through social difficulties helps children become more socially aware, caring and resilient. Within this general conception of freedom and risky situations, the participating English teachers provided an area for children, containing limited physically risky situations. The influence of risky situations was thoroughly discussed in the Literature Review, and there were considerable conflicting ideas about this. There was therefore no unlimited freedom. Despite all teachers' emphasis on the necessity of freedom, it was also about limiting freedom in order to control risks. This is enacted differently in these two countries with regard to their circumstances.

In this respect, the context of participating Turkish teachers was quite different to the participating English teachers because there was not an appropriate and assigned outdoor space for early years children, and this influenced provision of free activities outside as well as safety concerns. As indicated above, although the participating Turkish teachers claimed the importance of freedom in the outdoors, they conducted structured activities so as to control and protect children from unforeseen conditions. In this context, Deniz expressed in her first interview that

“...not having enough space or not having sufficient materials outside occurs as barriers. If there is a flexible environment for them, they can play games much better, helping them to express themselves much better.”

This teacher especially pointed out the restrictive role of space for outdoor activities. Another barrier, safety issues, was explained by Derya in the first interview:

“I think it is the physical conditions [the suitability of space]. It differs regarding what kind of school you are part of because an independent nursery and a kindergarten attached to primary school are different in terms of provided opportunities ... Our situation is so bad because cars can pass through our playing area or other children/children’s ball can drop in in the middle of our activity.”

These statements by these two teachers related the barriers revealed the reasons why the

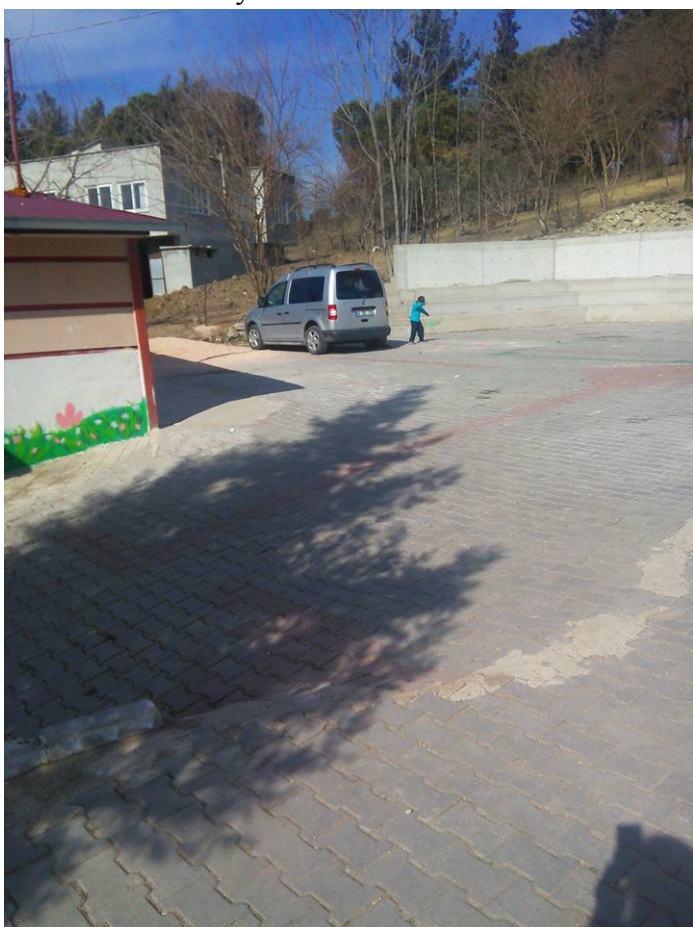


Photo 5.2: Turkish School-3

participating Turkish teachers had structured games rather than providing children with a freedom of choice. However, as it is mentioned earlier, the same points were described as limiting factors for freedom by both participating English and Turkish teachers because freedom and risks exist but are managed. In this regard, safe areas outdoors are required in order to provide freedom for

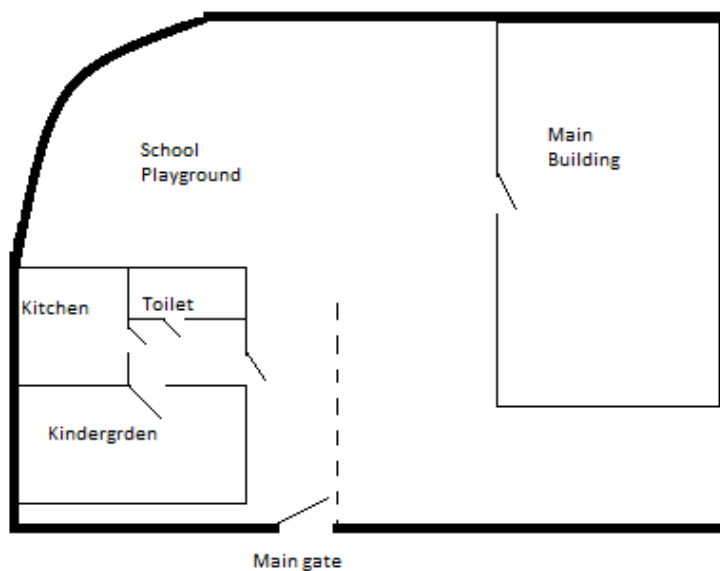
children (Little, 2015). The Turkish teachers had no separated outdoor area, and this led to a focus on safety concerns rather than thinking about freedom. To ensure safety, they pointed the possible issues to children in advance, and if they got close to a risky situation, teachers warned them not to approach the risky area. This was a completely distinctive

situation between these countries because the definition and existing condition of risks were completely different. For example, cars could pass through the playing area in one of the Turkish schools, so in a few observations, cars actually passed through in the middle of a game. It could also be seen from Photo 5.2 that there is the building for kindergarten children, a car and a child playing a game. The car passed through in front of the building and parked in the middle of school playground. In such examples, when Neva, the teacher, realized the hazard, she stopped the activity, and gathered the children to a safe place. During this time, the teacher constantly warned children to be careful and not to go near the car. It also shows that outdoor spaces are not always seen as suitable for independent play due to such repeated incidents. Outdoors may differ regarding schools, but outdoor play is not typical in Turkey.

In comparison, there were big differences in the manner safety was provided in these countries. The teachers' concerns about safety became different as a result of diverse opportunities and conditions, although all of the participating teachers pointed out safety concerns. While it occurred as an unfavourable aspect, this situation might be used to enhance children's own perception of risk in terms of assessment and management of risky situations. Sandseter, Little and Wyver's (2012) statement on risk-taking opportunities explains the positive results of such issues for children. They claim that "in some situations adult involvement was seen as important to ensure safety or provide support while at other times children were allowed greater freedom to manage risks for themselves" (Sandseter, Little & Wyver, 2012, p.178). Thus, it is possible to use such situations in children's favour. The same idea is supported by Dewey that traditional regulations, pre-determined actions and pre-determined regulations by curriculum substantially damage freedom (Dewey, 1963). The conflict of safety attitudes and

management was discussed in the Literature Review chapter in-depth. After the process of this research, the teachers started using such factors as an opportunity for them to provide positive risk-taking rather than adhering to their previous thoughts. This may be because the participants had started using Reflective Observation (RO) about the barriers in order to overcome the issues and move to Abstract Conceptualization (AC) because RO requires them to criticise themselves from different perspectives, and AC is to constitute new approaches (Kolb, 1984).

Taking the risk factors in account in Turkey, Figure 5.1 shows the school map of Turkish



**Figure 5.1: Turkish School-3 (School Map)**

school-3. This map exhibits that the building of the kindergarten is next to the main gate of the school, and there is no separation, so children are likely to face safety issues as soon as they leave the building. The same point

could also be seen in Photo 5.2. In this regard, Neva claimed in the first interview that

“Initially we need to provide safety because the control of children becomes challenging. If you don’t have an isolated area [separated/fenced area], if

you don't have a safe place, taking children outside becomes a really difficult activity.”

In the light of these points (photo, statement from teachers and school map), it can be seen that safety concerns as well as space issues played an important role in restricting freedom during outdoor activities. As I mentioned earlier in the case of England, teachers made similar references to safety and risky issues. Yet, the current situations related to the physical area were completely different from each other within these countries. Children furthermore need to have wider freedom to commence their own learning experiences with the ambition of independent process and without any disturbance (Waite & Davis, 2007; Waite, Rogers & Evans, 2013) within the provided area, but such barriers still limit their freedom in both countries.

#### **5.4. Barriers Influencing Pedagogic Roles**

In a similar way to barriers, space and safety considerations also emerged as limiting factors on the pedagogic roles taken in outdoor activities, and has a decisive impact on the interactions between teachers and children during outdoor activities. The environment and risks also had impact on teachers' roles. For example, one of the participating English teachers, Katie, expressed that

“...I know here very well. I think if it was a new place, I would worry more.  
And it depends on the children, how to trust the children. They can listen  
and stop.”

This statement illustrates that the place where you do activities and the safety issues around children are a decisive factor on teachers' activities, but Katie underlined that



children's obedience to teachers plays a substantial role in conducting smooth activities. Thus, place is part of the determining factors to the pedagogic roles adopted that in turn generates opportunities. Such approaches by teachers can cause adverse outcomes for children's learning and interactions due to their being overly controlled by teachers (Humberstone & Stan, 2011) since that attitude may limit children's opportunities to interact with peers and nature. This situation may emerge sometimes; however, the examples (phonics from English context and replica cows from the Turkish context) in chapter 7 illustrate that teachers may also control children's learning through managing the space and its affordances.

In other respects, the risky and difficult aspects during activities lead children to develop interactions between peers with enhanced opportunities (McClain & Vandermaas-Peeler, 2016), and having active roles. This means that when children are faced with an



Photo 5.3: English School-4

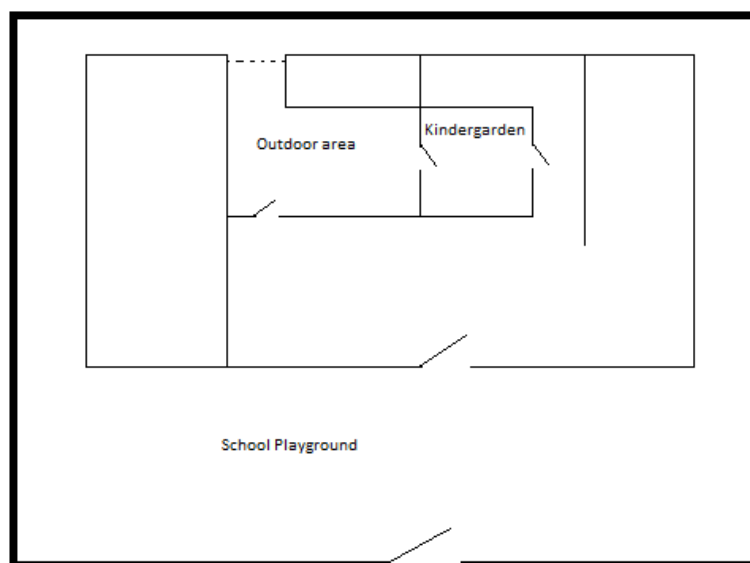
unexpected  
circumstance,  
they need to look  
for solutions, and  
this is likely to  
lead them to seek  
some help from  
others. The  
important point  
therefore is to  
identify the

situation during practice, and to arrange the role of teacher in order to ensure this



opportunity. Photo 5.3 illustrates the outdoor area of Katie's school. As can be seen from the picture, they had a limited outdoor area, which was bordered within the walls. The place, where the photo was taken, was a path to access a park behind the school. This was the only way for other children to access the park, so they sometimes passed through this area. Therefore, Katie emphasised the importance of trust of the children, and the necessity of their obedience to teachers' directives since they were sharing the outdoor area, and this influenced the roles and the interaction between teacher and children.

In relation to this, teachers and children were required to change their position in activities considering several factors including safety and space because the limitation of space or having risky circumstances around the spaces led teachers to shift their roles between director and mentor as in the example illustrated with Photo 5.3 and Katie's situation.



**Figure 5.2: English School-4 (School Map)**

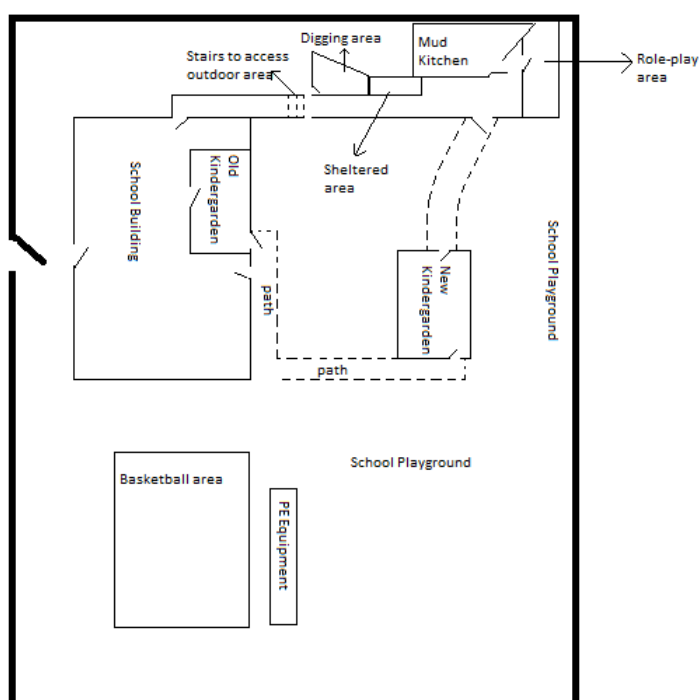
Similarly, the role of children changed from leading activities to following the instructions too. During one observation, one of the participating English teachers, Alison said that their outdoor area required

an adult there to check children, so the role of adult was to be cautious about the risky situations.

Figure 5.2 illustrates Alison's outdoor area for outdoor activities, which is surrounded by walls, and there are some columns. Therefore, teachers' position in the outdoors altered in consideration of the conditions of the area. In the case of risky situations during the activities, the position of teachers changed from mentor to director in order to keep children away from possible hazards. The reason is that the teacher was unable to participate in activities while the older age group children passed through them, so she had to control the children and check them. This situation affected the role of teachers and interaction between children and teacher.

In these circumstances, the educational interaction between the teacher and children was paused, which is an example of a change in the role of teacher from mentor to director. This is contrary to Dewey's statement that the role of the teacher has been changed over a period of time from being a director to being a mentor for children (Dewey, 1963); it seems, nonetheless, that temporary shifts have to occur in response to local and immediate circumstances. The example illustrates that each teacher decides which role s/he needs to have regarding the conditions; Katie showed the change from mentor to director in order to sustain children's attention on the activities and ensure their safety. These changes in the role of teachers are settled in response to the requirements of the existing situations. There is a direct relationships between interaction and teachers' roles during the activities. The approach of teachers therefore evolves with respect to conditions during the activities so that while teachers aim to provide enhanced opportunities for children, circumstances may sometimes restrict this endeavour so that the role of teachers are shaped by context. In light of these examples, space and safety concerns had an impact on the quality of roles and interactions because this issue also influenced the communication between children

and teachers. Figure 5.3 illustrates the map of the English school-1. As seen in this figure,



**Figure 5.3: English School-1 (School Map)**

early years had a separated outdoor area, which was isolated from any external interference. Distinct outdoor areas are separate from others, so the children with peers in the same area can take active roles and communicate independently without any outside intrusion.

Therefore, the teacher could participate in activities with children, and there was no need for the teacher to control children for any extra or unexpected circumstances. In this example, children could access outdoor areas easily, and the outdoor area was arranged in consideration of risk and safety factors, so there was no need for the teacher to worry or to control children for such things. Therefore, the role of teachers and children during activities varies considering the outdoor areas, which can be seen from the last two examples. While one was considering any hazardous issues, and controlling children in the case of distraction, the other does not need to worry about such external issues. This leads to a difference in deciding roles between children and teacher, children and children.

In the case of Turkey, there was only one example of a statement on the relationship with barriers and pedagogic roles for the Turkish context, due to lack of a designated outdoor area for the teachers. In this respect, Neva stated that

“To be honest, I am the person that issues a command, and they do it. In general, this is a requirement. However, I leave them free when the environment is suitable to do that ... I don't order, I am not on the side of from teacher to children communication. Unfortunately, I do that, I have to do that for their safety...”

This quotation from Neva verbalizes the conflict between Turkish teachers' statements

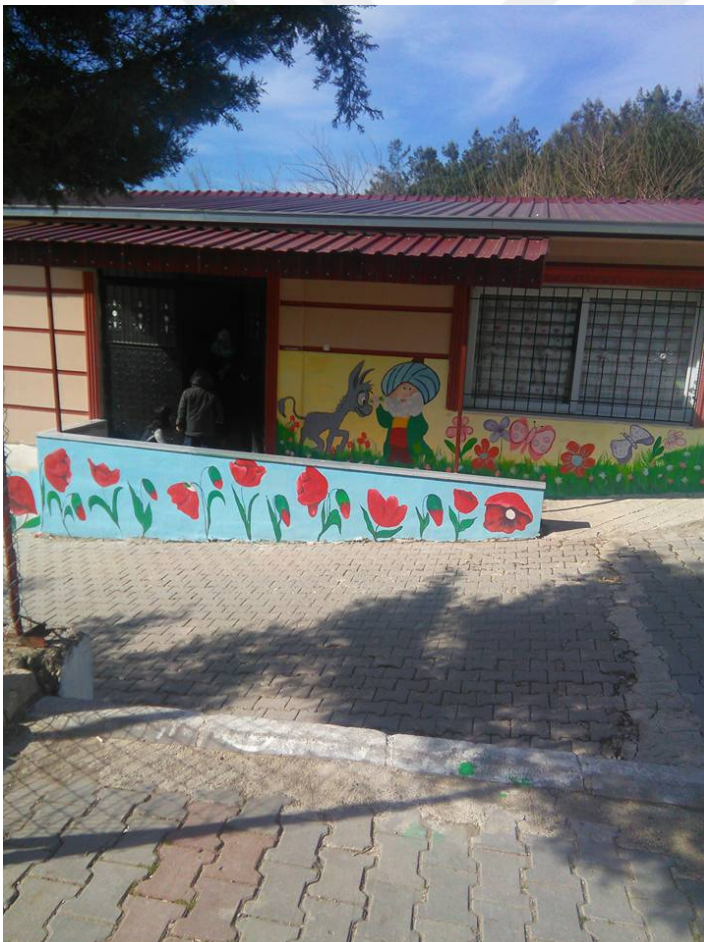


Photo 5.4: Turkish School-3

and practice about roles in outdoor activities because she personally criticised herself in terms of what was the ideal, what she did, and what the core reason was for this. This is further discussed in chapter 7 in order to exhibit the participating teachers' perceptions and practices. Adults are there to regulate their roles during activities, which needs a combination of play and pedagogic aspects

(Waite, Rogers & Evans, 2013), but they may be required to provide safety and to handle space issues rather than focusing on nurturing activities in many cases. These statements confirm the importance of teachers to remain outside and to provide better opportunities by regulating their roles. Besides, the relationship (based on trust) between peers and staff changes the conditions of space (Kendall & Rodger, 2015), so while staff have a regulative and decisive role in organising the outdoor space, children can also be effective in regulating it as well, if they are given the chance.

For example, Photo 5.4 demonstrates one of the participating Turkish schools that the teacher, Neva, needed to control children as soon as they left the building because their outdoor activity area was the school playground, and there was a lack of isolation from the school border. This context also regulates the pedagogic roles as well as interaction because of taking action considering the hazardous situations. That is why this teacher always needed to be aware of concerns, and control children to avoid any risky situation. Once they went out to do an outdoor activity, the bigger age group children were outside to do physical activities and to play football. She set up the activity and they were playing. After a while, the football came through another planned activity dangerously, and it happened a few times. Every time, she warned the children, and stopped the activity to take care of children (this is parallel to Katie's example earlier). Where cars could pass through, Neva asked the children to stay away from the road, to stand where they were or physically protected them (such as standing between the car and children) so that children would manage the risk themselves within the instructions of the teacher. Such risky incidences affected the implementation of outdoor activities, and the possible roles changing of teachers. This is not the only restriction of changing roles; space issues also

play a role. The nature of the space requires teachers to have adult domination and control during activities. The lack of space also leads to some risky situations because the unallocated outdoor spaces, and limited spaces, are highly likely to lead children to face hazardous or unexpected situations. These issues affect the experiential aspects during outdoor activities because interaction constitutes the basis of experiential development in education (Dewey, 1963). In this regard, Moss and Petrie (2002, p.9) state that

“The concept of ‘children’s space’ does not just imply a *physical* space, a setting for groups of children. It also carries the meaning of being a *social* space, ‘a domain of social practices and relationships’ (Knowles, 1999, p. 241); a *cultural* space, where values, rights and cultures are created; and a *discursive* space for differing perspectives and forms of expression, where there is room for dialogue, confrontation (in the sense of exchanging differing experience and views), deliberation and critical thinking, where children and others can speak and be heard.”

This statement emphasises the importance of space in schools and underscores certain aspects of it. It furthermore illustrates that space has more meaning than expected because it is a reflection of conditions and cultural aspects like traditions, customs, and so on. There are cultural regulations on outdoor areas because the ways of using outdoors in schools are shaped considering the historical backgrounds of the countries. For example, as the Turkish educational system is based on traditional teaching methods, the outdoor area is not the focus of the authorities. This can be illustrated with the statements on the importance of outdoor activities in the Preschool Education Programme (see Ministry of National Education, 2013b). As indicated in the next chapters, some activities are a cultural reflection like traditional games, and the suitable places for these are outdoors as a cultural space. These activities require different roles during the activities. Therefore, these barriers could be addressed via localised curricula, as suggested by Dewey for the Turkish education system (Özsoy, 2009).

Space also has a regulative role in the ways of steering learning and in the approaches of

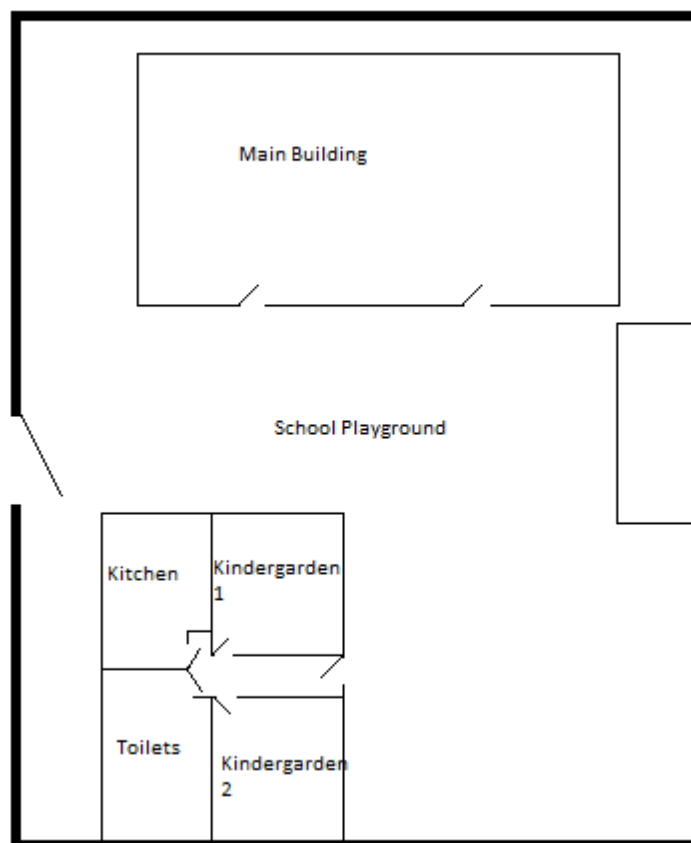


Figure 5.4: Turkish School-2 (School Map)

teachers to children and activities. While the participating teachers considered these negative aspects, they rearranged the activities as adult-led rather than child-led or small group activities. For this reason, the role of children is likely to change from active to passive regarding the conditions of space. To explain this, one of the participating Turkish

teachers, Derya had a representative outdoor space (Figure 5.4) that there was no separated outdoor play area for them, and as soon as they left the kindergarten, children were exposed to the school playground.

Figure 5.4 illustrates that when children went out of the building of the kindergarten, they were immediately in the school playground, which was used by older age group children as well. The participating teacher mostly used the space between the kindergarten building and the main building, but this place was in front of the main entrance to school's premises. Thus, hazardous incidents were likely to emerge. As a result of this situation, Derya and

other teachers preferred to conduct adult-led activities and take control of children. If this had not been the case, children would have been able go around the school ground, and even go out of the main gate, or when any risky situation would emerge, the teacher might have been incapable of ensuring the children's safety. When they have well-designed outdoor areas, teachers can find a chance to change their role from director to mentor rather than considering the risky situations all the time, and children can become more active to control their own learning.

These barriers in roles in outdoor activities are likely to occur in different contexts. The point is how to achieve and provide a less structured environment for children, and to provide child-led opportunities. While the participating English teachers had a chance to have different options during observations, one to one, small group activities for assessments and evaluating the children, the Turkish teachers were responsible for the provision of safety first, and had a role to be aware of unforeseen risks during activities rather than focusing merely on the activities. However, according to Dewey (1963), the role of teachers is to overcome the possible issues, which influence the activities. The statements from the participating teachers and observation notes showed instances which regulate the roles between children and children or between teacher and children. However, the reflection of teachers in interviews was a sign of the teachers' Reflective Observation abilities, which requires them "to reflect on and observe their experiences from many perspectives..." (Kolb, 1984, p.30). As a result of having this ability (one of the stages from ELT), the participating teachers were able to move on the next step to enhance their practice.



### 5.5. The Positive Use of the Barriers

While the participating teachers pointed out the negative impact of barriers, the relevant literature discuss these barriers in terms of developmental opportunities for children rather than restricting factors of the activities. While all teachers claimed risky factors as a part of safety and space issues, these obstacles can also be used to support developmental opportunities (Niehues *et al.*, 2013). Once teachers consider space and safety as barriers in their daily activities, they cannot overcome or facilitate activities in order to support positive risk-taking opportunities. The reason for considering them as barriers rather than enhanced learning opportunity for children is that safety concerns are always the initial determinative factor because of the conflict between adults' beliefs and practices (Little, 2015). In this case, the contribution of controlled risky situations can support children's self-control (Waite, Huggins & Wickett, 2014), but the participating teachers in my research claimed them as barriers, instead of managing risks to achieve their learning targets. For instance, the condition seen in photo 5.4 in the previous section was considered as a barrier as the school playground was used as an alternative to outdoor area, but the subsequent unexpected conditions may enable children to develop awareness of risky factors and to acquire risk management skills in the long term.

Another aspect of barriers is having limited spaces for outdoor activities, and this is also mentioned in a report focused on children's perspectives (Coleyshaw *et al.*, 2012). However, different types of spaces can be seen from the different contexts. In particular, while the participating English teachers claimed to have a limited outdoor area, the participating Turkish teachers highlighted the lack of separate outdoor areas. Nevertheless, the participating teachers changed their activities through the research process, so the

barriers could be overcome. The best example for this can be seen in chapter 7. Photo 7.6 is used to describe the interaction between children and nature, but another noteworthy point is that they are harnessing the space to their opportunities as digging and making a pond on the ground. In other words, children had to be creative in order to play in a limited area. As they did not have a separated area with various materials for outdoor activities, they made up their own games by altering the existing space. Had there been a separated area with various materials, this example would not have been observed. Therefore, the important aspect is to utilise the space as much as possible to enrich activities rather than considering the current circumstances as barriers.

Photo 5.5 shows that this area was organized for one week to provide children with the



**Photo 5.5: English School-3**

opportunity to explore nursing materials and have role-play activities. I, personally, was there when the teacher built this for the first time. Although it was very difficult to construct,

she did it because they had these materials, which were useful for children to attain the learning intentions of the week. During the week, when the weather was rainy, they moved some materials inside, and the tent was kept there for a week. The aim of this activity was to provide children with the chance to engage actively and to have areas with no adult

control (Waller, 2007). Thus, outdoor areas can serve varied opportunities for children if the teacher organizes it ably. The important aspect is to design outdoor space and activities effectively in order to provide enhanced opportunities for children.

Although the literature suggests teachers should not hesitate to conduct challenging activities, the conditions led them to be conscious about issues (barriers are discussed in previous sections). An additional reason for this concern might be that teachers in Turkey were mostly alone during their outdoor activities, and they had to control all the children to be sure of their safety. However, as can be seen from Photo 5.6, children were playing outside of their building (they were sharing the school playground with others), and the



**Photo 5.6: Turkish School-2**

main road was a few steps away from them. Children could go out of the school ground easily, and an accident might have happened suddenly. Nevertheless, this participating Turkish teacher, Derya, used

outdoor area for their activities rather than considering the barriers. This practice was likely to enhance children's perception of risk. These photos exhibit how to use some barriers in favour of children's positive risk-taking opportunities instead of hesitating to conduct activities.

Whilst space and safety can be perceived as barriers in outdoor activities, there are opportunities for teachers to consider such factors as a tool to enhance children's learning and development. The limitation of the space can be used to support creativity, and the risky situations can be used to provide positive risk-taking opportunities for children. However, this implies a change in cultural attitudes to children and play. In this research it can be seen that cultural attitudes shift over the process as long as participants want to change. My research was a tool for participants to evaluate their circumstances through seeing different practices, which can help them overcome some obstacles in their own practices. This is related to the impact of Professional Learning for teachers, so the participating teachers had a chance to share their current activities, critique them, and revise them so as to handle barriers and make positive use of them.

## **5.6. Chapter Conclusion**

This research was based on two different contexts as a cross-cultural research containing two variant countries. The physical conditions of participating schools between the two countries were different. Whilst expecting different barriers from each country, it was identified that there were two common barriers. The important consensus with such a small number of the participating teachers from both countries was that limitation of space and safety concerns are barriers in their outdoor activities, which in turn, shape their outdoor activities, in particular, considering two main emergent themes: freedom and pedagogic roles. However, the conditions and the types of barriers are quite varied between the two countries because while in one, separated outdoor areas were present; in the other teachers had to use the schoolyards as outdoor areas. This different situation is the result of the economic factors impacting on education, as Penn (1996) indicates the

impact of economic factors on education systems, and as these countries are perceived as developed and developing countries. Therefore, it is possible to see that the level of resources and the design of outdoor spaces also indicate the different economic circumstances of the schools.

The discussed barriers and the reasons for them were already outlined in the Literature Review chapter showing that safety and space issues were the fundamental problems in outdoor activities from various contexts. In this regard, my research presents these barriers in the context of England and Turkey in relation to two main emergent themes from the interviews and observations. The participating teachers from both countries indicated space and safety concerns as barriers in their practices in terms of freedom and pedagogic roles. I observed that these themes were influenced by these barriers because teachers always considered the barriers during planning and practicing the activities. It was evident that the participating teachers were unable to provide unlimited freedom for children during activities. In order to keep children safe, teachers are required to be aware of the issues and were mostly obliged to control children or keep them inside due to possible dangers (Coleyshaw *et al.*, 2012). Although these barriers restrain teachers' practices in terms of the types of activities planned and their pedagogic positions during the activities, these barriers can also be utilised in order to enhance the risk-taking (or risk-management) opportunities for children (Sandseter, Little & Wyver, 2012) instead of considering them as limiting factors for outdoor activities.

In conclusion, teachers may see some barriers around outdoor activities as confining them to engage with various limited activities, but there are also options to handle and utilise

barriers to accommodate enhanced opportunities for children, if they are considered as occasions to be used in favour of children.



## **Chapter 6: Findings and Discussion: Freedom**

### **6.1. Chapter Introduction**

This chapter contains one of the emergent themes from the first part of data collection, findings from the second stage of data collection and discussion. As I described in the Methodology chapter, the data collection was longitudinal via second interviews and observations carried out after a period of time. This chapter therefore contrasts perspectives on freedom from the different data sources.

Teachers have a role to provide independence and responsibility for children in spite of the requirements of teaching process (Biesta, 1994) because the teaching process limits the opportunities with the expected educational outcomes, and teachers are in charge of providing wider opportunities. Outdoor activities also highlight the role of nature to provide “a space for their [teachers’] pedagogical practice and work” (Sandseter, 2014, p.119) in order to achieve educational targets. This means that while the pedagogical part of education expects teachers to address some outcomes, the process of education may lead them to pre-determined results. This situation exhibits the gap between rhetoric and practice. Therefore, the relation between the teachers’ statements and practice are notable to discuss.

In this chapter, findings around the term ‘freedom’ are exhibited and discussed in depth in the light of the relevant literature. But before that, there is a need to identify the meaning of freedom. Dewey explains the meaning of freedom as a power to afford purposeful, critical thinking, as evaluation of conditions as well as being responsive to external and physical activities (Dewey, 1963). While this provides an overall approach,

Bilton (2010, p.26) suggests that “outside is a natural place for children to be and play and there is a freedom associated with it.” However, it is difficult to accommodate freedom only through spatial areas. Dewey further discusses the meaning of freedom in his book, and claims that even if adults use their knowledge and conditions in order to extend children’s freedom, there are still likely to be restrictions for both adults and children (Dewey, 1963). This point underlines the role of the teacher and children to determine freedom, which has different roles to provide opportunities for individuals, so culture is likely to regulate the ways of providing freedom. In the previous chapter, it was identified that there were influencing barriers on freedom during outdoor activities. Although these barriers were identified similarly by the participating teachers, the implementations varied according to the differences in cultural backgrounds.

However, freedom, in the Scandinavian context, is associated with an autonomous access to and engagement with the environment for the use of generating children’s own games and activities depending on their willingness (Sandseter, 2014). Therefore, different contextual aspects of freedom emerge in different countries (in this research: England and Turkey) similar to the difference in the practical side of barriers mentioned in the previous chapter. There are different meanings of freedom in different contexts and these include having a) no fixed boundaries, b) opportunities to choose activities and space to play, and c) options to engage with risks. In the context of this research, freedom is defined as creative, imaginative opportunities for children, open-ended resources, independent play, exploration and hands on experience. Before representing the findings, I should point out that while there are some examples from one context in an observation, sometimes there is no equivalent example from the other context (country).



## **6.2. Initial Approaches to Exploring Freedom in my Study**

The first part of the research centred on identifying the current situation in England and Turkey, and it started with interviews, followed by observation as set out in the Methodology chapter. These interviews and observation notes on freedom are presented and discussed respectively below.

### **6.2.1. Interviews**

The first statements on ‘freedom’ occurred in response to questions about the meaning of the outdoors. All participating teachers both from England and from Turkey stated the importance of outdoor activities in terms of providing freedom for children, and teachers mostly mentioned the outdoors and freedom together because children are more controlled in the classroom in terms of activities. However, the sense of freedom in outdoor activities changed within these countries in relation to their implementation. As an example of the participating English teachers’ ideas, Alex stated that

“You know things are free to them, so mud, sand, and things they can just use and they can be creative and imaginative in their play outside.”

She explained freedom in terms of materials and opportunities children had, which revealed the opportunities for creative, imaginative play through open-ended resources. However, this provided limited freedom to children as “children [were] playing with pre-defined materials” (Waters, 2013, p.12). From the statements of teachers, although the participating teachers considered outside activities as freedom, they provided limited material opportunities for children such as sand and mud, so teachers’ approaches to

outdoor activities are confined to a limited range of materials. In addition, Emma answered in the same fashion that

“... I think we have the opportunity to be free. It is about being outside.

When they’ve got scope of being able to [get idea of freedom] it is exactly the same as being in a classroom, you are having learning.”

This statement emphasises the similar aims of outdoor and indoor activities so that similar learning outcomes are likely to occur via different contexts. She indicated that although there was an opportunity to be free outdoors, the children were still expected to achieve predetermined outcomes in the same way as in the classroom. This is an example of the limitations of activities for freedom even when being outdoors is aimed to provide freedom. Waite and Pratt (2011) remark that place plays a substantial role in the learning outcomes. Emma, in relation to place issues, highlighted how being outdoors is different from indoor activities. For her, outdoors is enriched by freedom as distinct from indoors. The statements and pictures of the participating English teachers provide a layer of meaning as they show some restrictions on children’s freedom such as using predetermined materials, or creating outdoor contexts that are similar to classrooms. Moreover, expectations of the same learning outcomes in the outdoors make it no different than the indoor classroom. In terms of underlining freedom, in an example from Turkey, Deniz claimed that

“Sometimes, we leave them free and they play alone, so they have a chance to have free play ... children can have better opportunities like for creativity and being more free if it [outdoor activity] is supported more.”

This statement is a general representation of the overall perception among the participating teachers in Turkey because the term ‘freedom’ for the participating Turkish teachers is to release children into the playground (in the first part of research). In this regard, another teacher from Turkey, Neva emphasised the requirement of providing freedom. She stated that

“Freedom should be provided for children so that they can learn via exploration, first-hand experience and communicating with others voluntarily without having any governance or guarding by teachers. We are already restricting their freedom indoors, so they need to have more freedom outside.”

Neva’s statement showed the necessity of less controlled activities for children because, as Kytta (2004) also asserts, children prefer enlarged free play areas. These points from Neva’s statement are directly related to the statements about the experiential learning side of outdoors (Maynard, 2007c), alongside experimental and actual activities (Waite & Pratt, 2011). These are concepts of freedom in activities. On the same issue one of the participating English teachers, Alison, expressed that

“Outdoor learning is mud kitchen, nature, shovel etc... It gives children more scope to explore, find things out there.”

These examples exhibit the foremost aspect of outdoor activities as providing less controlled situations. Favoured children’s play areas are mostly less controlled by adults or less restricted. Dewey’s position on this is that teaching is a kind of art, which needs to include freedom for children (Allison, 2014). However, there is a need to explain that the

outdoor areas in the participating schools in England, are bordered by fences, unlike some Scandinavian outdoor learning environments, but still provide some freedom within their borders and the aims of the EYFS (as it is discussed in the previous chapter: barriers). To explain this, Sam claimed in the first interview that

“We think about the child as a whole, so the way we use our outside area is developed every time by the EYFS...”

This illustrates how the EYFS plays a weighty role in framing their outdoor activities as well as being a motivation to consider all children. It is claimed in the EYFS that “[p]roviders must ensure that their premises, including outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose. Spaces, furniture, equipment and toys, must be safe for children to use and premises must be secure” (DfE, 2012, p.23-24) in play and outdoor learning areas in order to balance safety concerns and freedom. The relation of this statement with Figure 6.1 in the next section is described in-depth. Before that, I must note it shows that while the EYFS supports teachers to conduct various activities, it constrains activities in the name of safety concerns.

As can be seen from the statements of the participating English and Turkish teachers, they all remarked on the importance of freedom in outdoor activities and how such activities facilitated freedom for children. Another researcher, Bilton (2010), focuses on the children’s side of outdoors as a reflection of their inner personalities. These research studies present a correlation between teachers’ perceptions of freedom in outdoor activities and children’s natural behaviour in the outdoors. Thus, there are similar explanations of teachers’ perception on freedom in different countries because the outdoors provide better opportunities for such as real-life experiences, facing real

problems and solving problems (Dewey, 1939) for children in comparison to the indoors.

One of the participating Turkish teachers, Neva explained further that

“When we say outdoor activities, I am thinking of children playing outside, in the nature having fresh air. Namely, they are more limited inside, and free outside, and they can have oxygen, fresh air, sunshine outside much better, and they can let their steam off much better. And of course, it affects their health.”

This teacher notes the affirmative side of outdoor activities and puts emphasis on unconfined freedom. These different statements of the English and Turkish participants arise from the historical differences such as the developments of early years and the perceptions of childhood, which regulate the current approaches of teachers to outdoor activities (see the Literature Review for detailed discussion). Also, this statement of Neva is in line with Maynard and Waters’ (2007) findings in their research that outdoor activities are closely associated with freedom and fresh air. This is an interesting fact that some responses around the relationship between freedom and health are associated with outdoor activities in some participants’ responses in relation to previous literature. As the participating teachers claimed and the literature shows, the outdoors has a role to provide more freedom for children as well as perceived opportunities for better health.

These statements both from English and from Turkish participants, link with ELT as these interviews overlap with the Concrete Experience (CE) aspect of ELT. The reason is that both interviews and CE serve the aim of “the basis for observation and reflections” (Kolb, 1984, p.21). This means that this step in the research process leads learners (teachers in my context) to describe and to realise the current situation for them while talking about

their perceptions. They mostly critique themselves in terms of their aims and requirements such as nature and materials. This awareness prepared them for the next step as well because it focused on their thinking about it. The next step in the research is the observation cycle in order to identify the relationship between their statements and implementation, this is also the second step of ELT; Reflective Observation (RO).

### **6.2.2. Observations**

During the observations, there were some overlaps with the statements from interviews as well as mismatch between what was said and what was done. Regarding the interviews, while children were controlled in the classroom, they had several opportunities to move around and to have more choice in their play in outdoor activities. The main aspect of outdoor activities in these countries was that while the participating English teachers were having regular outdoor activities on a daily basis, the participating Turkish teachers did not. For example, as a result of their irregular outdoor activities, children were unable to predict when they would go out in advance in Turkey, but they would know that it was the time to go out when I was there. This also shows the irregularity of outdoor activities in Turkey, and children perceived me as a sign for outdoor activity. A few times, I came across children saying that “yes, we are going out”, and they started preparing to go out. This observation showed the children’s enthusiasm for outdoors because they had more freedom outside than indoors. The reason for this is that children seek free, independent and less adult controlled areas (Gill, 2012) for their activities. The outdoors is the best place for them to find this opportunity. The relations between adults and children are discussed in the following chapters focusing on the pedagogic roles in-depth. The reason for children’s preferences of this kind is that “children’s freedom to play and roam

outdoors has been restricted in recent years” (Guldberg, 2009, p.34). She draws attention to the current situation in the limitation of children in daily life because two exemplified teachers each from either country highlighted how children’s outdoor activities are restricted by parents as a result of safety and health concerns. Correspondingly, I observed these teachers cancelling outdoor activities because of weather problems when I was there. Thus, such issues can limit the activities as well.

However, the provided freedom in activities varied in these countries. While the participating English teachers mostly provided opportunities for children to choose and play during outdoor activities, it was limited for the Turkish participants. In other words, the participating English teachers left children in the outdoor area to choose an activity and to play, so children could have freedom to use all the outdoor area, materials, and to choose any game they wanted to play, as stated by the teachers during interviews. Although teachers stated the importance of freedom in both countries, the context in England was restricted by some concerns like safety. However, it should not be the primary concern in outdoor activities. A Scandinavian research exhibits practitioners’ belief in Norwegian schools that “practitioners express this need for the kindergarten staff both to allow risky play and to stretch their own (staff ’s) limits so that the children can seek risks in play” (Sandseter, 2012, p.95). Contrary to this, my initial observation indicated that there was an excessive protection (Prince *et al.*, 2013) and focus on safety and to manage risky situations in the English context. For example, Katie, one of the participating English teachers would do regular welly walking with all children once a week. Normally the length of walk took 45 minutes but the preparation time (including

wearing high visibility jackets and giving some instruction) took longer than the walking time.

The safety concerns influence the activities and the length of activities. The Deweyian

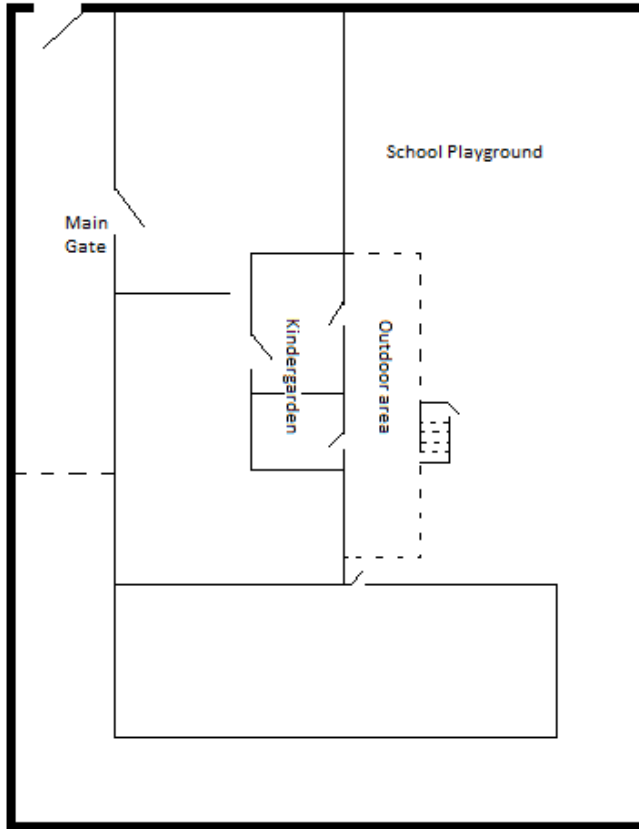


Figure 6.1: English School-3 (School Map)

curriculum.

For instance, Figure 6.1 shows how the outdoor area was constructed in participating English school-3. It exhibits the whole school map and outdoor area. The shown outdoor area in the figure has a direct access from the kindergarten, and it is separated by fences from the school playground. Beside this, it is lower than the school playground, and there is a gate and stairs to access the playground. During the observations, I saw that children were restricted from playing near the stairs and the gate because of safety concerns. This

idea is underlined that “educational practices carried through in an imperfect world—such as the world is, in any time whatsoever—are unavoidably imperfect” (Cunha, 2016, p.34). This means that in every condition there is likely to be something that limits the educational activities, and such issues are inevitable because there are different influential factors like teachers, children, environment and



example confirms the existence of safety concerns in settings. I also witnessed in my observations that all the participating English teachers organized the outdoor area similarly in the same weeks. The teachers used the same materials to set up in different schools. As it is discussed in the literature about Dewey's paradigm concerning Turkish Education system, these similarities of applications in England are contrary to Dewey's approach of localization of education considering the needs of the children (Dewey, 1939). This uniformity in schools is highly likely to play a restrictive role in the freedom of teachers. For instance, even "place [outdoor area] appears to be principally understood as a socially mediated cultural artefact, and its implications for education, both positive and negative, appear cultural rather than physical in nature" (Waite, 2013, p.429). This shows the role of culture and its impact on outdoor areas and activities to support or obstruct educational aims. To explain the condition, the activities might be in a different week with a different kind of materials but the aims were the same. For example, one of the participating schools had weekly learning intentions and situated materials hung on the walls where I could see.

Most of the time, I observed similar learning intentions in different schools with the same or different materials. This might imply that the local authority had given all settings advice on how to use resources, which I presume is the reason why there were similarities. During the observation period, in one week, all schools provided camping materials for children to use during outdoor activities. There were tents, sticks and camping materials. This is an effect of the EYFS on the implementation part (Sam's statement on this is mentioned in the previous section). As noted in the Literature Review, according to Bilton (2010), the EYFS guidance presents the regulation of outdoor areas. Thus, outdoor

activities and areas are framed by the EYFS and policies in England (see DfE, 2012). This was observed in this research as similar activities were provided concurrently in all of the schools. The construction of English settings' play areas are standardly fenced or adjusted for safety.

However, the case in Turkey was different in the implementation and in the teachers' statements during interviews. The reason may be having no separate outdoor areas and available materials for children to use. Even if teachers provided materials for outdoor activities, they led children to play together or assigned some rules while playing with them. Teachers' understanding and the utilization of the outdoor area were more about having structured games. The structured games may be part of traditional games, or developed by teachers or by children themselves. Therefore, the participating Turkish teachers provided structured games more than providing children with freedom in the first part of the research. However, while choosing the games, some freedom was given to the children to contribute to the decision-making process. Therefore, children could have freedom as long as the designated conditions in the predetermined area and rules allowed. In the observation period, all participating Turkish teachers conducted structured activities such as hide and seek, dodge ball, and rope jumping (Mart & Bilton, 2014).

The participating Turkish teachers sometimes left children free to run around in an empty



**Photo 6.1: Turkish School-1**

area (see Photo 6.1), but mostly they applied some traditional and structured games as outdoor activities. As can be seen from

Photo 6.1, the

participating Turkish teachers had no resources for outdoor activities, and most of them had neither a separated area nor outdoor materials. This school had an empty area for outdoor activities, and there was only a tree in the middle of the area with a bench for people (mostly older age group children and teachers) to sit and it was open to external factors. Hence, the participating Turkish teachers usually performed adult-led and structured activities so that they could encourage children to participate in activities rather than just running around. This situation of Turkish teachers could be used to enhance and adopt their activities because they had no boundaries and materials to limit them in contrast to the participating English teachers. Not having such boundaries could provide children with opportunities to employ their imagination and freedom. As Dewey (1997) highlights, freedom and imagination are substantial aspects, which are difficult to provide in education. Therefore, the participating Turkish teachers had this opportunity.

However, the safety concerns for Turkish teachers came into existence as a result of having no safe area. It was difficult to follow children when they were free to explore and access all areas in an unlimited area. This means that the participants were working alone (without a TA) and there was no separated outdoor area for them to keep children in the eyesight, so unless teachers controlled children with structured activities, it was highly likely to miss some of them or be unaware of any hazardous circumstances. As a result of such concerns, the teachers would do structured activities more. These different examples from England and Turkey showed that freedom is also dependent on staffing because the participating Turkish teachers had to consider many variables in their non-isolated outdoor area, and this led them to restrict the children's freedom in other ways. On the other hand, having separate and pre-determined (structured) outdoor areas might limit the freedom as well. In this regard, the role of teachers is a fundamental aspect in order to provide wider freedom. Both situations can be criticised from a Deweyian approach to freedom because he emphasises that the role of the adult in education is to supervise and governing or directing may damage children's freedom (Dewey, 1963). Correspondingly, "the role of adults ... requires sensitivity to merge with the activity to guide and support learning" (Waite, Rogers & Evans, 2013, p.271). These points indicate the asset that teachers represent in safeguarding outdoor activities for freedom.

By structured activities in the Turkish context, I mean playing tag, 'home and village' (in this game, two spaces are identified as home and village, when teacher says home, all children run to home area, and when teacher says village, they run to the other area. Anyone making a mistake is out), 'pull a rope' and so on. As mentioned earlier, the participating Turkish teachers performed adult-led activities loaded with instructions.

Because such games included some rules, these activities were done as highly structured by teachers. In such games, teachers determined the rules and borders of the game in advance, so children were obligated to follow the instructions, respond to the questions of teachers with little opportunity for them to meet the expectations of freedom mentioned in teacher interviews. Besides this and as a rule of games, if children make any mistake in games, or do not follow the instructions, they may be out of the games. Then, they have to stand out of the play area, watch and wait for others to complete that round of the game. During this waiting period, children sometimes started their own games, but they got warned by teachers to wait for others and watch them playing. After all children completed the game, they could re-join the game. Therefore, not all children had a chance to participate in activities at the same time. While some of them tried to achieve the expected goals, others had to wait for them. In terms of chosen activities, while there were some educational aims in some of these games, which were related to the Preschool Education Programme (Ministry of National Education, 2013b); others might not be able to address the expectations of the programme due to arising spontaneity during the day.

While the EYFS regulates the activities in England, the Preschool Education Programme remains incapable of emphasising and regulating the outdoor activities in Turkey (see the Literature chapter for in-depth discussion). The main difference between the two countries is that the implementation is not inspected in Turkey properly. These two different examples revealed how such monitoring (from the EYFS) and inadequacy of regulation on outdoor activities (from the Preschool Education Programme) influenced the theme of freedom. In terms of freedom, the policies/programmes need to have some regulations in order to promote activities but not to over regulate; teachers need support in policy, whilst

also providing freedom to enact. Indeed, the participating Turkish teachers had the most autonomy in this enactment compared to the participating English teachers, but they failed to fulfil this opportunity in the first part of this research because they needed more encouragement. These examples reveal the differences in the implementation of outdoor activities in terms of freedom between these countries. This difference shows how the second step of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) varies across countries although there were parallel statements in the interviews regarding the first step of ELT. The reason is that these observations confirm the second aspect of ELT, which is Reflective Observation (RO). In RO, the person has a chance to test their perceptions (Kolb, 1984). In this context, there were various aspects in the participating English and Turkish teachers' perceptions and practice of freedom in outdoor activities. The implementation process requires teachers to apply their knowledge and perception (mentioned in the interviews) in relation to RO process because it also embraces Concrete Experiences (CE) (Muro & Terry, 2007).

The above picture and observation notes illustrate how children had limited freedom in outdoor activities in the first part of this research. In light of these findings from observations, it can be said that although all teachers believed that outdoors provided freedom for children, the Turkish teachers could not always ensure freedom during outdoor activities. At the same time, the English teachers mostly achieved what they said in the interviews about freedom within some borders or their regulations. While there was a consensus on the outdoor context providing freedom, there was a conflict in the implementation in both countries. This is highly likely to be the result of variables in practice of participating English and Turkish teachers and the contexts for them. When I, as a researcher, talked to them about their approaches to outdoor activities during

observations, they claimed different causes such as barriers and recurring issues during activities (mentioned in the previous chapter on Barriers). Hence, it is important to clarify some variables and further points relating to teachers' approaches to freedom in outdoor activities.

### **6.3. Freedom in the Second Stage of the Research**

As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, all participating English and Turkish teachers were in a secret Facebook group to share and discuss their practice. Thereby, it was intended that learning from others would be possible. This is underpinned by new model, as discussed in chapter 4, and this process also forms a part of the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) that the reflection phase of their current activities can be associated with the Reflective Observation. The relationship between the ELT and the new model was described in Figure 4.1 in the Findings and Discussion: Professional Learning for Early Years Teachers chapter. The Facebook sharing process was useful for them in terms of two aspects. First, while they were sharing their practices, they had a chance to reflect on their views and critically consider their own practice. The second aspect was the interaction with others and seeing different practices with photos and explanations about them, which offered a multimedia source of reflection on their own and others' practices. To identify the effectiveness of the research process, the second part of the research was important. Thus, some questions about freedom were deliberately asked in the second interviews in order to identify their perception of freedom in depth, and the participating teachers were observed closely regarding this theme. In the second stage of this research, there were some explicit changes in teachers' statements and their implementations. The second cycle of research started with interviews as it was in the first stage of the research.

### 6.3.1. Interviews

The statements on freedom in the second interviews were similar to the first interviews of the participants in England but not in Turkey. The participating English teachers expressed the context of freedom for themselves, and this situation applied from beginning to end of the research, so their approaches to freedom were quite similar throughout the process. However, the participating Turkish teachers claimed an improvement in their activities in terms of providing more opportunities for freedom. This progress was attributed mainly as a result of communicating via the Facebook group and the representations of activities in the group because all participating teachers more or less contributed in the group, sharing pictures with description of activities.

That might also be as a result of their interactions with me, but their statements emphasised the role of seeing photos from others. This therefore indicates the impact of the new model due to providing an opportunity to see different practices rather than textual and photographic presentations. In this respect, as an example of participating English teachers, Alex claimed that

“I think as long as they are with an area, where they are supervised and managed by an adult. I think they should be given as much freedom as they can within the constraints of what you can give them ... Also have the opportunity to have the freedom, and experience different areas. I think as long as you supervise them, manage them, so I think freedom is important for them. If they’ve got freedom, then you know that they can come up with their own ideas, being imaginative, different ways of doing things”



She drew attention to the role of adults in supervising children and the importance of freedom in children's learning experiences. If the adults provide an enriched freedom opportunity for children, it may lead children to explore without limits so that they can use different skills like creativity and problem solving. This teacher's statement is correlated with the Deweyian idea that providing children with no such opportunities to explore, create and handle situations jeopardises children's advanced skills like open-minded and attentive behaviour in activities (Kelly, 2014).

However, the case was not the same for every participating teacher within the same country. Although Emma stated similar points in her second interview, she had a limited outdoor area, so the restriction to freedom varied. In relation to that, Emma expressed

“We are close to space, we can say we have choice to go, they can choose what they want to do, they can take their own learning further. But in terms of being in our school ground, we are really lucky, but is that freedom ... rather than ... our boundaries?”

She clarified that there was freedom within the provided boundaries because like all teachers, she considered safety issues, and tried to balance freedom and safety considering the positive sides (as mentioned in the previous chapter). She also pointed out the children's freedom to control their learning in outdoor activities. Nevertheless, children's independence was defined by adults in advance, and there might be restricted resources. For this reason, although they were close to a natural space (just outside of outdoor area), they conducted their outdoor activities in a specific outdoor area (which is presented in Photo 6.3 with observation notes below). She, furthermore, referred to their constraints by fences. Although Emma could provide wider opportunities, she thought that the limitation

by fences imposed their boundaries for freedom. The main aim of fences was to separate the outdoor areas and to keep children away from possible hazards. However, a similar point was mentioned in the previous section and in the Literature Review that such approaches can act as a restricting factor on children's experiences (Waite, Huggins & Wickett, 2014; Wyver *et al.*, 2010). In the other case, in Turkey, the second interviews showed changes in the participating teachers' perspectives on freedom in outdoor activities. Within this context, Deniz criticised their performance so far, and claimed that

“Honestly, I say that we didn't have freedom so far. However, I think that children will have more freedom after this period. They can be provided freedom through activities, organized by us in order to let them have free play opportunities.”

This quotation shows that the Turkish teachers realized the importance of freedom outdoors, and realized how to apply it with the help of interactive processes with others. It was also observed that she was keen to provide freedom by giving opportunities for children's free play rather than only focusing on structured games (example: Photo 6.4 below). In this case, providing enhanced freedom in outdoor activities instead of structured activities addresses the multiple intelligence approach of the preschool education programme (Ural & Ramazan, 2007). Even though the participating Turkish teachers did not follow the programme exactly (as mentioned in the Literature section, there is a lack of inspection), they could realise the primary objectives of the programme unintentionally in comparison to their English counterparts. In this case, while the participating English teachers adhered to requirements of EYFS in their activities, the

participating Turkish teachers had no obvious alignment with or obligation to the preschool education programme.

Correspondingly, another participating Turkish teacher, Derya, stated the changes in her perception to freedom, and the activities throughout the process. Derya, in this regard, claimed that

“Freedom is important. However, there is a need to provide a wide range of freedom like materials and space ... unless they have such things, they only run around ... Nevertheless, freedom is good for children. At least, I don’t give instruction for single step, and let them decide. As a result, I place emphasis on their decisions. Especially, we don’t have structured [ruled] games anymore”

It can be seen from this testimony she emphasised the importance of freedom in children’s activities. In particular, the last sentence shows that her approach to activities and freedom within the activities has changed through this research process. However, it is important to remember that this is the participating Turkish teachers’ stated intentions which varied from what they actually did in the first part of the research, and their practical reflections are represented in the next section. Nevertheless, the changes in teachers’ statements indicate progress in their intended actions.

The overall statements from the second interviews show that while the participating English teachers indicated the same general perception of freedom in outdoor activities in the same manner that they made in the first interviews, the participating Turkish teachers started reviewing their own practice, and revealed new intended practices. The statements

indicated a critical approach to their own activities by teachers from Turkey as a consequence of the interaction with others over the Facebook group. Yet, the participating English teachers reflected a similar idea with their initial interviews on freedom. Consequently, it is important to consider whether there is a change in their practice as a result of online interaction with the Turkish participants.

These statements also reflect their Abstract Conceptualization (AC) regarding the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). In the AC stage, the learners begin to make inference towards possible new practices, and this is likely to be tested to create renewed activities (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) for their subsequent practices. In the case of freedom in outdoor activities, the participating teachers started considering different implementations by virtue of the Facebook group interactions. Correspondingly, observation determined to what extent they have put such approaches into practice, so the second observation cycle plays an important part in validating the research process.

### **6.3.2. Observations**

In the observations, there are some outstanding findings from the second cycle of the research. While the participating English teachers kept their activities as they were, the participating Turkish teachers made revisions in terms of ways to apply activities. This might be because Turkey had more capacity for change due to a different starting point as discussed in the first stage of the research. In England, as Alex stated in the second interview (above) about the role of the adults, children had freedom within their boundaries. She provided four different areas for children to choose and play freely. These were; role-play area, mud kitchen, digging area, and numeracy and math area. For example, Photo 6.2 shows only one area for them, which has a role-play house, some

seating and sand pit. All areas mentioned were separated and independent from each other.

These were therefore the basic areas for them to choose to play in. Regarding children's



Photo 6.2: English School-1

weekly targets, she added more materials into related areas. These targets were identified according to their developmental process, and learning objectives from the EYFS

such as language development (some letters in the sand pit and writing materials) and natural engagement (sea animals in a water tray; bamboo, pinecones in a bucket). This practice shows a commitment to the Ofsted's statements as she claims that "children should have the freedom to make discoveries and enjoy experiences within safe limits, while learning how to protect themselves from harm" (Ofsted, 2006, p.9). This school had a wide range of opportunities to provide children with such experiences, and had fences to keep them in a safe place.

In another example, from Emma's school, Photo 6.3 illustrates the limitation of the



**Photo 6.3: English School-2**

outdoor area as she mentioned in the interview (in the previous chapter). In the practice part, she aimed to provide freedom as much as possible, so she only reminded children of their

learning objectives, and interrupted any children running around and not focusing on the activity. This point is directly related with Waite and Davis's (2007, p.267) statement on structured activities that "there were plenty of adults around to remind the children what to do and to 'keep them on task'." This means that teachers should sometimes hold back and wait to intervene as children's learning can be developed through their own lines of enquiry as well as assigned tasks for them. This requires a skill to know when to and when not to intervene. This example is an interesting fact that this teacher (Emma), participating in my research, used this strategy in general outdoor activities.

As can be seen from Photo 6.3 of her outdoor area, it is highly structured by adults to decrease the possibility of risk. The outdoor area is separated from external risky situations and it is only for their use, so there was no concern for outside hazards. There were plenty of materials, which were always outside such as sand tray, water tray and writing board.

However, “underpinning all these measures should be a resilient approach to risk, recognising the need for a balance between protection and freedom” (Gill, 2012, p.82). The balance between safety concerns and freedom is a substantial aspect of providing an outdoor area for children in both countries because if safety concerns are exaggerated, there will be no freedom; or to provide freedom, the safety aspects cannot be overlooked. In the case of England, the avoidance of risk limited children’s freedom to explore more, and they could only have assigned and expected risky situations. Despite this restriction to children’s freedom, such implementation is accepted by some researchers; Sandseter, Little and Wyver (2012, p.169) assert that “children shall also have a large degree of freedom in terms of choosing activities.” Nevertheless, the participating teachers aimed to provide a wide range of freedom whilst considering risky situations mostly within their limited outdoor areas.

In Turkey, Photo 6.4 was taken from one of Deniz’s activities, and she provided children with freedom to engage with nature via having a sand and mud area to play in, as well as having structured games (as she mentioned in the interview above), which indicates the impact of the process on teachers’ attitudes to outdoor activities via this research process such as seeing a sand tray and water tray mostly on the Facebook group. After she saw the examples of sand and water play, she immediately provided children with a muddy area for their outdoor activities. When she saw the first-time examples from the participating English teachers, she made a comment that “we didn’t know much about these activities and areas, they are so beautiful.” This means that the Facebook group provided the participants with active learning opportunities from others. This photo and observation notes showed the change in outdoor activities in terms of providing enriched ‘freedom’ for children in Turkey because the above photo and observations reveal how



these opportunities of not being over controlled are important for children to experience. The reason is that children got engaged with activities easily, and they seemed to enjoy them more than structured games.

A child in Photo 6.4 holds mud and looks at it enthusiastically because he feels the



**Photo 6.4: Turkish School-1**

experience, the joy of hands-on play. This is also an example of ‘interaction’ with nature. The

participating Turkish teachers changed their activities after seeing the examples in the Facebook group, and this is confirmed by their comments on others’ posts. Yet, it was difficult to overcome all barriers

when seeing examples

over a short period (and learning is an ongoing process), so some barriers such as having a secure outdoor area and being conscious about the risky situations remained. Nevertheless, they made an effort to overcome (or to ignore) such aspects in the second observations. This situation was part of the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) in terms



of the Active Experimentation step, which is the final step of ELT (see Figure 4.1 for the other steps) in order to apply new knowledge. In this step, the requirement from learners (in my case: participating teachers) is to have abilities to overcome the issues via making reasonable decisions (Kolb, 1984).

However, it is important to elucidate that there was still intervention during some activities by teachers because it was impossible to change behaviour and to overcome the boundaries in a very short time. As a result of this intervention of teachers, children still had limited freedom. Nevertheless, the participating teachers gave children an opportunity for some decision-making roles during the activities. In terms of this example, there was an improvement in providing freedom for children compared to the first observations although it might still be below expectations. This might be related to the outdoor area they had, because there were assigned areas for outdoor activities, so this might have limited them to enhance their provision. The appropriate balance stands for the right amount of controlled, uncontrolled and free activities. This reveals the role of teachers as decision-makers in organizing the outdoor area for children's freedom.

In the case of Turkey, the participating Turkish teachers benefited from the process because they had a chance to see different outdoor areas and activities. Informally, when I had a chat with Turkish participants, they commonly highlighted the resourcefulness of the English context. Tobin, Hsueh and Karasawa (2009) indicate freedom is in relation to cultural aspects that while one country may allow children to climb so high, another underlines the regulations for them to limit children in such activities. Contrary to such cultural aspects, the participating Turkish teachers indicated the changes over the research process after seeing the different examples in terms of freedom. The influence of the

process cannot be overlooked as a result of the posts of the participating English and Turkish teachers on Facebook. Although there is a cultural impact on activities, and approaches of teachers (Lynch, Moore & Minchington, 2012), learning occurred via the research process, and the participating teachers tested their boundaries against cultural aspects.

Correspondingly, it was observed that Derya (Photo 6.5) assigned an area for children to



**Photo 6.5: Turkish School-2**

do outdoor activities (because they previously had no specified area for them), and gave them a few different games to choose and play within this assigned area.

Even though she set up some games/activities

for them, children were mostly free to make up their own games. She aimed to deliver broad opportunities for children to explore and to experience various things around them with limited materials and within the premises. Using an assigned area might be the result of either seeing from the English participants or being in control of children. In many cases, the new situation exhibited the functionality of this research for participating teachers because they started using outdoors for facilitating learning (Maynard & Waters, 2007). Photo 6.5 illustrates their area, which is a part of the school playground, and it shows children's free engagement with activities. There is a game with a ball organized

by the teacher but still others are free to pull a rope or role-play like taking pictures. A featured child in Photo 6.5 is acting like taking picture with a camera (made in a previous art-craft activity inside). It can be seen that the child enjoyed the material he produced so this example shows that there is no need for an abundance of materials or space, and the principal support is to give children freedom to use what they have.

Another photo from the same teacher in the ‘pedagogic roles’ chapter (Photo 7.6 and Photo 7.7) confirms that children can find a way to interact with and experience their environment if they are given the required freedom. In the first observations, Derya only instructed through structured games, but through the process of exchange of ideas, she changed her mind, and she started setting up more than one game for children regarding their learning intentions in order to choose independently from these games. Creating optional activities suggests the affirmative impact of this research process on teachers in enhancing alternative perspectives and practices. Nonetheless, there is a need to clarify that she still assigned rules before going out. “ [The] limited size of the fields of promoted and free action make the actualization of affordances difficult” (Kytä, 2004, p.184). This means that teacher’s specification of some rules and points during outdoor activities is a result of existing space issues. Derya newly implemented these activities, which had been developed through the research process via the presented words and pictures.

Indeed, these points may apply to all participating English and Turkish teachers because everyone emphasised space and safety factors as drawbacks for them, which limited freedom. The reason is that “in the cell [limited/confined] environment the restricted fields of free and promoted action makes it impossible for children to explore the affordances of the environment” (Kytä, 2004, p.184). The result of the limitation of space influenced the

level of freedom that they had during outdoor activities. Yet the changes in teachers' approaches to activities and the case of freedom cannot be overlooked because the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) claims the cyclical learning process is continuing (Kolb & Kolb, 2009), so there is highly likely to be some development in the practice of teachers over time. While the participating English teachers realized that they had freedom within their boundaries, the Turkish teachers started providing a wide range of freedom to children in favour of changing activities from structured to flexible ones. Nevertheless, it can be claimed that the space and safety concerns of teachers existed in different contexts despite different conditions, and it probably remained a concern, which could always limit freedom. It can be inferred from examples of Turkey that such restrictions are not necessarily a barrier to providing wider freedom for children. Hence, the process of learning and putting that into practice can play an important role.

#### **6.4. Chapter Conclusion**

The term 'freedom' was an emergent theme in the first part of this research by virtue of teachers' statements about it and the implication of activities to provide freedom in outdoor activities. Therefore, during the second interviews, I particularly focused on this term to uncover teachers' deep thoughts on it, their practice of freedom and any changes of activities related to this during the research process. At the beginning, the participating English teachers defined it as creative, imaginative activities and having opportunities to be free. The participating Turkish teachers regarded freedom as free play, exploration, hands-on activities without any interference from the teacher. These are 'ideal' definitions corresponding to the literature reviewed. Nevertheless, the practical side was somewhat different. The participating English teachers aimed to enable the emphasised aspects

within their bordered and pre-determined areas and materials, while the participating Turkish teachers were unable to address their expectations for freedom in their activities because they conducted structured activities most of the time. The reasons for any restriction in their activities were expressed and observed as space and safety. While the participating English teachers stated that they had a limited outdoor area, the Turkish participants had no separated area. Thus, their definitions of risk and safety concerns and the issues they faced were very different from each other. Because of the differences in the participating teachers' statements, and these external factors, the enactment in both countries differed. In the second part of the research, following the Facebook group, the participating teachers updated their statements, and while the participating English teachers expressed similar ideas about freedom (e.g. experiencing and being imaginative) as the basis of their explanation, the participating Turkish teachers were self-critical, or reflective, and highlighted practical changes they had made (providing wider space for freedom, and assigning greater decision making roles to children) through the research process. In the final observations, I found that they were likely to apply what they stated in the interviews.

While the participating English teachers were critiquing their activities and claiming to make some small changes for this (in order to abide by EYFS), the participating Turkish teachers' perspectives broadened, and their practices changed considerably as a consequence of having interaction with other teachers. This is related to points discussed in the Literature Review chapter; that culture is described as "rules and tools of a society" by Sanders (2009, p.12). This shows the necessity of interaction with each other across countries, although some cultural restrictions apply. The principal method to cope with

any cultural restriction or barriers was using a Facebook group to share activities and to see the practices of others. It ensured a substantial opportunity to reflect on practices through photos and description of activities. In this way, the participating teachers applied the selection, organizing and integrating different activities when they visited the Facebook group. These are also three cognitive processes required for active learning. At the same time, this process from beginning to end coincides with the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) because every step of the research process corresponds to one of ELT stages; they are respectively Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentations. In this way, my research examines the situation regarding ‘freedom’ before this research process and shows to what extent it has changed in both participating English and Turkish teachers’ understanding and practice.

## **Chapter 7: Findings and Discussion: Pedagogic Roles**

### **7.1. Chapter Introduction**

The theme of ‘pedagogic roles’ also emerged during the first part of this research as well as ‘barriers’ and ‘freedom’. Pedagogic roles are important aspect of facilitating activities because “practitioners co-construct knowledge with a group of children” (Waller, 2007, p.405) in outdoor activities. Hence, the relationship between teachers and children plays a role both in social development and in the efficiency of the activities. The pedagogic roles are mainly identified by all the participating teachers in the interviews as adults’ and children’s roles which are shaped during the activities including adult-led, adult-directed, child-led, child-initiated ones, and so on. The roles also regulate the interaction between teachers and children, and children and children. It follows that interaction is a substantial facet of experiential learning and pedagogic roles. Figure 7.1 in the following section illustrates the manner of interaction in practice. Pedagogic roles and adult interaction occurs by way of questioning, observing and supporting children according to the positions and duties of teachers and children during the activities. These strategies help teachers learn children’s interests, explore children’s thoughts, attracting their attention, comfortableness and well-being, flexibility, and so on; as well as their engagement with the environment and various opportunities (Fenwick, 2001), which can be identified considering the roles of teachers such as participant, mentor, facilitator (see Figure 2.1).

Pedagogic roles include several wider aspects in practice. In addition, it may change with reference to; instructions, dialogues between teacher and children, as well as children’s active engagement with the environment, on-site materials, adults and peers. In the light

of these explanations, the term ‘pedagogic roles’ encompasses various points, which emerge in this research process. This chapter focuses on the initial findings on pedagogic roles from the first interviews and observations, and the circumstances in the second stage. The findings about the circumstances of ‘pedagogic roles’ in participating settings are revealed as well as providing a critical discussion of these findings within the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), and the new model.

Response to roles during outdoor activities varied in the teachers’ responses from the interviews in the first and second interviews. From the overall responses, the participating teachers from England and Turkey have different perspectives about their roles during outdoor activities, and in comparison to their statements, there are a number of observed incidences concerning the roles in outdoor activities. The participating teachers shaped their roles to provide communication among peers, between teacher and children, a way to learn about others, a method to conduct activities with targets, and engagement with the environment and materials. Therefore, the role of these stakeholders is important in order to examine the situations in outdoor activities for ‘interaction’. This is because “Foundation Phase teachers will need to recognize the child as a competent learner and the particular benefits that ‘child-initiated’ activity and the natural outdoor environment have to offer” (Maynard, 2014, p.66). Therefore, the role of teachers is to provide the necessary outdoor area for children and opportunities for child-led activities, in which children’s role is to actively take part in these activities. The relationship between teachers and children is that teachers have different objectives for different children, and it varies regarding the children’s knowledge (Dewey, 1997) as well as teachers’. Such varieties in the responses of teachers and roles could enhance others’ learning via sharing their



practice and communication. There were some findings in relation to roles from the first interviews and observations. I therefore focused on this theme as well in order to identify the changes to roles over the process, considering interaction between teacher and children in outdoor activities. This is because there were some explicit differences between these countries in the first part of the research.

## **7.2. Initial Approaches to Exploring Pedagogic Roles in my Study**

It was important to determine the existing perceptions about and implementation of outdoor activities in terms of pedagogic roles because this was an emergent theme. While the participating English teachers were highly likely to put their statements into practice, the participating Turkish teachers tended to do that to a lesser extent. However, pedagogic roles influence the interaction between teachers and children in activities, and pedagogic roles and interaction have a close relationship, so the interaction through activities are mentioned as well. In this case, while the participating English teachers mentioned interaction as a way to learn from children about their learning and to familiarize themselves with the children in order to detect the necessary elements in activities for them, the participating Turkish teachers defined interaction as positive relationships, opportunities to express children's feelings independently and making children comfortable. As a result of these differentiations in the statements of teachers in the two countries, some differences in their practices were highly likely. Thus, in the order of the research process, teachers' initial approaches to pedagogic roles in outdoor activities are first identified, and then the observation notes are discussed in the following sections.

### 7.2.1. Interviews

The initial interview responses provided a descriptive overview for me to determine the participating teachers' perceptions. There are different responses from teachers. To begin with the interview responses of participating English teachers, Alex stated that

“I think it is really good. I think you can get a lot out of children when they are outside because I think they are naturally inclusive outside, exploring. So it is a good tool for the teacher to be able to ask them questions, bring their learning on further they get a response from them, ask them further questions and watch their interest outside and provide them resources they need to bring their learning on further, so I think you can have a look at lots of interaction when children are outside.”

This utterance indicates the general perception of the teacher on roles during outdoor activities because valued interactions occur when there is a question and answer accompanying the discourse on recent circumstances or preferences (Bilton, 2012). Alex furthermore stated that

“We might have children, they are all playing outside, so there might be 15 children playing outside, then there might be one adult out there, doing a focused, I don't know it might be, doing a focused activity on painting or something like that. And then, that adult, one adult would be over seeing them in play and the other adult would take groups of, smaller groups of children to do adult-led activity.”

This quotation indicates the role of adults during outdoor activities in order to achieve their aims. Another English teacher, Katie, explains their roles in activities that

“The role of teachers ... or another adult is vital because you are there to facilitate, question, observe, assess, and then get children’s interest that you can see what children’s like, and we can plan for next week. And intervening sometimes, why are you doing that or how many have you got here? So I think it is not specific for outdoors but the role of the teacher as a whole in early years so important.”

This teacher also points out what their roles are through outdoor activities. A similar situation is also mentioned by Bilton (2010, p.164) that “staff ... have roles to fulfil before, during and after children have been in the setting. Beforehand, staff need to think about the needs of the children in the setting and then plan accordingly.” This statement and the quoted English teacher’s utterance overlap and provide a broad understanding of the context in England. Besides this, changes in roles are directly related to changing interactions. These changing roles create a particular way of interacting with respect to aims like exploration, learning outcomes and child development. However, interaction involves communication, engagement with nature, and it requires more than an identification of the current situations. The aims of roles of teachers and interaction may vary regarding the children, conditions and teachers (Dewey, 1997), so there are different variables on the options of the role and interaction to be used. Regarding this, Alison focused on different angles of interaction by uttering that

“I think we should go out and play with them. I think they need a teacher getting involved in their play, then knowing when to step back and just

observe. I think children learn more seeing how we interact, not just being with them, interacting in their activities, showing an interest there. If they are busy with collaborating and work with children, then they can carry on, we are looking for children [who] look a bit lost, a bit aimless, actually approaching them to find an appropriate activity.”

In this statement, the participating teacher underlines play ‘with’ children, so this is a different conception of involvement and shared experience as being part of the activities and interaction. This is parallel to one aspect of roles in Figure 2.1: participant role. This aligns much more with the ideas about going with the flow of children’s interactions and being careful not to interrupt that with an adult agenda. These statements from two teachers recognise that “we, as adults, can also learn from the interaction between children...” (Waite, Rogers & Evans, 2013, p.272). Therefore, the design of activities can enable teachers to manage the interaction so as to achieve aims. While designing and arranging the activities, teachers adhered to the curriculum, and they also considered the children’s interests. Derya furthermore claimed that

“I mostly lead the activities due to having structured activities. This means teacher directed activities like saying we will do this and this. There is nothing for children to lead, and children have no choice for child led activity because there is nothing for them. There are sometimes nice ideas, and they say to walk around the school garden and play something. We walk around the school garden and do some observations about leaves etc. This is only sometimes. Generally, we are doing teacher led activities because of teachers being in the centre of education.”

This teacher's quotation exhibits the current conditions in Turkey and the contrast with the English participants' approaches in the practical side of interaction regarding roles. While the participating English teachers indicated the different pedagogic roles: facilitating, questioning, adult-directing and focus groups; the participating Turkish teachers pointed out both adult-led and child-led activities, particularly, structured activities. This approach in Turkey is the opposite to the expected practice of outdoor activities that the domination of adults should be avoided (Waller, 2007) in the activities because the domination of adult is likely to restrict the interaction of children and the impact of activities. It is important to indicate that this literature comes from an Anglo-centric perspective, but it is valid for other views around the world. In this regard, Dewey states that teachers can help children to gain knowledge by stimulating their curiosity (Dewey, 1929). This means that adults are there to organize the environment, which can generate personal interest for children to manage and learn. Thus, the roles in activities and interaction need to be balanced in order to provide a balanced opportunity for children. Regarding this, Deniz expressed that

“They are more comfortable and sincere. Children feel more happiness outside, and express their feelings better than indoor.”

This quotation indicates the personal feelings of children outside when compared to indoor activities. The difference in the feeling between indoors and outdoors may be related to cultural density which has an external effect on feelings about social interaction related to freedom from the pattern of usual relationships in class (Waite, Rogers & Evans, 2013) and the different roles of teachers between inside and outside during the activities. In this case, the opportunities in the classroom may be more constrained. In other respects, the approaches of English and Turkish teachers to roles in outdoor activities indicate different treatments regarding cultural backgrounds (e.g. the concepts of childhood and play). This is because culture has a role to determine the approach to childhood, play and activities in education. While both England and Turkey has similar aims in the policies/programmes, the practices were unrelated to the aim of the policies and the impact of other countries like Norway.

However, the quotation from Deniz and the English teachers indicate something of the nature of the cultural density of the outdoor spaces in the two countries. Thus, the relation

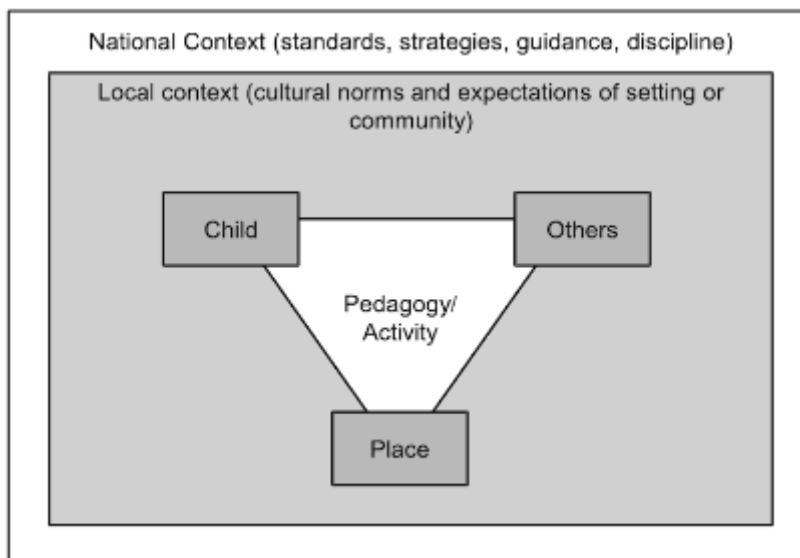


Figure 7.1: The possibility space in the relationship between place, pedagogy and learning (Waite & Pratt, 2011, p.7)

of interaction with the environment is fundamental for children to take place in different circumstances, and to join in activities with reference to Deweyian approach

(Stone, 2016) because interaction is a way to explore with children, and with their independent communication. To explain the interaction of children with different aspects, Figure 7.1 can be a useful diagram to indicate the relationship between environment and children so that the requirement to arrange the pedagogic roles considering interactive aspects. Figure 7.1 illustrates that there is a relationship between child, place and others (teachers). Among these pedagogical facets, context is associated with cultural density because these facets are shaped in education in the light of cultural approaches. The prominent point occurs from how the space is used in these examples from two different countries. The interaction between these three facets regulates the learning outcome of children within pedagogy (see Waite & Pratt, 2011). This confirms the usual cultural density of school spaces for adults to organize and for children to engage with it. The reason is that each facet from Figure 7.1 has an impact on the others in enhancing the outcome although cultural aspects regulate the relations. Nevertheless, there is a valid relationship between interaction and environment in any case according to Dewey's approach. Therefore, Deniz's statement and the Deweyian approach show the importance of the relationships with children and environment. In a similar way to this statement, another Turkish teacher, Derya claimed that

“Outdoors makes children be more positive because the classroom has a capacity [limitation], and children are having more problems with others in the classroom. However, outdoors provides them with a wide area. This decreases issues, so they are more passionate in outdoors to interact. They listen to me more, and perceive the rules...”

Derya indicated the interpersonal side of outdoor activities in relation to the opposite situation of indoor in terms of not having limitation so that eases changing roles during outdoor activities. This approach is the result of greater freedom outside as well. It may also be related to different roles and power relationships in different environments because, as Figure 7.1 illustrates, there is a direct relation between child, place and others. Derya's statement is also related to the roles of teachers in outdoor activities. The last sentence of the quotation indicates the adult-directed interaction during outdoor activities, and the impact of outdoor on this interaction for children to accept the role of teachers.

Before discussing the initial observation notes, there are some similarities and differences in terms of participating teachers' perspectives on outdoor activities in these two countries. One similarity is about conducting both adult-led and child-led activities occasionally, and a difference is about the details of their roles. For example, while the participating English teachers state the role of teacher during different types such as small group, whole group with adult-led activities must be to facilitate, question, give directives and so on, the participating Turkish teachers explain the need for free play or structured activities. As the participating teachers exhibit their pedagogic roles in activities, this is parallel to the CE stage of ELT (see Figure 4.1 & 4.2 in the chapter 4) because the participants are "able to involve themselves fully, openly, and without bias in new experiences" (Kolb, 1984, p.30). In other words, the participating teachers explained their approaches to roles in outdoor activities, and they represented that they were ready to reflect on their practice.

In terms of interaction, while only the Turkish teachers mentioned an improvement in interaction and communication during outdoor activities when compared to indoors, both the English and Turkish teachers perceived it as a way to understand children. Besides



this, the conducted activities vary the role of adults and children within these countries. This proposition is one of the major findings of the first interviews, and it is also related with the Concrete Experience stage of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which is called “perception mode” (Deryakulu, Büyüköztürk & Özçınar, 2009, p.703) because it is more about the current situation and their approaches to it. Therefore, the statements from first interviews and literature around pedagogic roles (and interaction) reveal different approaches in outdoor activities. The proposition remains that the practical enactment of pedagogic roles illustrates the actual practice of the participating English and Turkish teachers.

### **7.2.2. Observations**

With respect to teachers’ statements, their implementations exhibited some interesting points. The participating English teachers were mostly doing one to one and small group activities with children during outdoor activities. Only in some cases was there adult-led activity. The pedagogic roles were changing and variable regarding activities and situations. If they were doing regular activities, it was more about one to one or small group because children were maintaining the activities, and the teachers occasionally visited them. Contrary to this, Bilton’s work focuses on the interaction between children and staff in early years setting, and her small scale research suggests that “children, through their actions, are indicating that they would like more adult-child interactions of an extended and cognitive nature” (Bilton, 2012, p.417). This means that such implementations in England may be insufficient for children to address their needs and there is a paradox among teachers’ statements and children’s statements on their roles and interaction.

Although there is a contradiction between children's needs in Bilton's research and my



Photo 7.1: English School-2

research, Photo

7.1

demonstrates

how an outdoor

area is designed

in England to

ensure the small

group and one

to one activities,

which is

regulated by

policies. For example, the EYFS points out the importance of supporting children's

learning and development in activities as being spontaneous or underpinned by teachers

(DfE, 2017). Photo 7.1 also shows two or three prepared activities for children by the

teacher. When children engaged with such activities, she visited them and communicated

with them one to one or in a small group. During these visits, teachers asked questions to

determine children's level of learning, skills and led them into more challenging tasks.

During the course of the presence of a teacher in a small group or one to one activities,

the activities remained as child-led. Thus, questions were asked to understand children,

children's work, developmental process and their learning; for example, Emma, one of

English participants, at first visited children on the writing board (see Photo 7.1), and

asked them to write a few things; then visited children playing on the numeracy carpet,

and asked some questions about numeracy and maths. This is closely associated with one

of mentioned roles: facilitator. Emma organised and facilitated the activities for children, then she embraced the participant role in order to evaluate the activities and the impact on children while children were playing. While this underlines the substance of active engagement with children, the interaction between adult and children are identified in a few different ways: sustained shared thinking, intervention, awareness of needs, extending thinking, and elicited support (Huggins & Wickett, 2011, p.31). In the light of these points, teachers should support children to enquire (Bilton, 2010) because it helps children to think critically.

Photo 7.2 is another example from a participating English school. It can be seen that there



**Photo 7.2: English School-2**

are borders, which separates the outdoor area for reception class children, and there is no direct way out of this area. In this area, there were pre-set activities for children to choose and play. As Photo 7.2 indicates, there are different types of materials (e.g. blocks, tyres, sensory materials, and literacy materials). Children were free to choose and play with these predetermined materials. In this context, the role of the teacher was to design the outdoor area in advance, and the role of children was to choose an activity and play. During these activities, children had no option to run around and ramble. For example, it was observed that when

children ran around, teacher warned them and asked to find work to do. In such contexts, the role of the teacher was to keep children focused on activities. As a result of this, small group and one-to-one activities emerged. Once children went out, they were free to choose and play with these materials (which were arranged regarding the learning intentions), and then the teacher visited them during their small group or sometimes one-to-one. During these visits, the teacher observed children, asked questions, assessed them, and sometimes facilitated the activities. In terms of facilitating activities, teachers checked some pre-organised activities, and when no one was interested in them, she tried to include a few children in that activity and she regulated the rules. Children were responsible for obeying the rules and following the expectations of the teacher. Children were expected to attend the activities as they liked, and responded to questions when teacher asked. There was not only this type of outdoor activities, but there were also some adult roles as a guide in adult-led activity examples and participant role in activities.

Additionally, there needs to be freedom to engage with the natural environment because some activities may limit natural engagement due to their predetermined nature. However, it is important to clarify that the provided outdoor areas in schools may or may not be accounted for as natural environments. This means that while some consider it as a natural environment compared to indoors, others might not see the school playgrounds in the same way. This is because the school playgrounds and, particularly, natural environments, which teachers have as outdoor areas, are varied amongst schools and countries. While the Preschool Education Programme (Ministry of National Education, 2013b) in Turkey has only a handful of statements on the outdoors rather than natural areas, EYFS (DfE, 2012) underlines that practitioners are required to provide an outdoor space or they should

apply other outdoor activities, such as trips out, on a daily basis. Therefore, my findings confirm the necessity of a localised curriculum for schools, as Ata (2000) suggests, because conditions are different across the schools.

However, it should be noted that the participating Turkish teachers were doing mostly adult-directed activities in the first part of this research, so their interactions were unidirectional; teachers would give instructions and children would follow. For example, the aim of one to one activities was usually focused on solving a practical problem. Unless there was a problem with children, interaction and role changing were unlikely to occur. In contrast to this situation in Turkey, it is claimed in the literature from England that “adults of course will sometimes be involved in play, but the approach needs to be one of interaction not interference” (Bilton, 2010, p.57). This exhibits the importance of planning the role for teachers in activities, and the desired role is defined as participant (see Figure 2.1). Once, one of the participating Turkish teachers left the children’s free play at the beginning of the outdoor activity and she was talking to someone, then a child came to ask a question to the teacher. Nevertheless, the teacher restricted the child’s enquiries, and continued to do what she was doing. This was a notable example from the participating Turkish teachers to exhibit how they behaved with children during outdoor activities because similar situations occurred occasionally during the observations with different teachers as well. Most of the time, teachers did not respond to children’s demands in

Turkey. These incidents show lack of manifestation of one important type of pedagogic role and interaction in outdoor activities: one to one interaction between staff and children (Bilton, 2010). Although they were directing whole groups through instructions, there was little or no option for each child to talk with the teacher whenever they wanted. Therefore, the preferred roles in activities for the Turkish participant were as director, and they were in charge and able to control every step.

Photo 7.3 was taken from a highly structured activity in Turkey. This activity was the continuation of an activity from indoors. They made cows (replica cows) in an art and



Photo 7.3: Turkish School-2

craft activity, and they used these cows to milk. The children were familiar with real cows because they lived somewhere

close to a

village, though they would not know how to milk a cow. As it can be seen from the photo, children were standing on the edge, and waiting for the teacher's instructions and demonstration. This activity was directly related with the idea of Dewey, mentioned in the Literature Review about real-life experiences. However, the teacher was explaining the



aims and what they should be cautious about. Such situations are contrary to teachers' statements in the first interviews, which were about feeling comfortable in outdoor activities. The reason for this is that the teacher highly structured the activities, and children had no choice to feel free to have a relaxed interaction with the materials and others because they had to follow the instructions of the teacher. This incidence was also contrary to the literature because, while it provides a hands-on experience for children, they are highly restricted by teachers who give directions in every step. "[The] hands-on interaction with the environment is important as young children don't learn by having someone telling them about the world around them" (Dowdell, Gray & Malone, 2011, p.33).

Although the participating Turkish teacher, Derya provided some first-hand experience for children, they were highly structured and adult-led activities. Nevertheless, there is sometimes a need to have explanations by someone while having first-hand experience, so finding a balance in such activities is important to support reflection on experience. Children need to have experience in the situations themselves through participatory teacher interaction rather than being told everything because educative aspects arise through an interaction with environment (according to the Deweyian approach) (Hansen & James, 2016). This example and the example from the participating English teachers (Photo 7.1 and 7.2) have a common limited approach to outdoor activities because there are considerable limitations in the ways in which pedagogic roles can vary and what children are able to do. However, cultural differences play a role in these examples; while one is preparing and giving some opportunities during activities, the other one structures every step of the activity. It is obvious that participating Turkish teachers failed to practice

what they claimed to believe in interviews, although their statements were aligned with the literature as much as with the participating English teachers' statements. This Photo (7.3) illustrates to what extent children can engage with nature and their environment considering the controller role of teacher. In other respects, an important part of interaction, interaction with the environment, was largely missed in both England and Turkey. From these examples, it can be argued that structured activities in both contexts limit possible role changing for teachers and interaction between nature and children, although there are some practical differences in the interaction with peers and teachers.

Another important aspect was questioning during activities. The participating Turkish teachers asked questions to the whole group, which were designed in advance to get a certain answer from children, so it was mostly a one-way interaction. Persons "can appear authentically with one another, and utilize their faculty of judgment, of conscience" (Hannah Arendt cited in Dwoskin, 2003, p.117), so Waite, Rogers and Evans (2013, p.259) claim that "allowing sufficient time and places for children to 'appear authentically' to each other through cultures of playful interaction may be equally important." The observed conditions in Turkey in the first part of this research were insufficient to match the related expectations from the literature because this question and answer process worked under the control of teachers, so only children who are chosen by teachers had a chance to respond to the questions. Although Dewey emphasises 'suggestive questioning' that teachers can use to understand what the expectations of children are (Dewey, 1997), the participating Turkish teachers used the questions to direct children to expected answers. For instance, one participating Turkish teacher asked about the seasons and the changes on the trees accordingly. She expected children to give specific answers for these



questions and she helped them to find these specific answers. This example exhibits an mismatch between Dewey's statements and the practice of Turkish teachers as well as confirming the dominant role of the teachers. This approach is also criticised that "such communication is not automatically participation" (Biesta, 2010, p.718). In these examples, the correlation between the participating Turkish teachers' practice and their statements diverged.

There might be some reasons for this, in that having no separated outdoor areas might cause teachers to implement structured activities so that the teacher can have a chance to keep all children in their eyesight and within a determined area. Likewise, the participating Turkish teachers chose to implement mostly adult-led activities in the role of a guardian. Regarding this fact, Stephenson (2002) claims that teachers judge when they should have a directive role in activities. Thereby, they can manage children and possible unforeseeable issues. The following quotation from Gill (2012) perhaps fully describes this situation: "the adult role was to safeguard children from their own shortcomings and from the perceived dangers of the wider world, rather than to help them face those dangers and learn how to overcome them" (Gill, 2012, p.38). Gill describes the teachers' approach in playground with this statement, and it overlaps with the circumstance in Turkey. In the light of these examples, the Turkish teachers mostly participated in, and sometimes only supervised activities; and they had roles to regulate activities/games, such as giving instructions to follow the rules of the games and demonstrating how to play, which meant they started activities and controlled every step.

Therefore, while the teachers' responses to interview questions reflected the literature, their implementation did not because they controlled how children were to behave and

what opportunities they had during activities. In light of these points, the role of the teacher is to regulate the activities in order to promote wider opportunities, so the participating Turkish teachers' practices fell behind expectations regarding their statements from the first interviews. However, the situation for the participating English teachers in terms of questioning was parallel to the literature and their statements in the interviews because they focused on exploring children's level of learning, development and to widen the children's experiences in outdoor activities via one to one or small group activities. This might be the result of the fact that most works of literature take an Anglo-centric stance. The cultural differences in questioning of teachers during activities arise from this point. For example, when they dropped into a child's play, they asked about what the child did, and then they asked questions to think critically, and to get more from that activity. That is why the participating English teachers met the expectations from the literature regarding their pedagogic roles, to some extent.

Indeed, these differences may be the result of cultural identities as discussed in the literature, underlining the different approaches from different cultures to play and childhood. This observation process and teachers' implementation of outdoor activities can be associated with Reflective Observation (RO): the second step of the Experiential Learning Theory's (ELT) because learners in this stage apply, reflect their theoretical knowledge, and look for the question 'what if' (Muro & Terry, 2007). In this context, the practical part of outdoor activities in terms of pedagogic roles and related interaction for the participating English and Turkish teachers were identified with the first observation period. In the light of the first interviews and observations of the participating teachers from both countries, there were considerable differences in teachers' statements and

practices, especially of Turkish ones, which might be the influential factors generating this mismatch as mentioned in the chapter 5 (Barriers). This is because the role of teachers is shaped according to the barriers.

### **7.3. Pedagogic Roles in the Second Stage of the Research**

In the second interviews and observation process, there were some considerable differences compared to the first part of the research, especially for the Turkish participants. As already mentioned, the research had an intervention via an interactive process through Facebook, which enabled the participating teachers to share their practices with others. Within this process, the new model is frequently emphasised in terms of the value of meaningful representation of pictures and words, which provide in-depth learning within the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) cycle from beginning to end. While the second stage of the research is particularly associated with the new model, the whole process is based on ELT and the second stage represents the second half of ELT Learning Cycle; Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation (Kolb & Kolb, 2009) as a recognised method of adult learning (Miettinen, 2000). In this context, the new model based on ELT is useful in the following section in providing a wider understanding of the raw data. The new theoretical underpinning is summarised in Figure 4.2 in the chapter 4. As a result of the process, there are some remarkable aspects claimed by teachers as well as the observation notes. So, the findings from the second part of the research are discussed next in the light of the new model.

#### **7.3.1. Interviews**

The second interviews were to describe the later condition of teachers' perceptions on pedagogic roles and related interaction in outdoor activities. In the second part of the

research, when I asked specifically about the pedagogic roles of teachers in outdoor activities, they had a chance to review themselves, and explain the situations in-depth because “the role of early years practitioners in both indoor and outdoor environments is complex and multiple” (Waller, 2007, p.404). In this regard, Emma stated that

“I think our teachers are very good at supporting a small group or one to one basis. In terms of looking children’s learning, it’s still helping to our targets, and helping them develop and extend themselves through their play and through their activities ... I think they’ve given the choice of leading the activity. But I think in some respects there are still some needs to be reminded as to what they can do. I think sometimes outside is still really easy to run around and lose focus, and where they are a lot more purposeful inside, I think we need to take that outside as well.”

In the first part of the quotation, she evaluated herself and TAs in terms of their roles and activities, and in the second part of the quotation, she explained the role of children in activities. She also emphasised the effect of outdoors for children to lose focus and to run around. Therefore, Emma aimed to give them some useful purpose for outdoor activities in the same ways as indoors. In this context, the pedagogic role of teachers is to facilitate the activities for children to engage with them. These facilitated activities should include “outdoor play policy which includes the identification and assessment of benefits” (Waite, Huggins & Wickett, 2014, p.79) so that teachers can organize outdoor activities with regard to different factors such as developmental issues and children’s needs. The reason is that the role of adults is to engage with each child’s needs and differences considering

the curriculum (Biesta, 2004). Emma furthermore explained the role of children and interaction with them as follows:

“In terms of the children. Children to children, they are always engaging with each other like constantly sharing ideas. I think again they’ve got the opportunity because it is outside to be a bit louder, and to make their ideas to be heard of it, ‘I’ll tell you what, let’s do it, can you come and help me’. So they’re really good actually like sharing that knowledge or and that communication. They’re very good, and quick on saying like ‘look at me, watch this, can you do that’. They work together quite well in terms of their activities. And in terms of teachers to children, I think again, our practitioners are really good at asking questions, and promoting that learning through directions.”

This quotation illustrates the explanation of small group and one to one activities as well as both child to child and teacher to child interaction for them, and this underlines the communication of children with each other, and the teacher’s roles during activities via asking questions. However, asking questions may be inadequate in practice (Maynard, Waters & Clement, 2013) unless practitioners are adequately skilful (Maynard & Chicken, 2010) to conduct communication effectively and design the roles in accordance. This is because the role of teachers can easily become director (see Figure 2.1). Correspondingly, Sam explained different aspects in outdoor activities considering the situations, so she uttered that

“When they are outside, it hasn’t an impact on indoors because it is quite calmer, and [the] outside area is full of chats. So lots of learning chat and

talk is going on. Actually on a rainy day, it can be quieter outside and busier inside. Actually, you've got kind of a having that space, providing them to opportunities to children to have different types of conversations, I think ... They have communication and language opportunities definitely."

This aspect of interaction is explained that "the playground can be seen as an informal setting for social learning, where important interaction takes place between children" (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2006, p.83), but it depends on the arrangement of the pedagogic roles during activities. This is similar to the Deweyian approach as well. Dewey treats education as a development, interaction, involvement and demonstration rather than physical activities (Boostrom, 2016). This means that the role of teachers is to address children's needs to enhance children's communication with each other as well as engaging with teachers and their environments. Parallel to this, Sam claimed that

"If you are providing a good provision for children, the children will take their learning, and teachers are there to support their learning, just kind of dropping in at key times. I think the children... should be in control of their learning, and actually [the] teachers' job is to kind of just plan ideas to support their learning really ... actually you are just giving them tools, so it is very much the children are choosing and selecting."

From the statements of the participating English teachers, it can be seen that the role of teachers in their daily activities is to be supervisors for children because they organise a few different activities for children, then support them to lead the activities. Since they considered the children's needs, and they regulated the activities, roles and interaction regarding their willingness, children were there to participate in the provided activities. It

can be seen that the participating English teachers' statements overlap with the literature. However, it is important to note that their responses changed in some points through the process as did the participating Turkish teachers' responses. In the case of Turkey, Derya expressed that

“The quality of interaction increases, and I don't need to be into them a lot to correct ... it is more flexible and free, so it has higher quality ... there was some problems like getting bored, having some different excuses not to play. Nevertheless, they enjoy different activities like high ground, collecting stones etc., and communicate with us about these activities. This helps us not to try to convince them to play.”

This example from one of the participating Turkish teachers clarifies the impact of process in terms of regulating her role in the first part of the statement as well as the effect of outdoors in terms of interaction between teacher and children; she reviewed the situation, and how it changed. She also pointed out the impact of outdoor activities in terms of provoking interaction with the teacher, and the environment has prompted direct engagement with it by the children. This occurs as a result of changing roles of the teacher compared to her director role in classroom. In this case, the pedagogic roles are changed because of the willingness of children to communicate so that teachers can easily adjust their roles considering the children's ambitions. The last sentence of the statement demonstrates how outdoor activities are associated with play as well. A similar example to Derya's statement is from Alex, one of the participating English teachers. Alex stated that

“Children gather their own resources, and they do things. We did it a couple of weeks ago. We went on a nature trail, collecting lots of sticks and pinecones to make their own pictures. So I think that is the main thing that we are taking from them [Turkish teachers], using resources that children can collect naturally rather than things that are provided on board for them.”

These examples illustrate how the environment can be useful for children, and changing roles is highly likely to occur as a consequence of such activities as well as having interaction between nature and children. In addition, Alex’s words indicate the influence of the Turkish teachers on the participating English teachers in terms of thinking and implementing something differently than in their usual practices. Returning to the Turkish context, Neva claimed similar points

“Children have lots of rules inside, so they find a chance to act how they want, and they feel their intentions in the outside. S/he can decide a friend to play with, run with, enjoy with; and they can interact much better as a result of expressing their feelings freely. When they are inside, I control over them, but when we are out, they can interact with each other in a much better way ... so their interaction outside is much better, and joyful [than indoor].”

This utterance also confirms the changes in the roles of children as having an improvement in interaction between children in terms of having freedom to express their feelings and preferences when they are out with child-led opportunities. It gives a sense of movement, pleasure and joy. She started giving children an active role because she realised that children needed to have a central part in activities (Waller, 2007). The rules indoors are explained as those “that allow teachers to control physical and intellectual behaviour,



making everyone feel safe, but also strongly affecting what is deemed appropriate for learning” (Waite & Pratt, 2011, p.10). Regarding this statement, Neva was right to claim that children can have opportunities to have active roles outside. These are furthermore related to the conditions of feasible, and unexpected, situations in the area, which are also shaped by policies and programmes. As suggested in the previous chapter, the EYFS plays a regulative role in the English context. Neva’s statement also indicates the regulative role of cultural attitudes in the classroom in Turkey. Nevertheless, the changes in their statements show that the participating Turkish teachers establish new practices to enable children to have a range of different forms of role and interaction for children’s learning from this process. These statements therefore are not independent from their initial perspectives on pedagogic roles and interaction in outdoor activities. This may be related with Waters and Maynard’s findings on children’s perspective that “there is potential for rich, meaningful interaction to take place” (Waters & Maynard, 2010, p.480). This statement as well as teachers’ comments show how they identify the value of children’s roles and interactions in outdoor activities. Therefore, Deniz’s statement on the role of teacher is important when she mentioned that;

“I have started thinking about the importance of teachers’ roles ... s/he has roles to prepare and guide children, and s/he needs to be more active than before. In the process of choosing the environment and arranging the materials, teachers should be active, and then children should be active. Actually, this changes step-by-step. Normally, I would sometimes leave children to play free in the schoolyard, but after seeing the examples, it has changed. If teacher lets children play after organizing the environment for the activity, I think it is more beneficial for children. Of course with

providing freedom ... If there is a need for intervention, the teacher should intervene; there should be also observation as well. This also depends on activities, and the context of activities.”

The last statement from another Turkish teacher indicates the changes in perspectives, and illustrates how she sees their roles later in the research process. The statements on pedagogic roles and interaction in outdoor activities differed for the participating teachers regarding the countries from beginning to end. However, there are some appreciable changes in their statements as a result of the research process, and this is likely to be related to the impact of new model, which provides professional learning opportunities for teachers. Through this process the participating teachers had a chance to critically appraise their current practices. The changes in the statements show changes in their perceptions of pedagogic roles as the AC stage of ELT expects, so the participants start new inferences of action (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2000) in order to enhance their practices. These changes in the teachers’ approaches in outdoor activities were that “teachers move from being dictators prescribing what will be learned, to the role of facilitators, shaping and guiding the learning of children who are themselves active protagonists in the learning process” (Loreman, 2009, p.68). The next stage of my research process is observation, which shows the relationship between the participating teachers’ perceptions and practice of pedagogic roles. In terms of observation cycles, there are some remarkable points, illustrating the implementation of teachers’ perspectives in practice, and the changes (if there are any) throughout the process.

### **7.3.2. Observations**

In relation to interviews, pedagogic roles (and the nature of interactions associated with the different pedagogic roles) was the one of main points considered during the observation period, as I wanted to delve into the connection between teachers' perspectives and practice. Therefore, it was observed that the participating English teachers had no observable intention to enhance their practice, and they kept the same way of planning and facilitating activities from the beginning with small changes. This means that they had similar one-to-one or small group activities unless they had an adult-led, whole class activity. Nevertheless, there are several momentous incidences in the second observation notes. While the participating English teachers mostly held on to the same facets as the first observations, it was observed that the engagement of children with teachers and activities were much better compared to the first observation cycle when the teacher informed the children in advance, or took part in activities with children. For instance, when the participating English teachers left children free to choose and play with assigned outdoor activities/materials as having role of facilitator, children could lose their attention easily, and directly pass on to another activity, and it continued as such during the whole period of outdoor activities. However, when the teachers explained the activities,

materials and aims before going out, and asked about which activity they planned to do or taking part in activities, the children easily got engaged with activities, and the time for rambling in order to choose activity decreased. This is correlated with the explanation about teacher and the impact of changing pedagogic roles for children by Dowdell, Gray and Malone (2011, p.32) that there is benefit in “the teachers who helped the children make sense of their interactions within the environment.”

The displayed activity in Photo 7.4 is about Phonics, and the aim was to find pictures and categorise them regarding the first sounds. It was not interesting enough at the beginning



Photo 7.4: English School-2

for children to do it themselves. When the teacher joined them as participated in activities, and merged it with a physical and enjoyable activity, children started enjoying that. Indeed, this activity was not a

quality example of outdoor activities due to being an extension of (or the same as) indoor activities. Outdoors needs to provide different structure and discourse (Waite & Pratt, 2011) to meet the particular aims (developmental, health) (Waters & Maynard, 2010) and learning potential (Bilton, 2010) of outdoor activities. Nevertheless, it is important to reflect on the role of the teacher. As long as the teacher participated and interacted with

them for this activity, other children got excited and joined in this activity, so the aim of the activity was achieved easily as a result of the teacher's participation and interaction with children rather than by their only observing them.

In conjunction with this example, "such spaces may stimulate children to initiate interaction with their teachers about aspects they find interesting, exciting and about which they may have questions" (Waters & Maynard, 2010, p.481). For this to occur, teachers needed to be part of the activities instead of keeping distance from children to evaluate them. This recent example can be criticized in terms of materials to stimulate independent interest and motivation, but the point that is illustrated is the effectiveness of teacher's participation in activities. In a similar way to this, Siraj-Blatchford (2009) advocates 'sustained shared thinking' in that it enhances the pedagogical outcomes through teacher and children interactions. This means that teachers' involvement in activities promotes the expected outcomes since it supports natural interactions with children. However, this activity (Photo 7.4) is open to discussion because there is no point in it to be chosen for an outdoor activity as it can serve the same function inside as well. In this example, while underlining the importance of planned pedagogic role arrangements and expected interaction between teacher and children, the main role of the outdoors should be kept in mind because, as Figure 7.1 illustrates, interaction between children and environment is required as well. This example hinders this valuable aspect. In this way, the teacher aimed to achieve the following outcomes of the European Commission on Education and Active Citizenship that the role of teachers is to support, guide, mentor, and facilitate the activities to achieve learning for children so that children can take part

in their learning journey actively (European Commission, 1998). This statement asserts how the role of teacher should be in order to ensure enriched opportunities for children.

It was also observed that when teachers participated in activities with children rather than only asking questions and observing them, the interaction among children as well as between teacher and children becomes richer in terms of being supportive. “[C]hildren need sometimes to have practical conversations such as asking for help either because they are hurt or upset or because they cannot resolve a problem on their own” (Bilton, 2012, p.415). This is more important than having activities based on questions and answers only and this also provides children with easy role changing with adults. The reason for this is that if teachers observe, ask questions and take notes, children realize that they are assessed, so their positions becomes more formal in order to exhibit what they are doing. This approach of the participating English teachers is far removed from the ‘comfortableness’ that the participating Turkish teachers aimed for in outdoor activities. This process definitely is a way to identify children’s learning as stated by teachers in the second interviews.

In other respects, the question and answer type of relationship between teacher and children only helped teachers to identify the current state of understanding and it failed to enhance children’s experiences, and role changing for children and teacher. Pedagogic roles and interaction in the English context only partly changed over the research process because the idea stimulating input from the participating Turkish teachers was limited due to their mostly adult directed activities with structured questions and answers. The Turkish participants offered limited examples in terms of reflecting different practice examples for the English participants. In the English examples, the role of the adult in such activities is

to regulate the area and materials according to children's needs, which are determined via observations and questions during one-to-one and small group activities. Children only have the role to participate in the activities and follow them as expected. However, one of the participating English teachers, Emma, started using traditional games in their playground (see Photo 7.5 below). Although I did not observe this activity in person, Emma shared some pictures and explained in the Facebook group that she conducted adult-led traditional activities in order to provide wider opportunities for children.

Photo 7.5 shows the school playground, which they would not normally use for outdoor



**Photo 7.5: English School-2**

activities. After they had interaction with the participating Turkish teachers, Emma posted this photo on Facebook showing that they conducted

outdoor activities in this area for that day in the light of examples from Turkey. Another participating English teacher, Sam, further explained to me during an informal conversation that she was doing some adult-led activities and she tried to do traditional activities more after seeing the examples from Turkey. In this way, these participating

English teachers addressed Dewey's expectations from teachers in terms of promoting traditional activities for children (Saito, 2006).

Despite the limited examples, there were some practical changes in their implementation of outdoor activities, so this can be related to ELT learning cycle because "learning ... combines experiences, perception, cognition, and behaviour" (Kolb, 1984, p.21). This means that there is not only one variable to affect the conditions as learning can emerge as a result of the process. Hence, the experience of teachers, perceptions, understanding and actions relate to my data. Therefore, I aimed to determine these aspects at the beginning of the process, and to enhance them within the research process considering Professional Learning.

The participating Turkish teachers had observable changes in pedagogic roles in outdoor activities compared to the first observation cycle because they changed their activities and interaction with children from adult-led structured activities to less structured activities. This shows that the participating Turkish teachers moved into the Active Experimentation stage of ELT because "people with an active experimentation orientation enjoy and are good at getting things accomplished" (Kolb & Kolb, 2009, p.52). In connection with this theory, this critical process of research led to a variation in the Turkish context. Thus, the participating Turkish teachers changed their outdoor activities within this period. All participating teachers in Turkey except one considerably changed their implementation to encourage children to have active engagement and roles. One teacher kept her initial approach most of the time but she still provided enhanced opportunities for children by listening to children more and by organizing activities according to their interests. Nevertheless, the most notable aspect of the second observation cycle was the interaction



of children with nature, in addition to enhancing the variety of pedagogic roles. Overall, there was improvement in the practice of outdoor activities. For instance, one of the participating Turkish teachers, Derya, started adopting a facilitator role, providing a few different activities for children to let them have the right to choose. She was there to participate in activities, helped them when they needed, and she was participating in activities to be able to communicate independently with them.

Photo 7.6 shows that a few children made up their own pond, and played there without interference from the teacher. The teacher was occupied with another activity with other children. Occasionally (if these children asked), she went by and helped them solve problems or she joined in the activity and talked to them about what they were doing, and so on. In this way, the teacher had a mentor role in activities after initially facilitating activities, and children had a chance to have free interaction with peers and nature, and they could express themselves as freely as they needed. “Children initiate physical activity (e.g., imaginative play, scientific exploration) and they also initiate interactional activity (with each other and with adults)” (Waters & Maynard, 2010, p.474). It was evident that the teacher was there to help them instead of controlling them and only asking questions because interaction is not simply an interchanging knowledge between people, it is participation (in the Deweyian approach) (Biesta, 2006). This may be participation either in activities or with materials and the environment. This photo is a good example of children’s interaction, independence and engagement with nature as well as having an active role in activities despite the limitations of space. This aligns with Piaget’s approach

to play in that children need to actively and independently interact with their environment (Fenwick, 2001). As can be seen from this photo, there is interaction among children



**Photo 7.6: Turkish School-2**

alongside children and between children and nature. Children themselves made a hole in the ground to build a pond, which confirms that often limitation of potential in the space is due to teachers' approaches and restrictions on children. This illustrates that when children have a chance to change the outdoor environment, this adds a richer experience for them in terms of creative, meaningful, social and independent activities

as seen in Photo 7.6; as well as providing activities with regard to the constructivist approach, which constituted the aim of preschool education programme in Turkey (Ural & Ramazan, 2007). Therefore, such changes in the activities of Turkish teachers are valuable for enhancing interaction and addressing the expectations of the programme. It was claimed (in the first part of the research) that some barriers such as space and safety were restraining factors for them, so they mostly conducted adult-led activities. However, throughout the process, although the environment and materials were the same, they considerably changed their role positions in the activities from director to mentor and

facilitator. The participating Turkish teachers started organising a few different activities, and providing opportunities to choose, allowing the children to do the activities they wanted. The pedagogic roles of teachers changed from leading activities to facilitating activities, and children had the role of controlling their own learning processes rather than following the adult instructions.

This change in the practice of Turkish teachers occurred over the research process because the participating Turkish teachers were in charge, and they realised the importance of letting the children be more independent in order to engage with nature and others (the importance of freedom is mentioned in the previous section). Another point from this photo is the lack of materials for outdoor activities in Turkey. Yet, this was not an obstacle for children to have successful activities as Bilton (2012, p.418) states “the lack of toys



**Photo 7.7: Turkish School-3**

which can create disputes does enable children and adults to have deep, prolonged and meaningful conversations.” In this context, the lack of materials or area seems not a valid excuse for poor interaction in

outdoor activities, which can be achieved via facilitator role of teachers in different circumstances. Regarding this, Derya started changing her activities to doing more

unstructured activities, so the children had an active role in activities, and the role of teacher changed from director to facilitator in activities. Photo 7.7 were shared by Derya with an explanation of the activities. According to her Facebook posts, Derya organized different activities at the same time for children with substantial materials. One of the activities was about setting up an open zoo, which can be seen from Photo 7.7. For this activity, children had a chance to bring out some materials like dinosaurs, lions and horses from indoors, and they also used stones and plants from their environments. Because the role of teacher changed from organizing structured activities to unstructured activities, the interactive aspects between children and environment, and peers were enhanced in the examples.

It can be seen that these activities arose as a reflection of the interaction with English teachers in the Facebook group. In brief, both teachers and children had active roles in outdoor activities in the second part of the research. This means that the pedagogic roles were enriched over the research process because it widened the teachers' perceptions of their roles (Davies, 1997). During the research process (on the Facebook group), there were a few examples of sharing with others about forms of different pedagogic roles in outdoor activities in order to provide professional learning for participants. However, while the participating teachers shared their practices on the Facebook group, they started critiquing their own practice, so this might lead them to make changes in their activities, as ELT indicates learning is a constant process (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

As a result, in the second observation cycle, while the participating English teachers continued their usual activities with small changes, the participating Turkish teachers made greater progress in favour of provision of better conditions for children. The reason

for this change can be explained in that conversations with others are not all about information transfer (Biesta, 2010), so there is no guarantee that all participating teachers gain new knowledge from others. This means that the participation in the research process may not have influenced all at the same level as it is highly likely there will be different interpretations of the examples. These different cases indicate that the main factor is related to cultural aspects. While teachers from both countries were taking part in the same process, one group enhanced their activities, and one stayed largely the same when compared to the beginning stage. This is because the English teachers remained conducting using the same methods during their activities in the second stage while the Turkish teachers started adopting different approaches adapted from the participating English teachers. The approaches to similar situations may arise differently in divergent cultures and nations (Lynch, Moore & Minchington, 2012). The variation of the participating teachers between the two countries might arise from the influence of the varied regulatory role of the EYFS and the programme on teachers.

#### **7.4. Chapter Conclusion**

In general, as with freedom, the theme of ‘pedagogic roles’ emerged from the first part of my research. Then, I focused on it in the second interview and observation cycles to explore pedagogic roles in outdoor activities in depth, considering adult interaction in these activities. At the beginning of the research, the participating English teachers did not lead activities outdoors but they started applying these activities in the second part in addition to their previous provisions. However, while the participating Turkish teachers were doing only adult-led activities, they started setting up more than one activity, and giving importance to children’s choice. The changes in the roles influenced the type of

interactions, which are children-children, teacher-children (Humberstone & Stan, 2011) and children and environment. As far as implementation is concerned, the participating English teachers applied their thinking in small group activities with questions and answers to identify children's learning. However, the Turkish participants practiced completely different activities, which were more about adult-directed communications, questions and answers because the participating Turkish teachers conducted mostly adult-led activities.

The participating teachers from both countries expressed some improvement in their practice during the research process in terms of the 'pedagogic roles' theme. They also stated different aspects of pedagogic roles in outdoor activities in the second interviews compared to the first. Alexander (2001, p.521) states that "a properly conceived comparative pedagogy can both enhance our understanding of the interplay of education and culture and help us to improve the quality of educational provision." Accordingly, the sharing and interacting with others via Facebook group posts aimed to achieve these benefits in connection with professional learning. "The quality of meaning thus introduced is extended and transferred, actually and potentially, from sounds, gestures, and marks" (Dewey, 1929, p.174) to (in this research context) other participants via the Facebook group. However, fewer exchanges were made about various pedagogic roles in Turkey on the Facebook group. It was observed that while the participating English teachers kept their outdoor activities much as the same throughout the process, the participating Turkish teachers made observable changes in their practice. A notable reason for these differences might be the role of policy/programme in these countries as mentioned earlier. While the EYFS (DfE, 2012) has a regulative role on participating English teachers, the Preschool Education Programme (Ministry of National Education, 2013b) leaves decision making

to teachers. This difference provides participants with opportunities to make changes. As a result, there was no big reflection on the English participants' pedagogic roles and activities in terms of ELT learning cycle to illustrate a development, but the participating Turkish teachers externalized this process and their development with regard to the new Professional Learning Model.



## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

### **8.1. Chapter Introduction**

The previous chapters outline the background literature as the basis for this research, research methods, findings and discussions over the research process. Since the beginning of the planning phase of this research, a considerable amount of data has been collected, analysed and discussed in view of my methodological approach and earlier literature review. As illustrated in the previous chapters, three main themes emerged: barriers, freedom, and pedagogic roles in outdoor activities. In addition to these themes, professional learning in early years was described in relation to the impact of the Facebook intervention. The initial and final situations of outdoor activities in these countries were compared over the period of this research in terms of the key themes.

In the light of my findings and the discussion, it is important to summarise this cross-cultural research in order to indicate the cross-cultural understanding and practices of outdoor activities between England and Turkey. This chapter revisits the main research aims of the thesis, summarizes, and assesses the main aspects of the ethnographic research and explains possible limitations, and future implications of the results for further research, policymaking and practice. In this context, the next section indicates the implications of the research on the specifically focused aspects; this is followed by discussion of some of the possible limitations to the research, suggestions for the future, the impact of the research, its contribution to knowledge and finally a reflection on my learning journey.



## **8.2. The Findings of the Research**

As a result of a successful process of data collection, analysis and discussion, one contribution of the research is to highlight the impact of the research process. In this case, the primary purpose of this research was to identify general insights into the overall conditions of outdoor activities in these two countries in order to determine the teachers' perceptions towards, and practice of, outdoor activities in early years. It then aimed to identify some changes in their perceptions and practice as a result of online interaction with others.

The main research question was: what perceptions of outdoor play are held by early childhood teachers in Turkey and England? To identify this, I conducted interviews and observations in eight different settings (four from each country) as the first part of the research. The literature exhibits the differences of these countries in the sense of historical development of countries, the cultural perspectives of childhood and play, policy and programme development process, and outdoor activities. I aimed to identify the cultural differences in the first part via ethnographic research. In this first part, three main themes: barriers, freedom—and pedagogic roles were identified as important aspects in the provision of outdoor activities in terms of the meaning the participants attributed to them. In addition, I identified a 'professional learning in early years' theme.

The barriers apply to all themes as it is a restrictive factor in relation to teachers' approaches to activities. In relation to the section of the literature chapter which outlined the drawbacks of using outdoor activities, only two of the mentioned drawbacks: space (Garrick, 2009) and safety (Dillon, 2010) were identified by the participating teachers in terms of barriers in implementing activities. These barriers occur across the two other

themes in restricting teachers' outdoor activities. The participating English teachers mostly pointed out the limitation of space for their activities, and safety concerns around activities while the participating Turkish teachers highlighted that they had no designated outdoor area, so risky situations in any outdoor activities are highly likely to arise. Although such facts could have led children to ensure risk-taking opportunities, the participating teachers emphasised these aspects as barriers for their outdoor activities. The Literature also discusses this issue that the risky situation can enhance children's risk management and perception of safety (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012) so as to become accomplished individuals (Waite, Huggins & Wickett, 2014), but the research did not encounter any examples of teachers taking advantage of risk in this way.

The sub-research questions of this study need to be highlighted as well. On the whole, they were about how teachers enact these perceptions into practice. The perception of these themes and the practices of teachers are closely related to each other. In this case, freedom in outdoor activities stands for the life experience of children in their learning process (Boisvert, 1995). While defining outdoor activities, the participating teachers associated freedom with outdoor activities, but there were some variations by virtue of cultural differences. While the participating English teachers stated freedom of some outdoor materials and similar goals with the classroom, the participating Turkish teachers noted independence, wider opportunities and less governance on children.

In the enactment part of teachers' perceptions, the conditions are varied in these countries. It was observed that while the participating English teachers practiced regular outdoor activities with some extent of freedom for children, the Turkish participants were mostly disorganised for outdoor activities in that they were irregular and relatively unplanned.

The participating Turkish teachers provided free play to run around and explore the environment as a space with no or very few previously supplied materials for independent outdoor activities, and their outdoor activities were mostly traditional and structured games. In these activities, the participating teachers were in charge and had control over every step of activities. This approach by teachers restricted the freedom in activities for children (Dewey, 1963). In light of this, the circumstances in Turkey were insufficient for Turkish teachers to provide wider opportunities for freedom in outdoor activities as successfully as the participating English teachers could. The possible reasons for such differences in their enactment and statements were as discussed; the approaches of participating teachers are shaped by some aspects considered later in this section.

The last theme, stemming from the first part of this research is ‘pedagogic roles’, which comprises the change of approaches of teachers as adult-led or child-led activities. Adult-led activities regulate every single step of the activities expecting some standard responses from children while child-led activities are those children take an active part in regulating environment and activities as teachers are there to support them (Bilton, 2010). In alignment with the literature, the participating teachers from both countries stated the variable roles in outdoor activities, which are; facilitation, observation, leading, organization of small group activities and avoidance of the domination of adults (Waller, 2007). As the participants stated in their first interviews, the participating English teachers conceived the pedagogic roles in the character of focused group, one-to-one, child-led and adult-led whereas the participating Turkish teachers explained their roles as adult-led and child-led in their activities. Regarding this, the nature of interaction is also emphasised under this theme because of having a close relationship between pedagogic

roles and interaction in activities. However, in the enactment of these understandings into practice, teachers had slightly different approaches in these countries due to cultural differences (Tobin, Hsueh & Karasawa, 2009). While the participating English teachers conducted activities in the ways they mentioned in the interviews, the participating Turkish teachers were doing mostly adult-directed activities in contrast with their statements on applying both adult-led and child-led activities. The practices of the participating Turkish teachers were different to what they claimed in first interviews, and they were conducting mostly traditional games, so the activities were adult-led, contrary to the literature asserting that teacher needed to be brave to provide wider opportunities (Nicol, 2010).

These findings indicate the initial conditions of these countries. The second stage of my research study, was based on peer interaction between English and Turkish teachers through a secret Facebook group and the changes that occurred as a result. This has led to my final research question: How does sharing ideas between Turkey and England influence the understanding and practice of outdoor activities? To that end, I tried to identify the changes in the understanding of and practices in outdoor activities in comparison to the first part of the research. The research revealed that the approaches of teachers to the themes mentioned above were found to have changed in some ways and this expanded another theme; Professional Learning.

In terms of the first theme, freedom, the understanding of the participating English teachers for freedom in outdoor activities was aligned to their initial responses, but they became more critical about their practice. All of the participating teachers acknowledged the importance of freedom for children, and they remarked on their physical boundaries.

In this case, they highlighted that the practice of activities within their safe environment is actually their barriers to provision of greater freedom for children as these safety concerns emerge as limiting features for the experience of children (Wyver *et al.*, 2010). Correspondingly, the statements of participating Turkish teachers expressed some deficiencies in their initial practice and how they have changed their activities. The change in teachers' attitudes to freedom in outdoor activities was more evident in the second observations.

In the second observations to address the implementation of their statements, the participating English teachers provided a wider range of materials to provide enhanced freedom for children with regard to the requirements of EYFS and safety concerns (DfE, 2012). As long as these requirements afford limitations to children's freedom in activities, these have also an impact on teachers' freedom because they are unable to consider activities freely without the boundary of considering the restrictions of policies. On the other hand, the participating Turkish teachers achieved their goals to some extent to enrich the outdoor activities in order to provide extensive freedom for children. They started providing a few different activities concurrently rather than teacher directed traditional activities so that children would have a chance to choose and enjoy activities as they wished. Furthermore, the participating Turkish teachers allowed children to decide and guide the activities as long as some rules are followed because the mentioned space and safety issues remained as before. Thus, for the development of approaches to freedom in these countries, the policies and culture worked as a brake (Tobin, Hsueh & Karasawa, 2009) against change in the case of England.

In the second stage, the English participants indicated the pedagogic roles as both child-led and adult-led activities in terms of facilitating activities and learning (Dowdell, Gray & Malone, 2011) and assessment (Waite, Huggins & Wickett, 2014), so these are identified as the requirements of the process of teaching (Biesta, 2004). However, the participating Turkish teachers started using both adult-led and child-led activities although their environmental and cultural conditions were the same as they were at the beginning, so the approaches of teachers started changing from authority to contributor during activities (Loreman, 2009).

In the second enactment of their approaches for the pedagogic roles, the practices of both countries participating teachers changed through the process. The participating English teachers mostly conducted activities as they were doing at the outset of the study, but in some examples, they started using their opportunities differently, and they started applying some traditional games after seeing the examples from the Turkish context, where their roles evolved from facilitator to director to lead activities. In Turkey, the participants started introducing child-led activities. They started organising a few different activities at the same time for outdoor activities as the participating English teachers did, and let children choose and control the process. The teachers were there to help them, and they were taking part in activities. Even if they were unable to find a chance to set up a few different games, and were doing whole class activities, teachers started letting children decide on the activities and lead the activities as they wished. These approaches by teachers from both countries are parallel to the expectations from teachers in the EPPE project as teachers are expected both to teach children and to generate independent decision making process for them (Sylva *et al.*, 2003).

In brief, this research exhibits the perceptions of outdoor play in the case of England and Turkey considering the participants. Barriers, freedom, and pedagogic roles are the main themes around outdoor activities for the participating teachers as well as professional learning in early years. Although these aspects are already expressed as important points in outdoor activities, this research fills a gap in terms of exploration of cross-cultural similarities and differences, subject to representativeness of the participants. The same claim for an original contribution is valid for the practical aspects for participating teachers because this research also focused on teachers' practice of outdoor activities as well as influential factors. These factors and themes are included in the literature individually, but this research has also delineated the relationships between themes and barriers in outdoor activities while providing a cross-cultural comparison. The final and most remarkable contribution of this research is to confirm the positive impact of cross-cultural research and the impact of a multimedia sharing platform for teachers in order to raise awareness of teachers' activities from different viewpoints and cultural contexts. It has demonstrated that using multimedia in the cross-cultural interaction of teachers may also promote interior dialogue which leads them to enhance their perspectives on activities and to overcome barriers. In the light of this similar interventions, sharing ideas between different countries through Facebook, can be used to encourage enhancement of the current situations as in-service development opportunities for teachers in different countries. The research also generated an innovative modified model of experiential learning. The new model combined traditional ELT and online interaction, using social media. Through this means PL opportunities for teachers are enhanced with some advantages of the model, such as being delivered low cost and having cross-cultural

context. Although there are these notable outcomes of this research, there were also some constraints in this research to attain better outcomes.

### **8.3. Limitations**

As it can be expected, every research has its limitations with regard to the methodology, data collection tools, timing and participants. The list below shows a number of aspects that imposed limitations for this research, through which I can be critically aware at first hand.

- The first limitation of this research was the necessity to focus on a small number of schools due to adopting an ethnographic approach. However, it was a requirement to collect reasonable data to interpret each teacher's understanding and practice of outdoor activities. Another reason for this is that if the number of participants was high, the length of process would exceed one academic year, so there would be inconsistency in the dataset as a result of different children and possibly different teachers in the classroom the next year.
- The sampling methods used might be another limitation. Voluntary based convenience sampling was utilised in this study. The sample group chosen by these methods are therefore unlikely to represent generalizable findings, although the participants were particularly chosen to approximate the general picture regarding practice in each country. However, future research might focus on a wider sample including a range of contexts from both countries to identify to what extent this research approach can be used across larger groups and in other cases.
- The next limitation can be identified as the language barrier for participants on the Facebook group because when the participants shared something, I was



required to translate them in the second language, so this might have restricted their interaction between each other. Sharing, being translated, getting responses from others and second translations are a long process compared to instant communication. Therefore, this might have influenced the participants' active roles on the Facebook group. Possibly automatic instant translation would speed the exchange of ideas. Use of multimedia platforms within a single country would also obviate the need for translation but the cross-cultural exchange aspect would be lost.

- Having a set timetable for observations might lead teachers to revise their activities in order to illustrate how effective the outdoor activities they chose were. This is likely to cause generate an element of inaccuracy in the data. However, it is difficult to ensure this aspect in ethical qualitative research because I, as a researcher, had to inform participants when I would visit them.
- The ethical approaches of participants limited the process of research in terms of shared materials on the Facebook group. Although consents were collected from parents, the participating English teachers avoided sharing any photo with children in it; they only shared activities without children in the photo. However, the participating Turkish teachers shared photos with children. This difference might lead to conflict on their thinking about how to interpret and comprehend the activities.
- As a result of the focus of this research, the core aspect was teachers, and this led to ignoring children's voice in most points. If children's voices were also heard and spoken for in data via collecting data from them as well, these themes could be critiqued in further depth. For example, children's opinions are likely to be

different from our interpretations. They might enjoy the adult-led activities as they would have regular interaction with teachers; although this approach has been criticised in this research in the light of the academic literature.

#### **8.4. Suggestions for Further Research**

In view of the results of the research, further research on outdoor activities in early childhood education is needed in order to determine these outcomes:

- My research has focused on the teachers understanding and practice of outdoor activities in early years/kindergarten so that these mentioned themes have emerged from the perspective of teachers. In terms of children's interaction, Bilton (2012), argues that children should be involved in future research in order to comprehend their viewpoints. The reason is that the education includes both teachers and children learning at the same time, so both children and teachers' opinion and attitudes have influence on the course of events.
- As there are cultural impacts on activities and teachers' approach, some wider studies should be done in each country (or in other countries too) to identify the overall perceptions of outdoor activities and practice so that a wider range of approaches and practices in outdoor activities can be identified. This type of research might raise other attitudes towards outdoor activities and policies.
- In order to have wider insight into the current situations, different tools might be used in addition to ethnographic methods because a wider range of data collection tools could provide additional information about the conditions relating to the topic. Interviews and observations can be manipulated by participants, so document reviewing (daily/weekly programmes of teachers) may provide another

source of findings on current conditions along with their being invaluable asset for triangulation.

- For the further development of teachers' understanding and practice of outdoor activities, different methods such as visiting another country can be used for participants to explore the other culture and practice for outdoor activities. Experiencing the different methods first hand may support participants' learning experience and may help them to overcome barriers more smoothly and effectively.
- It may be useful to use the technique of video recording for the other participants in further research in first place so that the participating teachers may be well prepared for what kind of examples they can see over the process, and they can analyse the examples carefully so as to make changes in their practice.
- The sample group could include teachers working with a wider age group rather than only reception class/kindergarten age. My research focused on teachers of only this particular age group, but the conditions of teachers working with different age groups could be varied, so teachers working with different age groups might be included in further research to determine how these conditions impact changes in their understanding and practice of outdoor activities.

## **8.5. Contribution to Knowledge**

My research extends cross-cultural knowledge about education in England and Turkey. It furthers the development of international understanding of outdoor education. Some of the most interesting implications relate to the freedom and autonomy of both children and teachers. In terms of learning about outdoor play and learning, the study illustrates that

much literature assumes Western norms. Some Turkish teachers' responses showed creativity in managing challenges and limited resources by opening opportunities for children to come up with solutions. This could contribute to contemporary perceptions of freedom and autonomy in early childhood as well as barriers and the pedagogical roles in outdoor activities. In the case of the mentioned three main themes, there was great willingness to reflect and change in the practices for especially the participating Turkish teachers' with regard to the theme 'professional learning in early years'. This is because all schools across England have similar practices, which create too much cultural density as practice and learning environments become more homogenous with a risk that this may also limit the role of the individual professional in shaping practice. Therefore, the participating English teachers made only relatively small changes in their practice after being exposed to what the Turkish participants implemented.

My research also contributes to theory by successfully developing the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) with online interactive tools so that the participants acquired opportunities in the experiential learning process through the enhanced online tools. This combination adds a cross-cultural contribution to international understanding of teachers' understanding of, and practice in, outdoor activities. As a result of this research, cross-cultural online research has been identified as a useful tool for teacher development. The interactive research process indicates the influence of other colleagues on a teachers' personal development. Therefore, it is important to benefit from such interactive tools for teacher training or in-session support for early childhood teachers.

This research furthermore provides wider perspectives for researchers to critically compare the cross-cultural context via the utilisation of multimedia tools. With the new

model (The Online Interactive Professional Learning Theory Model), in- and pre-service teachers' perspectives on either outdoor activities or other educational activities can be enhanced. While Tobin, Hsueh and Karasawa (2009) provided a longitudinal cross-cultural perspective in three cultures, my research points out the importance of online interaction within two cultures. Both research projects highlight the role of cross-cultural research in terms of enhancing practices. However, the new model enables teachers to be included actively in the learning process and thus would be very useful for future research. As it becomes easier for people to encounter different cultures (e.g. the internet or physical travel), the ELT and the new model could be more widely adopted, and the reflection can be potentially more collaborative. Therefore, this new model has a lot to offer at a time when professional learning is declining due to economic constraint, as there is a cheap opportunity to access a range of examples.

In conclusion, this research shows the need for cross-cultural research that is enriched with interactive tools as a part of the new model. The different approaches to outdoor activities of teachers enable others to utilise the differences of cultural contexts as well as bringing new international perspectives. Thus, the key point to be made is that to develop the current outdoor activities in schools the focus should be on teachers' learning process within a supportive environment, and to foster active participation of the teachers. In relation to this, the developed model based on this research design (The Online Interactive Professional Learning Model) is the most important contribution of this research in terms of ensuring further opportunities for professional learning to utilise the advantages of sharing practice.

## **8.6. Reflection on Learning Journey**

Over the research process, there was a development for me as a researcher in addition to my contribution to the field. From the beginning of the research, I gained many skills because conducting a longitudinal research brings lots of difficulties in terms of having good research design, timetabling, considering ethical aspects and so on. In addition to this, the most important outcome from the research journey for me is to be expecting unexpected outcomes. This means that I was expecting to have mostly one directional impact of research process (whereby Turkey would learn from England), but the data revealed that it was two directional, and all participating teachers have learnt from each other.

Therefore the research process provided me with development of skills as a researcher. In other respects, I considered various literature and opportunities, which can be either used in the research or considered as a professional learning. For example, the context and process of this research meant that cross-cultural research aspects were identified with regard to outdoor activities within the examples of England and Turkey. The participating teachers' perceptions and practices were sought at the beginning in order to reflect the cross-cultural aspects. Following that, with regard to the aim of the research to enhance practice, the participating teachers' professional learning was facilitated via online interaction. In this case, the research process was enhanced with multimedia sources like photos. However, the existing theories were inadequate to sufficiently address my research design intention. The requirement to construct a new model emerged and was developed, which model successfully addresses the professional learning process for the participating teachers in this research, as well as contributing to the field. This is

the most important outcome for my learning journey: contributing a unique model to the field.



## Appendices

### Appendix-1: List of Historical Events

Table 1: List of historical events in both countries

Year	England	Turkey
1850	First Nursery Opened	
1906	The National Society of Day Nurseries	
1918	The 1918 Education Act	
1940s	The Nursery Centres Scheme	
1945	Nursery Schools	
1950		First Nursery Opened
1953		The Educational Council
1962		The Educational Council
1967	The Plowden Report, the Seebohm Report, the Halsey Report	
1972	a White paper	
1974		The Educational Council
1977		The Department of Preschool Education
1981		The Educational Council
1988		The Educational Council
1989	The Children Act	The draft preschool education programme
1992		The General Directorate of Preschool Education
1993		The Educational Council
1996		The Educational Council



1998	The Department of Education	
1998	The National Childcare Strategy, the Sure Start Initiative	
1999	The Education: Nursery Education and Early Years Development Regulations	The Educational Council
2002	The Lisbon Treaty (both influenced)	
2002	A review report, The Educational Act	Revised Preschool Education Programmes
2004	The Choice for Parents, The Best Start For Children: A Ten Year Strategy for Childcare	
2004	Children Act	
2005	Childcare Bill	
2006	Childcare Act, Choice for parents, the best start for children: making it happen: An action plan for the ten year strategy: Sure start Children's Centres, extended schools and childcare	The Preschool Education Programme
2007	EYPS, Every Parent Matters	
2008	Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)	
2009		Strategic Plan for 2010-2014
2013	EYITT, More Great Childcare, More Affordable Childcare	The Preschool Education Programme

## Appendix-2: The Number of Preschools in Turkey

**Table 2: The Number of Preschools, students and teachers in Turkey (Ministry of National Education, 2006  
cited in Çelik & Gündoğdu, 2007; Ministry of National Education, 2013a; Taner Derman & Başal, 2010)**

Year	Number of Preschools	Number of Students	Number of teachers	Year	Number of Preschools	Number of Students	Number of teachers
1923- 1924	80	5880	136	2000- 2001	9 249	258 706	16 563
1940- 1941	51	1690	60	2001- 2002	9 643	289 066	18 149
1943- 1944	49	1604	63	2002- 2003	11 314	320 038	18 921
1950- 1951	52	1760	71	2003- 2004	13 692	358 499	19 122
1963- 1964	146	4767	180	2004- 2005	16 016	434 771	22 030
1970- 1971	413	10 714	743	2005- 2006	18 539	550 146	20 910
1980- 1981	2007	43 545	2 875	2006- 2007	20 675	640 849	24 775
1990- 1991	3625	113 388	6 624	2007- 2008	22 506	701 762	25 901
1997- 1998	7532	181 450	10 186	2008- 2009	23 653	804 765	29 342
1998- 1999	7 976	207 319	11 825	2012- 2013	27 197	1 077 933	62 933

### Appendix-3: The Online Interactive Professional Learning Model

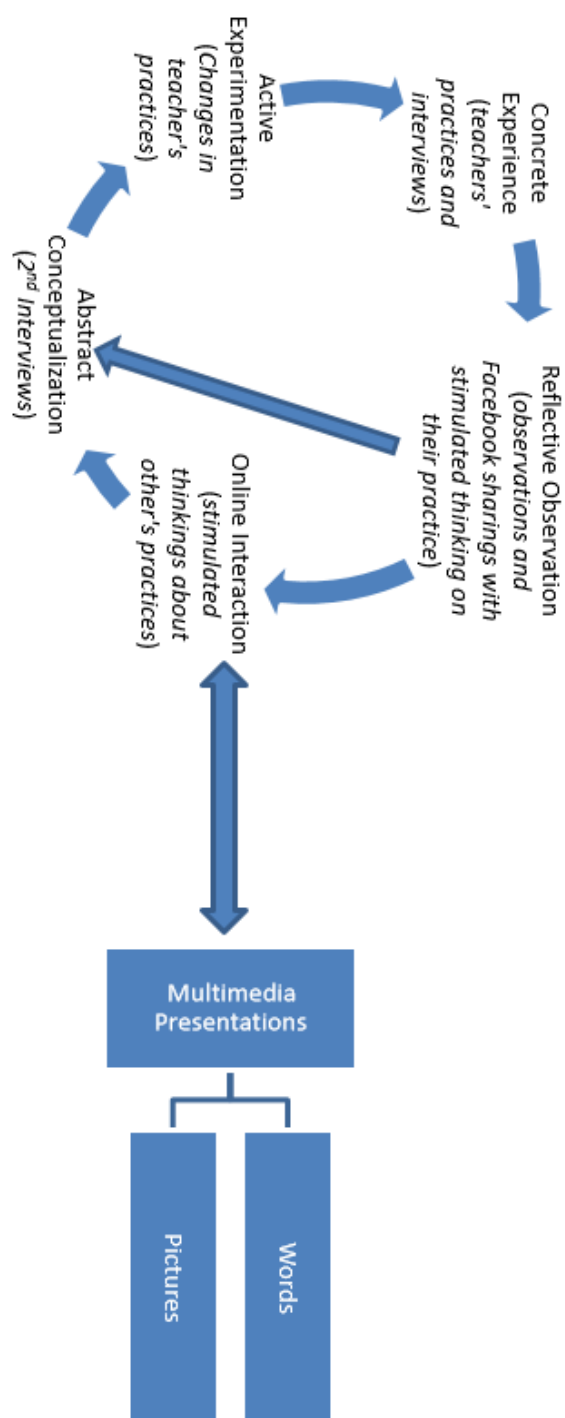


Figure 1: Applied Online Interactive Professional Learning Model

## Appendix-4: Interview Questions

1. What do you understand from outdoor activities?
  - a. What are the aims of going outside?
  - b. Why do you consider these (aims) important?
  - c. Are there any significant benefits of going outside?
    - i. What are the significant benefits of going outside?
    - ii. What are the drawbacks (disadvantages) of going outside?
    - iii. *What determines this disadvantages?/ How do you decide about whether or risky aspects?*
  - d. How might outdoor activities be improved?
2. Do you think that tools are important for outdoor activities?
  - a. Why do you think so? *(it is important or not or depends on activities)*
  - b. What kind of tools *(equipment)* do you use for outdoor activities?
  - c. Do you think these materials need to be improved?
  - d. How might these materials be improved?
3. What do you think about the interaction between teacher-student, student-student interactions during outdoor activities?
  - a. How is it important to engage with children one-to-one during activities?
  - b. To what extend do you think that child to adult ratio is important for this interactions?
  - c. *Do you do adult led or child led activities?*

4. What influences you to engage in outdoor activities? *(what kind of things; materials, curriculum, manager etc. influences you to engage in outdoor activities)*

a. Do you use any particular source/guide to inform your outdoor activities? *(Do you follow any electronic materials etc. in order to improve your activities)*

b. What do you think about the curriculum?

i. *Do you think that it has a sufficient emphasise in outdoor activities?*

c. Have you found anything particularly helpful to inform your outdoor activities?

5. What do you think about class control during outdoor activities?

6. *How many times do you go outside daily? What is your regular plan to do outdoor activities?*

#### **Second Interview Questions:**

1. What do you think about the effectiveness of seeing different implementations from other countries?

a. Is there any differences after this process on interacting with teachers from other country?

b. What kind of changes does it lead you to do?

c. To what extent have you changed the activities after seeing different implementations?

d. Were they useful for you to lead different perspectives?

e. Do you consider that there has been an improvement?

- f. What kind of changes can you identify?
2. In overall, to what extent is it useful to contact with other teachers via social media?
  3. How is this process useful for you to develop a new perspective to outdoor activities?
  4. *What do you think about the term 'freedom' in outdoor activities?*
  5. *What do you think about the roles of teacher and children during outdoor activities?*
  6. *To what extend is the outdoor part of classroom?*
  7. *What do you think about the interaction during outdoor activities?*
  8. *What do you think about the weather conditions during outdoor activities?*

## Appendix-5: Observation Notes Frame

Teacher Name: .....

Observation Number: .....

Date:...../...../20....

<b>Individual</b> (children's activities in terms of engagement of environment, opportunities etc. during outdoor activities)	<b>Physical</b> (covers existing materials and people at that moment)	<b>Context</b> (the regulations of social aspects in terms of children's behaviour, expectations etc.)

## Appendix-6: First Cycle of Observation Days

Country (Year)	Teacher name	1 <sup>st</sup> observation	2 <sup>nd</sup> observation	3 <sup>rd</sup> observation	4 <sup>th</sup> observation	5 <sup>th</sup> observation
ENGLAND (2015)	Teacher-1	5 October –Monday	9 October –Friday	15 October-Thursday	21 October-Wednesday	27 October-Tuesday
	Teacher-2	6 October –Tuesday	12 October-Monday	16 October-Friday	22 October-Thursday	28 October-Wednesday
	Teacher-3	7 October - Wednesday	13 October-Tuesday	19 October-Monday	23 October-Friday	29 October-Thursday
	Teacher-4	8 October -Thursday	14 October-Wednesday	20 October-Tuesday	26 October-Monday	30 October-Friday
TURKEY (2015)	Teacher-1	30 November - Monday	4 December-Friday	10 December-Thursday	16 December-Wednesday	22 December-Tuesday
	Teacher-2	1 December-Tuesday	7 December-Monday	11 December-Friday	17 December-Thursday	23 December-Wednesday
	Teacher-3	2 December-Wednesday	8 December-Tuesday	14 December-Monday	18 December-Friday	24 December-Thursday
	Teacher-4	3 December-Thursday	9 December-Wednesday	15 December-Tuesday	21 December-Monday	25 December-Friday



## Appendix-7: Second Cycle of Observation Days

TURKEY (2016)	Teacher-1	4 April-Monday	8 April-Friday	14 April-Thursday	20 April-Wednesday	26 April-Tuesday
	Teacher-2	5 April-Tuesday	11 April-Monday	15 April-Friday	21 April-Thursday	27 April-Wednesday
	Teacher-3	6 April-Wednesday	12 April-Tuesday	18 April-Monday	22 April-Friday	28 April-Thursday
	Teacher-4	7 April-Thursday	13 April-Wednesday	19 April-Tuesday	25 April-Monday	29 April-Friday
ENGLAND (2015)	Teacher-1	9 May-Monday	13 May-Friday	19 May-Thursday	25 May-Wednesday	31 May-Tuesday
	Teacher-2	10 May-Tuesday	16 May-Monday	20 May-Friday	26 May-Thursday	1 June-Wednesday
	Teacher-3	11 May-Wednesday	17 May-Tuesday	23 May-Monday	27 May-Friday	2 June-Thursday
	Teacher-4	12 may-Thursday	18 May-Wednesday	24 May-Tuesday	30 May-Monday	3 June-Friday

## Appendix-8: Data Collection Process with Updated Cycle from Creswell (2007)\*

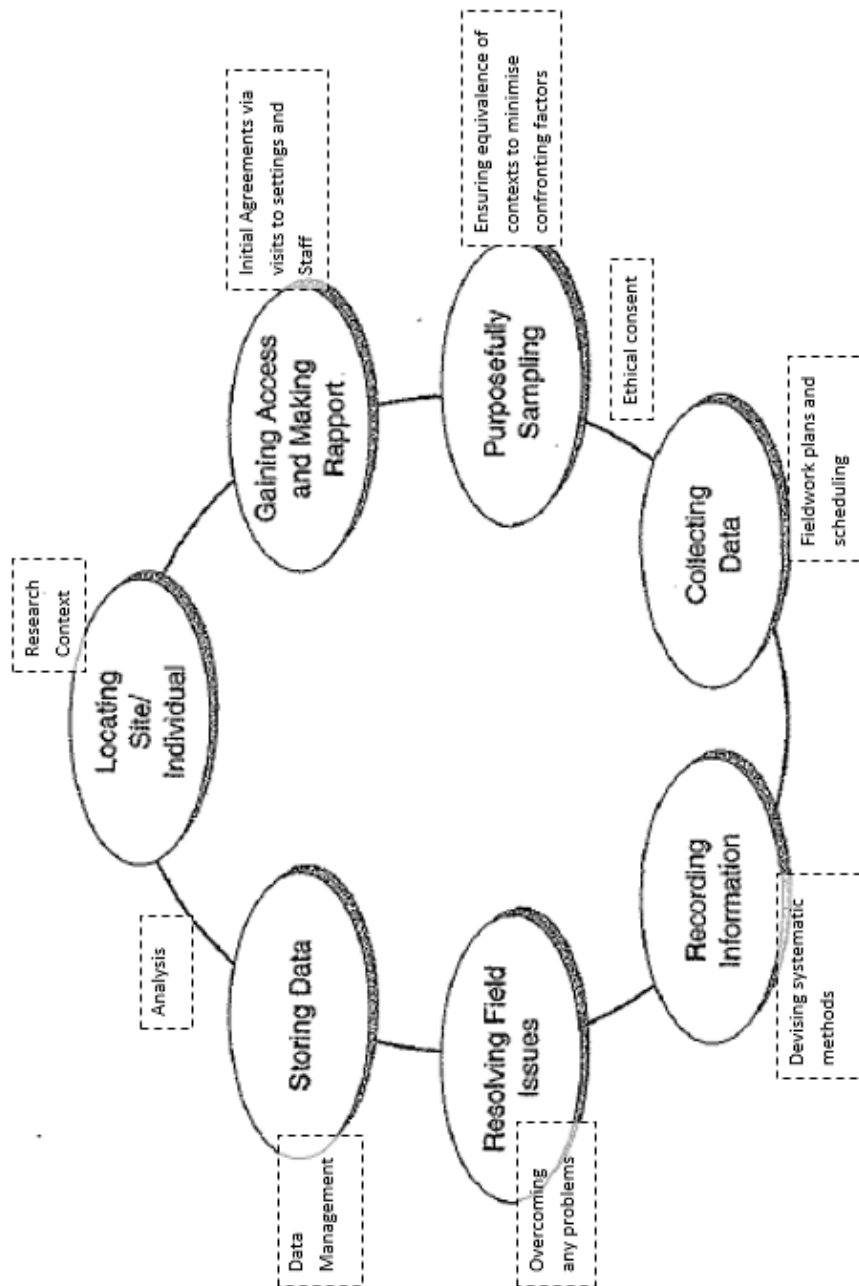






Figure 2: Applied Creswell's (2007) Data Collection Cycle

\* The main cycle was kept as original and the related steps of my research were represented in squares, where they overlap with the cycle.

## Appendix-9: Participating Teachers

Teacher	Rural / Urban	Number of TA	A Representative Photo of Outdoor Areas from Each School
Alex	Rural	1 (or 2, occasionally)	
Emma	Urban	1	

Sam	Urban	1	
Alison and Katie (working together)	Urban	1	



Deniz	Urban	N/A	
Derya	Urban	N/A	

Neva	Rural	N/A	
Umut	Urban	1 occasionally	

## Appendix-10: Timetable for Data Collection

Months	Action
September 2015	Observation (England) to engage with settings
28 September- 2 October 2015	Primary interview (England)
5 October-30 October 2015	Observation (England)
30 October-13 November 2015	Analyse
16 November-20 November 2015	Observation (Turkey) to engage with settings
23 November-27 November 2015	Primary Interview (Turkey)
30 November-25 December 2015	Observation (Turkey)
25 December-10 January 2016	Analyse
11 January-15 January 2016 (13 January)	Discussion Group (Turkey)
18 January-22 January 2016 (21 January)	Discussion Group (England)
22 January 2016	Webpage/facebook group starts
28 March-1 April 2016	Interview (Turkey)
4 April-29 April 2016	Observation (Turkey)
2 May-6 May 2016	Interview (England)
9 May-4 June 2016	Observation (England)

*\*This table is determined assuming 4 teachers from each country.*

## Appendix-11: Emergent Themes

1. Extension of classroom
2. Experience
  - a. Exploration
  - b. Developments/skill
    - i. Physical development
    - ii. Imagination
    - iii. Motor skills
  - c. Nature
  - d. Engagement
    - i. Socialization
3. Materials
  - a. Wider opportunity
  - b. Skill improvement
  - c. Imagination
4. Required materials
- 5. Freedom**
6. Health (fresh air)
- 7. Drawback**
  - a. Weather
  - b. Space
  - c. Safety
- 8. Interaction**
  - a. Facilitate
  - b. Understanding
9. Ratio
10. **Adult roles** (child led or adult led)
11. Factors
  - a. Curriculum
  - b. Resources



## **Appendix-12: Head Teacher Information Sheet and Consent Forms**

### **Head Teacher information sheet**

**Research Project:** A Comparison of English and Turkish Early years/Kindergarten Teachers' understandings of and practices in Outdoor Activities

**Research Team Member:** Mehmet MART

Dear Head Teacher

I am writing to invite your school to take part in a research project about seeking teachers' understanding and practice of outdoor activities. For this reason, I contacted you a few weeks ago about a study which we are conducting at Plymouth University as a PhD thesis and supervised by Professor Jocey Quinn, Plymouth Institute of Education. The study aims to investigate the differences between two countries' (England and Turkey) teachers in using outdoor activities in nurseries/kindergartens and whether they can have a fascinating insight into each other's outdoor activities. In this case, I intend to work with a teacher from your school, who has a minimum of 15 students. The project is expected to make some recommendations outlining how we might best help teachers to use outdoor activities more effectively. However, it is important to emphasise that information about individuals will not be shared with the school.

In the case of this research, I would like to spend time beforehand in the classroom to help the teachers during their activities and to engage with the children to decrease the possible nervousness etc. as I arrive to collect data.

#### **Why has this school been chosen to take part?**

I believe that involvement in the research would be of potential interest to your school because this research is a comparative study and it aims to facilitate the cultural exchange of ideas and implementation on outdoor activities. As a result of this study, it is highly likely that staff will gain different perspectives on outdoor activities.

#### **Does the school have to take part?**

It is entirely up to you whether you participate. You may also withdraw your consent at any time until the end of the data collection period if you wish not to participate in the project any longer. It is anticipated that data collection will end in June 2016. Following this time data will be anonymised and the analysis process started preventing withdrawal from the project. I will remind you of this date closer to the time.

#### **What will happen if the school takes part?**

With your agreement, participation would involve an interview with one of your staff who is responsible for early years/kindergarten age children. Practitioners will be asked

to take part in an interview and then observed by me once a week for 5 weeks. The interview questions are about recent outdoor activities and practitioners' opinions. An interview is expected not to last more than an hour. The interview would be recorded with an audio recorder at a convenient time and place. The observation will be carried out as a participant observation and it will be for an hour one day a week over a five week period. In this case, participant observation is to observe activities and to take notes about these activities while lending assistance for teachers to carry out their activities.

If you agree to the school's participation, I will seek further consent from the teachers.

### **What are the risks and benefits of taking part?**

The information given by participants in the study will remain confidential and will only be seen by the research team listed at the start of this letter. Neither the teacher nor the school will be identifiable in any published reports resulting from the study. Information about individuals will not be shared with the school.

Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. I anticipate that the findings of the study will be useful to schools in terms of their organisation of the outdoor learning environment.

### **What will happen to the data?**

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private and confidential. No identifiers linking you or the school to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a number and will be referred to by that number in all records. Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and only the research team will have access to the records. In line with Plymouth University research ethics policy, the research data will be kept securely for a period of ten years after completion of the research project. The results of the study will be presented in the PhD thesis, and in written reports, and hopefully in published articles. I can send you electronic copies of these publications if you wish.

**What if I have any questions or concerns?** You can contact my supervisor, Professor Jocey Quinn, Plymouth University; Tel: 0175 258 5454, email: [jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk)

### **Where can I get more information?**

At the end of study, the main findings will be provided for you as a report.

If you would like more information, please contact Professor Jocey Quinn;

Tel: 0175 258 5454, email: [jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk)

or, Mr Mehmet Mart;

Tel: 07424508434, email: [mehmet.mart@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:mehmet.mart@plymouth.ac.uk)

I do hope that you will agree to participate in the study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it sealed to us, in the pre-paid envelope provided.

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of Plymouth University Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for its conduct.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely



Mehmet MART

### **Head Teacher Consent Form**

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.

I understand what the purpose of the research is and what is required from me. All my questions have been answered.

Name of Head Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick as appropriate:

I give consent for my school to take part in the research as outlined in the Information Sheet ☐

I would like electronic copies of any articles arising to be sent to me ☐

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix-13: Teacher Information and Consent Forms**

### **Teacher information sheet**

**Research Project:** A Comparison of English and Turkish Early years/Kindergarten Teachers' understandings of and practices in Outdoor Activities

**Research Team Member:** Mehmet MART

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about teachers' understanding of and practices in outdoor activities in England and Turkey.

#### **What is the study?**

The study is being conducted by a PhD student of Plymouth University, supervised by Professor Jocey Quinn. It aims to investigate the differences between two countries' (England and Turkey) teachers in using outdoor activities in nurseries/kindergartens and whether they can gain a fascinating insight into each others' practice in relation to outdoor activities.

It hopes to make recommendations regarding how we can best help teachers to use the outdoors effectively, and to provide Turkish teachers with a European perspective for outdoor learning and vice versa.

The study will involve teachers who are currently teaching in early years classes/kindergartens in a semi-structured interview and observations. During the interview, if permission is given by the practitioners, the interview will be recorded with an audio recorder and later the recordings will be transcribed and anonymised before being analysed. In addition, I will visit the setting to observe practice first hand once a week for 5 weeks for about an hour each day. During the observations, I will observe and take notes of teachers' activities. I would like to spend some time in your class so that my presence can become familiar to the class. During my presence in class, I will have a role to assist teachers while carrying out activities nearly one week before the data collection process, so my presence can become familiar to teachers and children.

#### **Why have I been chosen to take part?**

I would like to collect data from practitioners who teach five year-old children in the south west of England and the south of Turkey. I approached a number of local schools that have outdoor provision and your head teacher kindly expressed an interest in being involved in our study and suggested your name.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

It is entirely up to you whether you participate. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time until the end of the data collection period. You will have a

chance to withdraw from the study up until June 2016. After this date, data will be anonymised for the purpose of analysis. You will be reminded of this date closer to the time.

### **What will happen if I take part?**

You will be asked interview questions about your recent outdoor activities and your opinions about outdoor play and learning. This will take approximately an hour, and if you give consent, this interview will be audio recorded. Besides this, I will come along to your classroom and observe your outdoor activities, taking notes to help me to remember. In this case, participant observation is to observe activities and to take notes about these activities while lending assistance for teachers to carry out their activities. As a result of participating in the research, it is hoped that both countries' teachers can improve their activities and develop new perspectives.

In this way, I can gather examples of practice from two different countries (England and Turkey) and assess these countries' similarities and differences in terms of outdoor activities. Then, there will be a discussion group in each country of those who participated in my research. In these discussion groups, the participants and I will talk about their activities, the other country's teachers' activities, what influences the way practice is enacted and how these insights might help us to improve outdoor practice. After the discussion groups, a secret Facebook group will be established for you to share your ideas, activities, pictures etc. with all participants. Teachers will be responsible for the materials that they share on the Facebook page and you should be aware that in sharing information it will be possible for the other participating teachers and the researcher to engage with the materials posted and that they may be used to inform the research. Photographs posted may be used in the research but if so all faces will be blurred.

A few months after our discussion group, I will visit you again and carry out a second interview and observations. According to the findings, if there are or are not changes in practice, the reasons for them will be presented.

As a result, the possible reports, publications etc. can be shared with your head teacher and you if it is requested.

### **What are the risks and benefits of taking part?**

The information you give will remain confidential and will only be seen by the researcher and supervisors. Neither you nor the school will be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Information about individuals will not be shared with the school.

Participants in similar studies have found it interesting and valuable for their professional development to take part. We anticipate that the findings of the study may be useful for schools in the organisation of their outdoor environments and pedagogy.

### **What will happen to the data?**

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private and confidential. No identifiers linking you or the school to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Participants will be assigned a number and will be referred to by that number in all records. Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and only the research team will have access to the records. In line with Plymouth University research ethics policy, the research data will be kept securely for a period of ten years after completion of the research project. The findings of the first interviews and observations, will be shared with participating teachers without using names or school names. The results of the study will be presented in the PhD thesis, and in written reports, and hopefully in written articles. I can send you electronic copies of these publications if you wish.

### **What happens if I change my mind?**

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. During the interview, you can stop answering questions at any time, and during the observation, you can say that you do not want to be a participant any more. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will discard your data. However, you would need to cancel by June 2016, because after this time the data analysis will have started.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of Plymouth University Research Ethics Committee and has been given ethical clearance.

**What if I have any questions or concerns?** You can contact my supervisor, Professor Jocey Quinn, Plymouth University; Tel: 0175 258 5454, email: [jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk)

### **Where can I get more information?**

At the end of study, the main findings will be provided for you as a report.

If you would like more information, please contact Professor Jocey Quinn;

Tel: 0175 258 5454, email: [jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk)

or, Mr Mehmet Mart;

Tel: 07424508434, email: [mehmet.mart@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:mehmet.mart@plymouth.ac.uk)

I do hope that you will agree to your participation in the study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it, sealed, in the pre-paid envelope provided, to us.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mehmet Mart', with a small mark above the end of the signature.

Mehmet Mart





**Research Project:** A Comparison of English and Turkish Early years/Kindergarten Teachers' understandings of and practices in Outdoor Activities

**Teacher Consent Form**

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.

I understand what the purpose of the research is and what is required of me. All my questions have been answered.

Name of teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of primary school: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick as appropriate:

I consent to being interviewed

☐

I give consent to audio recording of interviews

☐

I consent to being observed

☐

**I consent to using photos of children in the thesis with blurred face**

☐

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix-14: Parent Information and Consent Form**

### **Parent information sheet**

**Research Project:** A Comparison of English and Turkish Early years/Kindergarten Teachers' understandings of and practices in Outdoor Activities

**Research Team Member:** Mehmet MART

I would like to inform you about research that will be carried out in your child's school, and provide you with the opportunity to indicate if you would prefer for your child not to participate.

#### **What is the study?**

The study is being conducted by a PhD student from Plymouth University, supervised by Professor Jocey Quinn. It aims to investigate the differences between two countries' (England and Turkey) teachers in using outdoor activities in early years classes/kindergartens and whether they can gain fascinating insights into each other's practices in relation to outdoor activities.

It hopes to make recommendations regarding how we can best help teachers to use the outdoors effectively, and to provide Turkish teachers with a European perspective for outdoor learning and vice versa, so Turkish and English teachers will have a chance to develop different perspectives regarding outdoor activities.

The study will involve teachers who are currently teaching in early years classes/kindergartens in a semi-structured interview and observations. I will visit the setting to observe practice first hand once a week for 5 weeks for about an hour each day. During observation, I will observe and take notes of teachers' activities. The observations will not directly focus on the children's activities, so I will not be recording details about your child. There will be a secret Facebook group for participating teachers to share their ideas and activities, and anonymity and confidentiality will be provided for this. Nevertheless, I will be spending some time helping in your child's class beforehand so my presence can become familiar to the class.

#### **Why has my child's school been chosen to take part?**

I am aiming to collect data from practitioners who teach five year-old children in the south west of England and the south of Turkey. I have approached several schools with outdoor learning provision and your child's teacher has kindly expressed an interest in being involved in my study.

#### **What will happen if my child takes part?**

I will come along to your child's classroom so that everyone can get to know me at first and then I will watch their teacher as they support children's outdoor activities, taking notes to help me to remember.

In this way, I will get examples of practice from two different countries (England and Turkey) and assess these countries' similarities and differences in terms of outdoor activities.

### **What are the risks and benefits of taking part?**

The information collected will remain confidential and will only be seen by the researcher and supervisors. Neither children nor the school will be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Information about individuals will not be shared with the school.

Participants in similar studies have found it interesting and valuable for their professional development to take part. We anticipate that the findings of the study may be useful for schools in the organisation of their outdoor environments and pedagogy.

### **What will happen to the data?**

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private and confidential. No identifiers linking your child, the teacher or the school to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. In the case of usage of photos from the Facebook group in my thesis, the faces will be blurred to provide anonymity. Participants will be assigned a number and will be referred to by that number in all records. Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and only the research team will have access to the records. In line with Plymouth University research ethics policy, the research data will be kept securely for a period of ten years after completion of the research project. The results of the study will be presented in the PhD thesis, and in written reports, and hopefully in published articles. I can send you electronic copies of these publications if you wish.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of Plymouth University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for its conduct.

**What if I have any questions or concerns?** You can contact my supervisor, Professor Jocey Quinn, Plymouth University; Tel: 0175 258 5454, email: [jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk)

### **Where can I get more information?**

If you would like more information, please contact Professor Jocey Quinn;

Tel: 0175 258 5454, email: [jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:jocey.quinn@plymouth.ac.uk)

or, Mr Mehmet Mart;

Tel: 07424508434, email: [mehmet.mart@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:mehmet.mart@plymouth.ac.uk)

I do hope that you will agree to your participation in the study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it, sealed, in the pre-paid envelope provided, to us.

Thank you for your time.



Mehmet Mart

**Research Project:** A Comparison of English and Turkish Early years/Kindergarten Teachers' understandings of and practices in Outdoor Activities

**Parent Consent Form**

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.

I understand what the purpose of the research is and what is required of me. All my questions have been answered.

Name of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of primary school: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick as appropriate:

I consent to using photos in thesis with blurred face

☐

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix-15: Ethical Approval Forms**

1 March 2016

### **CONFIDENTIAL**

Mehmet Mart  
Plymouth Institute of Education  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
Plymouth University

Dear Mehmet

### ***Amendment to Approved Application***

***Amendment Reference Number: 15/16-144***

***Original application Reference Number: 14/15-84***

***Application Title: A Comparison of English and Turkish Early  
years/Kindergarten Teachers' understandings of and practices in  
Outdoor Activities***

I am pleased to inform you that the Education Research Ethics Sub-committee has granted approval to you for your amendment to the application approved on 28 January 2015 subject to the following conditions:

1. Change "secret Facebook page" to read "private Facebook page" in all documentation..
2. Ensure that Professor Jocey Quinn is given her correct title in all documentation.
3. Your supervisor should read through the documentation to check for correct English.

Please note that this approval is for three years, after which you will be required to seek extension of existing approval.

Please note that should any MAJOR changes to your research design occur which effect the ethics of procedures involved you must inform the Committee.

Please contact Claire Butcher on (01752) 585337 or by email

[claire.butcher@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:claire.butcher@plymouth.ac.uk)

Yours sincerely



**Professor Linda la Velle**

Chair, Education Research Ethics Sub-committee -  
Plymouth Institute of Education  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities

## Appendix-16: The Relationship between Emergent Themes from Nvivo

	Name	Sources	Referen...	Created On	Created...	Color	Modified By
<b>SOURCES</b>							
Internals							
Externals							
Memos							
<b>NODES</b>							
Nodes							
Cases							
Node Matrices							
<b>CLASSIFICATIONS</b>							
Source Classifications							
Case Classifications							
<b>COLLECTIONS</b>							
Sets							
Memo Links							
Annotations							
<b>QUERIES</b>							
Queries							
Results							
<b>MAPS</b>							
Maps							
<b>OPEN ITEMS</b>							
drawbacks							
freedom							
roles in outdoor							
	anything helpful to inform	5	6	28 Oct 2015, 03:13	MM		MM
	benefits of outdoor	5	9	28 Oct 2015, 02:33	MM		MM
	drawbacks	5	7	28 Oct 2015, 02:37	MM		MM
	factors	4	5	28 Oct 2015, 03:06	MM		MM
	curriculum	5	7	28 Oct 2015, 03:10	MM		MM
	particular sources to...	4	9	28 Oct 2015, 03:08	MM		MM
	materials	3	5	1 Feb 2016, 19:26	MM		MM
	required materials	5	7	2 Feb 2016, 18:03	MM		MM
	weather and risky aspe...	5	7	28 Oct 2015, 02:38	MM		MM
	freedom	2	2	27 Jan 2016, 13:18	MM		MM
	children interaction	1	1	28 Oct 2015, 16:15	MM		MM
	Experience	3	4	28 Jan 2016, 14:18	MM		MM
	development	4	8	29 Jan 2016, 14:39	MM		MM
	nature	4	6	1 Feb 2016, 14:01	MM		MM
	Meaning of outdoor	5	6	28 Oct 2015, 02:27	MM		MM
	aim of outdoor	4	4	28 Oct 2015, 02:29	MM		MM
	health (fresh air)	3	3	27 Jan 2016, 18:13	MM		MM
	frequency of going outside	5	9	28 Oct 2015, 03:16	MM		MM
	parents	3	3	28 Oct 2015, 16:28	MM		MM
	Professional Learning	0	0	1 Jun 2016, 14:34	MM		MM
	improvement of materi...	5	7	28 Oct 2015, 02:57	MM		MM
	improvement of outdoor	5	5	28 Oct 2015, 02:40	MM		MM
	reason of aims	5	6	28 Oct 2015, 02:31	MM		MM
	roles in outdoor	5	9	28 Oct 2015, 03:06	MM		MM
	class control	5	9	28 Oct 2015, 03:14	MM		MM
	importance of child-ad...	3	3	28 Oct 2015, 03:02	MM		MM
	interaction	5	6	28 Oct 2015, 02:58	MM		MM
	one to one interaction	4	5	28 Oct 2015, 03:01	MM		MM
	ratio	5	11	28 Oct 2015, 03:04	MM		MM
	sufficient emphasis on o...	5	5	28 Oct 2015, 03:12	MM		MM
	tools important	5	6	28 Oct 2015, 02:53	MM		MM
	tools need to be improved	3	3	28 Oct 2015, 02:56	MM		MM
	used tools	5	5	28 Oct 2015, 02:55	MM		MM
	why tools important or not	5	8	28 Oct 2015, 02:55	MM		MM

## Appendix-17: The Examples of How to Approach Data Analysis

M: OK. What do you think about the roles of teachers and children during outdoor activities?

K: I think it depends, if it is outdoor activity that is an adult-led one, then I think the adults roles are very much, they will be there, supporting and directing in an activity. So I think that is one side of it. But I think if they are going, we will do this afternoon, if it is a child-initiated activity, where they are outside, I think the adult's role in that respect is to observe the play and interact with the children, to bring the learning forwards, so you know, to discuss ideas, and questioning them, you know what could we do next, and how we can make this tower bigger, why you are doing that. I think the role is to really questioning and facilitate the learning. But not to take the lead mass. When they are outside, they've child initiated play.

M: you mean, the role of children is a bit more than teachers because of...

K: yes, if it is a child initiated, yes, I think it is. If it is adult-led, I still think if it is still adult led, the child is a main factor. But the adult might have more input if it is an adult led activity.

M: to what extend is the outdoor part of your classroom?

K: definitely, these doors are open for children to come in and out. Activities, we planned, are very much, you know they could do an activity in here and they can go outside and do activities. it is really outside is an extension of the classroom. So We try to set it up, so maybe what we've learn indoor in the week, what we are learning in the classroom, is what we are learning outside. This week, we're learning about caterpillars' story. We do life cycles of butterflies, talking about mini beasts, so we've got mini beast sheets, going outside this afternoon, we've got water trays, they've got bugs in, we've got butterflies in the sand pit, they've been talking about making little houses to keep the caterpillar safe in our construction area. And we've got digging area, where they have been thinking about growing and vegetables and things. I think it is very much the outside is the part of the inside.

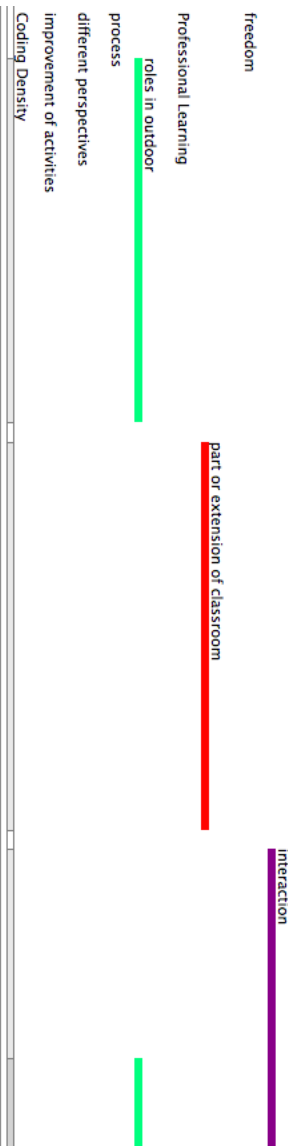
M: so, you use the outdoor to complete something indoor?

K: yes. Sort of. It is mirror. Something comes from inside to outside. It is not separate. It should be a flow of. Definitely.

M: what do you think about the interaction during outdoor activities?

K: Children to children is very important. I think you see a lot of it outside, and because they've got lots space out there, lots of big equipment, they can use. There is lots of interaction between them; sharing of ideas, coming up with games. I don't know, they maybe do gathering them and help each other to think, carry things. You've got lots of negotiating skills, as far as between sort of teacher and...

Teacher and child, I think they should definitely be interactions between them. I think the children should be able to explore things by themselves. And I think the teacher should be, if it is child initiated play activities outside, it should be the teachers there to be facilitate and teacher is not the charge of the play. The teacher should be standing back and watching, and then add points intermittently going in and questioning, providing ideas maybe to extend the learning. I think there shouldn't be massive interaction. There will be interaction but not the teacher shouldn't take over the situation because it is child led. As much as possible.



I: Farklı etkinlikler mi?

M: suanda facebooktaki paylasimlar diger ogretmenlerden filan. O anlamda.O surec...

I: Ordan tabi ki faydalandigimiz, aa buda varmis bunu da yapabilmisiz dedigimiz seyler oluyor arkli arkadaslarin yaptigi etkinliklerde. Onlari en azindan biz de uygulayabiliyoruz veya bize uygun olan, mekanimizi, sinifimizi, okulumuza uygun olanlari uygulama sansi yakalamis oluyoruz bu sekilde.

M: ne tarz seyler gordunuz, ne tarz seyler dikkatinizi cekti bu surecte?

I: Acikcasi oradaki okullardaki, materyal farkliliklari dikkatimi cekti, veya mekanlar biraz daha rahat o dikkatimi cekti, bizim gibi kisir veya dar mekanlardan ziyade, daha genis daha kullanisli daha zengin mekanlar var, bu biraz daha dikkatimi ceken seyler.

M: bu surecten sonra mekan disi etkinliklerinizde herhangi bir degisiklik oldu mu?

I: yani bu birazda somestir donemine denk geldi, bu ara sey zaten, yani bundan sonra tabi ki uygulayacaz bunlari. Yani biraz daha disarda, havanin da isinmasi ile birlikte o gordugumuz seyleri uygulayacagiz disarida.

M: sey diyebilirmiyiz; suana kadar fikirsel olarak gelismeler oldu, pratikte ise zamanla.

I: aynen aynen. Pratikge dokecegiz zamanla. Tabi dedigim gibi, hani kendim biraz dusunup baktigimda ya sunu da su sekilde yapabilirim veya iste su da olurmus aslinda bize. Biz de bunu yapabilmisiz dedigimiz seyler oluyor, oldu acikcasi.

M: ne tur seyler peki bunlar hocam ornek verebilirmisiniz, aklınıza gelen bir kac ornek?

I: yani disarda mesela birazda bahcede, biz bahceye birsey cikarmayakorkuyorduk hani. Hani ne diye korkuyorduk, iste siniftaki esyalarimiz kirlenmesin veya iste pis pas olmasin veya iste sinifta dursun tarzı, disariya sy cikarmaya korkuyorduk. Ama bundan sonra disarda cikarip, hatta disarida mesela bir peyzaj calismasi yapacagiz zaten onlari disarida birakarak boyle cocuklar her disariya ciktiklerinde, onlari gorerek veya direk oraya giderek oynayabilecegi yerler olusturmayi dusunuyoruz ileri dogru. Ya biraz daha cesur davranarak mi diyeyim artik bize gore, malzemeleri biraz daha rahat kullanmayi ogrenecegiz. Ogrendik gibi. Cunku biz biraz daha dedigim gibi cekiniyoruz. İste ne yapiyoruz, bir top cikariyoruz disari, top kirleniyo, hemen iceri girerken yıkayıp tekrar iceri almaya kalkiyoruz filan. Veya iste bir, cocukların oynadigi, cocukların kumda oynadigi malzemeler iste veya arabalar filan diyelim iste basit bir ornek verecek olursak, onlari gerekirse biraz daha cocuklar cikmadan once disarida birakip boyle, cocukların kendilerinin yonlenecegi sekilde yerler olusturabiliriz.

M: Cocuklar icin hazir olacak sekilde

I: evet, hazir mekanlar. Daha onceden hazirlayip disariya ciktigimizda direk kendileri, kendileri gidip tercih etsin. Ne oynayacaklarını kendileri belirlesinler.

M: galiba hocam sey gibi dusunebiliriz bunu, Ingiltere’de var olan ornegi gordugunuzden dolayi diyebilirmiyiz? Onlar da hep hazir oldugu icin.

I: evet, tabi tabi onlar da hep hazir. İste biz de cikarken, karar verip, alacagimiz oyuncagimizi yada seyi yanımıza alip hep beraber cikiyoruk ama hani oraya baktigimizda mekan hazir,

Coding Density

Improvement of activities

Professional Learning

weather and risky aspects for outdoor

process

roles in outdoor

xxx general points

interaction

different perspectives



	interaction	
	Professional Learning	
	roles in outdoor	
	part or extension of classroom	
	xxx general points	
	different perspectives	
	Coding Density	
M: were they useful for you to lead different perspectives?		
R: yes, yes I think it is. It's really been eye opening and made us think more about what we can do, to support the children in those areas for development. throughout the school, we talk through our key stage play time is quite difficult, and I think because they find it hard manage and focus on something. By implementing a game, us doing it as well as staff. They've been more engage within that, and they've been more purposeful in terms of games.		
M: engage with activities and with others.		
R: yes.		
M: do you consider that there has been an improvement?		
R: yes definitely. Yes absolutely. I think our is better coming up with game, they can play rather than just saying or playing bad guys or playing superheroes. It is more about, this is the rule of our game, this is what you do, and this is how it is finished something.		improvement of activities
M: you mean, you give some general framework for them to play, general games and they follow that during the playtime rather than setting up some other game.		
R: yes. I think sometimes they've extended it, and they said we played in this way which is, you know, completely fine. But until they know of games to play, you can't expect them to know how to make them up, and I think that is something I haven't sorted of before until you're doing, taking part in your research. then it's been really interesting them to see actually, I haven't thought about that in that way before, and so for me, that is a real sort of, I've learnt what we can do to encourage them as well.		
M: so may I say, it is the best thing from my research to show you, like having different perspectives to think about it more.		
R: yes.		
M: what kind changes can you identify? You already did some. Do you want to add some more? You said you are using the games...		
R: yes, and whole class thing. I think we said this, obviously classes are bigger. Actually because of how the children to encourage to do that, there more focused in a bigger group, and I think that is definitely something that I would do it again more of as whole class activities rather than less small ones.		
M: in overall, to what extend is it useful to contact with other teachers via social media?		
R: I think it has been really useful and really interesting to see photographs of what [... laugh to something else],		
M: let me ask again, to what extend is it useful to...?		
R: I think, the photographs have been really interesting, it has been really great to see how other people use their outdoor space. And again, to make the link with Turkish schools, and to have the perspectives about us what that's like for them in terms of their environment, how different it is to ours. Also, how they are using that, I mean those lovely photos of people go		process

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