

Investigation of Family Involvement Dimension in Preschool Prospective Teachers' Activity Plans*

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Introduction

Family involvement is defined as the process of mutual cooperation, communication and interaction between school and family in order to ensure the highest level of development and education of the child (Arabacı, 2018, Epstein, 2002). It is known that family involvement studies support all developmental areas of children such as cognitive, language, social-emotional, psychomotor and physical development as well as their academic achievement (Berns, 2012; Heckman, 2011; Keçeli-Kaysılı, 2008). For this reason, the family is expected to actively participate in the educational process and support the education provided in the school. In this participation, there is a partnership, not just a one-sided information process, for the child to achieve developmental and educational goals. The term partnership it means coordinated work, equal responsibility for the child's learning process and its support, and real and effective participation in a systematic, preventive and solution-oriented manner (Christenson, 2004). Family involvement is one of the most effective ways of cooperating with the family (MEB, 2013).

The aim of this study is to investigate the extent of family involvement in the activity plans prepared by the 4th grade students of Kütahya Dumlupınar University Early Childhood Education department in accordance with MEB 2013 Early Childhood Education Program. The sub-purposes of the study were, preschool prospective teachers';

- Examining the status of family involvement activities in the activity plans
- Examining which activities are planned for family involvement and what kind of family involvement activities are planned
- Examining the process of planning and implementing family involvement activities in activity plans as determined.

Method

The study was carried out using the basic qualitative research method (Merriam, 2015). As a data collection tool, semi-structured interview form and activity plan documents prepared by the students within the scope of teaching practice course were used. The documents are the activity plans of 4th grade students attending the pre-school teaching department of Kütahya Dumlupınar University in 2018-2019, which were selected by easy accessible sampling method. In the activity plans, developed by the researcher for family involvement of Family Involvement Activity Evaluation List for Preschool Prospective Teacher (OÖÖAAKED) was used. In addition, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with randomly selected 8 volunteer preschool prospective teachers. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this context, 668 activity plans of 42 students were examined.

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In the process of data collection, prospective teachers were informed about the purpose and content of the study and permission was requested to examine the activity plans and to conduct interviews, and the volunteer participation form was signed by the prospective teachers. The activity plans of the prospective teachers were examined with the Family Involvement Activity Assessment List (OÖÖAAKED) developed by the researchers. According to the analyzes, 8 randomly selected volunteers from the prospective teachers who included and did not included in the family involvement studies were interviewed on the day and time planned by the researcher. During the interviews, it was stated to the prospective teachers that voice recording would be taken and necessary approvals were obtained. 8 teacher candidates were interviewed once. Interviews lasted between 12 minutes and 20 minutes. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze the data of the study.

Findings

When the activity plans prepared by the students were grouped, language, mathematics, literacy, play, drama, field trip art and science were also found to be integrated activity plans formed by integrating them. When the results of the research are examined, it is seen that most of the prospective teachers do not include family involvement dimension in their activity plans. Although all of the prospective teachers stated that family involvement was necessary in the preschool period, it was seen that most of them did not include family involvement studies in their activity plans. The reasons for not including family involvement in the activity plans were that they felt inadequate in planning and implementing family involvement activities, that the school administration did not want the prospective teachers to establish one-to-one communication in the families and that the lecturer did not want the family involvement study. However, all prospective teachers stated that they would like to receive training on family involvement. When the plans of the involved in the family involvement activities are examined, it is seen that there are activities within the scope of the activity proposal aimed at reinforcing the targeted or concepts gains at school. Other family involvement activities include trips, creating concrete products and sending them to the classroom and requesting materials from home for use in subsequent activities. When the family involvement studies of prospective teachers' according to activity type are examined, it was seen that family involvement studies were planned in language, science, mathematics and literacy activities as well as it was mostly integrated activities. Another result is that prospective teachers who are planning family involvement activities have problems in the implementation of the activities planned. Prospective teachers who went to practice once a week stated that the time was insufficient in terms of implementing and monitoring the activity.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

When the results of the research are examined, it is seen that the participants have been working towards the participation of the families in the educational activities. Abbak (2008) reported that family participation activities are rarely or never implemented; home visits, training boards, telephone calls, tape recordings, collective files and meetings, while specifying the light (2007), phone calls, seminars, conferences, home visits, wish-complaint box and meet-to-meet with families. Similarly, in this study, it was seen that the participants did not include family communication activities, individual interviews and home visits in their activity plans. They may think that the reason for this situation may be due to the attitudes and behaviors of the schools' management.

Kurtulmuş (2016), in his study examining the family participation studies in the activity plans of preschool teachers, revealed that teachers mostly planned family participation for mathematics activities, and low level planning of family involvement activities for art and play and movement activities. In this study, while the participants planned the family participation activities for the art activity in the third place, the play and movement activities took the last place.

This study is limited to the data collected from prospective teachers of Kütahya Dumlupınar University. The research can be conducted with prospective teachers from different universities. School administrators should be encouraged to conduct family involvement activities of prospective teachers within the scope of teaching practice. It should be ensured that prospective teachers are informed about the content and qualifications of family involvement activities and make practices.