

An Examination of Early Childhood Teachers' Views and Experiences on Assessment as Learning

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Abstract

In recent years, assessment as learning, which is one of the formative assessment types, has attracted attention with its focus on the role of the child in the connection between learning and assessment. Assessment as learning which includes children's awareness of their own learning processes, what they want to learn and how they learn, is a critical component for young children's self-regulation and metacognition. This study examines preschool teachers' views and self-reported experiences regarding assessment as learning. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten preschool teachers, ensuring maximum diversity. The findings of this study were analyzed with the themes of feedback, questioning, self-assessment, and peer assessment. The results indicated that although teachers have various practices in the context of feedback and asking questions, they give a more limited place to self-assessment and peer assessment in their practices. Although there are differences in teachers' experiences, providing support for some critical highlights regarding their practices is important for the effectiveness of assessment.


Anahtar Kelimeler: Assessment as learning, assessment, early childhood education, early childhood teacher, formative assessment

Okul Öncesi Öğretmenlerinin Öğrenme Olarak Değerlendirmeye İlişkin Görüş ve Deneyimlerinin İncelenmesi

Öz

Biçimlendirici değerlendirme türlerinden biri olan öğrenme olarak değerlendirme, öğrenme ve değerlendirme arasındaki bağlantıda öğrenenin rolüne odaklanılmasıyla son yıllarda dikkat çekmektedir. Çocukların kendi öğrenme süreçlerine ilişkin farkındalıklarını, ne öğrenmek istediklerini ve nasıl öğrendiklerini içeren öğrenme olarak değerlendirme, çocukların öz-düzenleme ve üst-bilişsel becerileri için önemlidir. Bu çalışma, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öğrenme olarak değerlendirmeye ilişkin görüşlerini ve söyleme dayalı deneyimlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla, maksimum çeşitlilik sağlanarak on okul öncesi öğretmeni ile yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın bulguları ile dönüt, soru sorma, öz değerlendirme ve akran değerlendirmesi temalarına ulaşılmıştır. Sonuçlar, öğretmenlerin dönüt ve soru sorma bağlamlarında çeşitli uygulamalarının olduğunu göztermekle birlikte, öz-değerlendirme ve akran değerlendirmesine daha az yer verdiklerini göstermektedir. Öğretmenlerin deneyimlerinde farklılıklar olsa da

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uygulamalarına ilişkin bazı kritik noktaların desteklenmesi, değerlendiriminin etkililiği açısından önemlidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Öğrenme olarak değerlendirme, değerlendirme, okul öncesi eğitim, okul öncesi öğretmeni, biçimlendirici değerlendirme*

Introduction

In the first years of schooling, preschool education has a huge impact on young children's learning journey. The importance of this year is not only because it's children's first year of formal schooling, but also because it is when young children are formally assessed developmentally and educationally for the first time (Bradbury, 2012). As in other education contexts, assessment is a very controversial topic in early years education. Standardized testing and school accountability have become increasingly important in recent years, and, in turn, have raised the pressure placed on schools, teachers, and children. (Wiliam, 2010). In this crucial period of schooling, there are a great number of different ways to assess young children's learning and development. However, the key point to decide the most appropriate one is to determine the purpose of the assessment. Because of the importance of assessment concerning learning, the relationships between assessment and learning are widely studied, resulting in a growing body of research on assessment influencing learning (Schellekens et al., 2021). In the last 30 years, the terminology used to describe educational assessment and its relationship with learning has of course evolved (Crooks, 2011). From 1990 onwards, the terms formative assessment and outcome-based assessment have been widely used. In general, these concepts are assigned two different purposes. While formative assessment supports and develops children's learning when they are on task, summative assessments evaluate children's achievements and document their accountability, ranking, or competence after an activity or a process (Black et al., 2003).

Fleer (2006) argues that there is a trend in using sociocultural theories for improving teaching and learning in early years education, whereas approaches to assessment are not at the same level and are under the umbrella of the individualistic Piagetian approach which gives little attention to the interaction between peers or children and adults. While Piaget focused on self-initiated discovery, Vygotsky placed more emphasis on social contributions to the process of learning. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory defines the learning process as "...a social construction as well as an individual" (Dunphy, 2008, p. 14). According to his theory, children's learning is shaped not only at the individual level but also through their interactions with their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). In this approach, the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, where learning and development take place, has an important role in understanding both the learning and assessment processes of children. From the perspective of sociocultural theory, collaboration becomes a key point at which both children and teachers are involved in "each other's thinking process" (Dunphy, 2008, p. 17). Siraj-Blatchford (2014) describes this thinking process as "sustained shared

thinking” (SST) that occurs when two or more people interact with each other to “solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities or expand narratives” (Siraj-Blatchford, 2014, p.178).

In 1999, the Assessment Reform Group, an influential group of education researchers in the UK, chose alternative terms rather than formative and outcome-oriented assessment to articulate the relationship of assessment more clearly to learning (Assessment Reform Group [ARG], 1999). This team used formative assessment as an assessment for learning, which emphasizes the purpose of assessment to improve the learning and teaching process in general, and outcome-based assessment as an assessment of learning, which generally refers to judging performance and measuring outcomes after a formal learning activity (ARG, 1999; Crooks, 2011; Earl, 2003). The Assessment Reform Group defined Assessment for Learning in 2002 as a process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where children are in their learning, where they should go, and how best to learn (ARG, 2002). In 2003, Earl (2003, 2012) added a third concept called “Assessment as Learning” (AaL). This concept includes learners' active participation in self-assessment and self-directed learning as a distinct function to improve the learning process. In this new concept, the aim was to expand the role of assessment for learning by emphasizing the critical connector role of the learner between assessment and the learning process (Dann, 2014; Earl & Katz, 2008). According to this view, the learner is seen as an active and engaged owner in the development of metacognitive and self-regulated learning skills (Earl, 2013; Lam, 2016).

Wood (2013) argues that assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, guiding the teacher in many ways, such as improving children's understanding of learning and thinking and being able to control the effects of the curriculum with the acquired knowledge. In this way, teachers can also assess the link between the curriculum and children's responses to planned activities, document children's learning to share this with other adults, such as other parents and teachers, and reflect on curriculum planning, quality, and effectiveness (Wood, 2013). Therefore, the main purpose of assessment in the early years is to make children's learning visible by collecting and documenting information from their learning to support and expand their learning (Dunphy, 2008; Karlsdóttir & Garðarsdóttir, 2010). As Dunphy (2008) states, 'observing, empathizing, listening and reflecting' are the essential elements of assessment (p.33). Another tool that helps children develop their reflection and critical analysis is the assessment as learning approach, which considers assessment as a part of learning (Earl, 2007).

Assessment as Learning (AaL) in Early Childhood Education

Today, concepts related to assessment focus on the increasing role of the children in terms of supporting self-regulation, autonomy, and independence, due to its

relationship with children's learning and development. (DeLuca et al., 2020). At this point, "assessment as learning" emphasizes the role of the learner as the critical connector between the learning process and assessment (Earl, 2003). Assessment as learning provides children with direct feedback on what they have learned and, more importantly, how they have learned; this is essential for promoting independence and self-regulation (Clark, 2012). This process also focuses on actively involving children in their learning so that they can better identify their strengths and identify what they should do differently to meet their learning needs (Earl, 2013; Hattie & Timperley, 2011).

Assessment as learning is an essential learning process that entails observation, analysis/interpretation, and assessment of each child's performance based on clear criteria. It confirms child accomplishment and gives feedback to the learner for better learning and to the teacher for better instruction. (Mentkowski, 2006). Yan and Boud (2022) proposed the definition of assessment-as learning as "assessment that necessarily generates learning opportunities for children through their active engagement in seeking, interrelating, and using evidence (p.13). This assessment approach emphasizes using assessment as a process of developing and supporting metacognition for young learners. AaL focuses on the learner's role as the critical link between assessment and learning. As active, engaged, and critical evaluators, children make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge, and use it for new learning. This is the regulatory process in metacognition. It occurs when learners personally monitor what they have learned and use the feedback from that monitoring to make adjustments, adaptations, or even major changes as they understand it. When teachers focus on assessment as learning, they use classroom assessment as a tool to help children develop, apply, and become comfortable with reflecting and critical analysis of their learning (Earl, 2007).

Yılmaz et al. (2023) reconceptualized the role of child portfolios as a tool to promote AaL in early childhood education. They explained the AaL process with a multidimensional structure regarding child portfolios. In more recent years, it has been seen in the literature that studies on assessment at all educational levels have been handled with the perspective of "assessment as learning", which centers on the role of the learner (Schellekens et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2019). However, there are very limited studies that address the assessment in early childhood education from this perspective (Yılmaz et al., 2023; DeLuca et al., 2020). From this point of view, the current study aims to examine the views and experiences of preschool teachers on assessment as learning. For this purpose, answers to the following questions are sought:

1. What are the views of preschool teachers on the process of assessment as learning?
2. What are the self-reported experiences of preschool teachers on assessment as learning?

Method

Research Design and Participants

The current study is a qualitative study aiming to investigate preschool teachers' views and self-reported experiences on assessment as learning. The study was conducted in the phenomenology pattern which focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding of, which can appear in various forms such as events, experiences, perceptions, tendencies, concepts, and situations in the world we live in (Creswell, 2013). The study group was determined by the maximum variation sampling used to identify wide-ranging situations and important common patterns (Patton, 2014). 10 volunteer preschool teachers formed the participants. The types of schools where teachers work, their professional experience, and the level of education constituted the diversity of the participants. All the teachers have a bachelor's degree, 4 of them have a master's degree and 1 has a doctoral degree. 3 of the participating teachers have 5 years of professional experience, 5 of them have 10 years, and 2 of them have over 15 years of professional experience.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the study, an interview form prepared by the researchers was used to collect the data. Interviews, the most frequently used data collection tool in qualitative research, are effective in providing important and detailed information from individuals (Creswell, 2018). A semi-structured interview was preferred as it helps to obtain in-depth information on a particular subject due to its standardization and flexibility (Robson, 2011). For the interview questions, international literature was reviewed, and this draft form was sent to two experts from the field of early childhood education. After their feedback on the questions in terms of scope and meaning the form was finalized. The interview form consists of four demographic questions and fourteen questions about the assessment. All but two of these questions were open-ended. Appointments were made with the participants in advance and the place and time of the interviews were planned. Interviews were started with demographic questions to make the participants feel comfortable in the interview and to facilitate the natural flow of the meeting. All the interviews with the teachers were held in a quiet place and suitable for the meeting at that moment, such as an empty classroom or a multi-purpose hall in the schools where the teachers work. With the permission of the participants in the consent form to participate in the study, a voice recorder was used during the interviews and the interviews were recorded to prevent data loss. Due to four participants time barrier for face-to-face interviews, online meetings were held with them. Interviews lasted an average of 32 minutes. For the analysis of the data, initially, the researchers transcribed the interview records. Interview transcripts were transferred to the computer and the data was analyzed by thematic analysis. In the analysis of data, six stages were followed: familiarizing yourself with the data,

generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Findings

The findings of this study are presented in four themes: feedback, questioning, self-assessment, and peer assessment.

Feedback

Participant teachers were asked about the importance of giving feedback to children in early childhood education. The interview data revealed the categories of teachers' purposes for giving feedback to children, the timing of feedback, and the strategies they used for feedback. Regarding the purpose for feedback, some of the participant teachers stated that feedback is an essential part of the job and made a connection between feedback and learning. Participants generally stated that they gave feedback to reinforce learning and to bring about planned behavior change. Some of the participant teachers' statements about the relationship between feedback and learning are as follows:

I mean, the more feedback we give to children, the better the learning is or the more efficient it is for the child. Because nothing happens without feedback. I mean, the child doesn't even know whether he/she has learned or not. (T-8)

I think such feedback is valuable, to reinforce that behavior, to reach that outcome. (T-3)

Your feedback is important so that the information learned is not forgotten, that is, we want to target the behavior we want to give to the child by giving feedback. Our aim is to complete the target acquisition by giving feedback. (T-10)

The interview results show that another purpose of the participant teachers' use of feedback was to ensure the motivation of the children. In the words of T-5, "I say 'Well done my beautiful children, you are doing very well. I give motivational feedback such as 'You can accomplish these things too'. Again, T-1, one of the participants, expressed this as follows: "In my feedback, I try to give motivational feedback such as "You are doing very well, how carefully you did it". A few teachers also made a relationship between motivation and children's emotional state and stated that children felt successful or happy through feedback. While T-9 expressed this as "It motivates them very well, they are very happy and they become aware of themselves, they feel successful", another participant T-8, while talking about what kind of feedback he gave during the interview, said "... such feedback (talking about applause) would be a behavior that would make the child very happy."

The interviews revealed that teachers generally tended to give feedback at the end of the activity. Especially at the end of task-based activities where children produced a product, teachers stated that they wanted to see the products and gave feedback.

I'd like to see his work when he's finished. Don't put it in our closet without telling me, without showing it to me. I definitely want to see it. They bring it, they show it, this is very good, etc. I provide feedback, but I also give positive feedback to that child, I definitely notice his/her effort. (T-1)

At the end of the activities we teach, we should show more visual materials to the children, that is, those abstracts become concrete at the end, and maybe we put the last point. (T-10)

For example, he has finished, but he needs to go one step further. (T-2)

Regarding the timing of feedback, some teachers stated that the children themselves wanted to receive feedback. T-6 "Now, the child does not stop when he/she does not get feedback. I mean, he wants feedback on everything. Even when he finishes his meal, you will say something". Similarly, T-4 stated that children turned to the teacher for feedback when they produced something as follows. "I mean, for example, he did an activity. The children are already asking, how is the teacher? They are already asking themselves." Similarly, T-5 stated that children demanded feedback by saying, "It is not enough to say to the child that yes, you did a good job, they want to see and feel that what they have done is valuable, they want to hear it, children already have that need for approval." Two participant teachers also stated that while children need feedback more at the beginning of the semester, feedback is a need that decreases with the development of children in the process. T-8 stated this as follows: "While they need feedback more at the beginning of the semester, towards the end of the semester, if the child expresses himself/herself and gains his/her own responsibilities, there is no need to give feedback at the end of the semester, he/she does not have that expectation from you all the time".

During the interview process, teachers provided the sample strategies for their feedback practices. When the examples of self-reported experiences were examined, it was seen that teachers tended to give feedback to children who had difficulties on a learning process. In these examples, teachers used positive feedback and offered suggestions focused on improving the product:

Plays don't need a lot of feedback. Because the game is already a process that reinforces itself. But in such worksheets, I try to use them more intensively because the younger age group can have difficulties. (T-1)

As feedback, I usually say, yes, you did a good job, but you can do this, can you do that next time? In other words, I approach it positively first and then squeeze the negative one in between, then it is more effective. When we give direct negative feedback to the child, they feel bad. He runs away to do it. Obviously, he

cannot grasp the point that he cannot learn. Because he feels rejected. I can say this because of my own observation. (T-5)

But for example, let's say he did something wrong. I can say that this is also good, but it was like this, or as I said, if it is something I need to correct, if I don't correct it, if I am going to cause him/her to acquire the wrong concept, I tell him/her to correct it verbally. (T-7)

After noticing teachers' view to give feedback to children in need of support through their statements during the interview process, teachers were asked what kind of feedback they gave to children with normal development or to children who fulfilled the task given during the activity at the expected level. According to the interview results, it was found that teachers described children's products or performances and gave feedback with expressions of appreciation.

Let's say he did it right, or I don't want to say he succeeded or failed, but he did everything right. He did it exactly as I told him, and he got all the instructions right. At that moment, I was like, yes, you really did it exactly as I said. I don't know, was it difficult? How did you cut that? What did you think while doing this? Because good things really come out. (T-4)

I love the colors you've chosen. You've chosen such harmonious colors. Or see, you didn't take care here. You know, you can try again if you want. Especially I prefer to emphasize the effort. Yes, they may not be able to do it, I always emphasize this, you can do it, but you try, try. (T-3)

In response to the question of what kind of feedback teachers gave during the interview process, it was found that teachers mostly used verbal feedback, while some teachers also gave feedback by distributing stickers or applauding.

Questioning

The results of the study indicated participant teachers' experiences of questioning and the categories were related to the purpose of questioning, types of questions they ask to children, and the timing of questioning. The interview results showed that the prominent motivation of preschool teachers in asking questions was to provide children with the opportunity to express themselves; especially to enable children to express their emotions. Some of the participants' views on this:

By asking questions, you get the child talking. And the child opens up to the teacher. He expresses himself better. If you just pass it off by saying it's good, the child's creativity will not develop, and the child will not be able to express themselves very well anyway. You know there is a time to start the day in the morning, our aim there is to ask questions to the child, to include these usually introverted children in the conversation, to make them express themselves in front

of someone, to make the child talk, to make them express their feelings, what they are going through, what they want. (T-7)

We use asking questions a lot. I mean, asking questions in many areas is a method we use a lot to learn children's feelings and to get into their imagination worlds. (T-10)

Among the participants who were asked to express the purpose of asking questions, two teachers established a relationship between learning and asking questions and stated that they asked questions to support children's thinking processes and creativity. T-9 stated this purpose as follows: "Asking questions actually makes them think about many things. They are not aware of some things, so with the questions I ask, for example, why is the leaf green? He is reasoning. If the leaf was not green, what color would it be? You know, it is very good in terms of creativity, but it gets blocked after a certain point when there is no question and answer." While giving examples of questions, T-2 explained this purpose as "If you were designing, how would you build such a vehicle?" I aim to make children think at the time and to develop their imagination a little bit.

During the interview process, participant teachers were asked to share their views on question types. Teachers' emphasis on open-ended questions is among the prominent findings. Some of the participants' views on this are as follows:

We ask questions so that children can give a broader answer. Not by saying yes or no. I ask questions with open-ended questions, and when the child asks a question, I guide him/her to find the answer himself/herself. (T-8)

In preschool children, they usually say, don't ask yes/no questions. I usually try to do the same. (T-1)

I mean, for example, I don't ask direct questions about what I want to find the answer to. For example, if I am going to explain something a little indirectly, I ask 3-4 questions beforehand so that I can come to that topic later, so if I ask direct questions about that topic, it doesn't work. For example, I don't ask things like, "Did you like the activity?" I ask things that are very clear, understandable, open-ended, and indirectly lead the child to the goal. (T-5)

Regarding the timing of the questioning practices, the participants stated that they practiced questioning especially at the time of starting the day in the morning and at the time of assessing the day. For example, while T-5 stated that she asked the children what they did on the weekend and whether there were things they were afraid of or sad at the time of starting the day on Monday, T-1 stated that he did this questioning time as a routine with the following sentence. "Asking questions is like this... we do morning routines. I use it every day. What month is it today? I ask things like "what day is it?". There were also participants who explained that they asked questions while the child was engaged/continuing to work. For example, T-4 said, "As I said during

the activity, I ask something related to what he/she is doing. If there is a topic related to the activity that has emerged at that moment or something more independent of the activity, I ask something about it. For example, he drew someone, who is this, what are you doing, where are you here, or they are playing a game. What are you playing in the drama center? I can get involved and ask questions when I get involved." Regarding the timing of asking questions, teachers also stated that they practiced question and answer during the story reading process and when children were in learning centers or during an activity. Some of the participant views on this issue are as follows:

We read a story, when we read a story we ask a question, when he/she tells how much he/she understands from the story, he/she (the child) becomes aware of himself/herself. (T-10)

We use asking questions mostly while reading a book. For example, I ask at the beginning of the book, where is the front cover, where is the back cover, what would you do? (T-1)

Self-Assessment and Reflection of Young Children

Participant teachers were asked about their views and experiences on child reflection and assessment as it is a critical component in assessment as learning. They mentioned about the importance of reflection and assessment and the ways they experienced how children assess their own learning. Regarding children's self-assessment of their own learning and developmental processes in early childhood education, participant teachers stated that it is important for children to engage in self-assessment. Some participants discussed this importance together with the concept of motivation. Some statements related to this are as follows:

Sometimes children also need to assess themselves. Self-assessment is also important. We can show it in terms of motivation (talking about the child's work). Look, before you could do this, now you can do that, etc. (T-1)

A highly motivated child immediately becomes very enthusiastic. He can't sit still. Somehow, he wants to transfer what he knows. After that, he wants to talk about any example he adapted to his life, he wants to talk. (T-2)

In response to the question of how children make self-assessment, some teachers stated that children make self-assessment by comparing themselves with their peers. For example, T-5 stated this: "He compares himself with other friends. For example, when he falls behind in line work or other cutting activities or during the play, he thinks that he should be faster or do it more accurately, or that his friend is doing it properly, but he is doing it differently, I look at it, he corrects it next time, or we talk at the end of the play." Some teachers stated that children first assess the products created by their friends and then assess themselves with the questions asked by the teachers. For example, T-7 said, "Let's say he carried his coloring while painting.

When he came back, how do you think you colored it here instead of you missed it, you did it wrong?" is an example of this question.

While discussing children's self-assessment process within the scope of the interview, some teachers gave examples of judgmental statements about the products created by the children. While the strategies used by the children while working on the product or their statements about how they followed a certain path are not included, the statements of the children about the products they created being at the expected level come to the fore. Similarly, it is seen that children also make self-assessment with their judgements about the product while assessing themselves. A statement related to this is as follows:

For example, when they start to paint a picture, if their other friends paint ugly pictures, they look at it. We then ask the child not to accept the ugly drawing of another friend, but to accept it as such, and then ask them how they like their own drawing? You know, how do you find this picture you made? I ask this question, for example. After that, when they observe that picture from the environment, they can make a comparison when they see better or worse ones. Oh teacher, I didn't paint here. If there is an incomplete painting, when I ask how you found this painting before, she can say, "I didn't paint this place well. I'll go and paint there." (T-10)

Peer Assessment

The categories of this theme are listed as the importance, purpose, and implementations of peer assessment in early childhood education, and importantly it was found that they were not familiar with the concept and practices of peer assessment. A few of the participants asked the researcher to explain what is meant by peer assessment. For example, T-4 expressed this by saying "Peer assessment hmmm... (thinking) How for example?", while T-5 expressed their opinions through reasoning by saying "Peer assessment ııııııı... (thinking) is it something like making comments to each other?".

The results of the interviews revealed that teachers consider peer assessment as children's comments and assessments about each other's products when they produce something. Teachers stated that children usually judge the artifacts created by their friends, especially at the beginning of the semester, and that children made these assessments in a more appropriate language with the skills they acquired during the ongoing process. Some of the views related to this are as follows:

In this age group, peer assessment is a bit brutal. I mean, they are not particularly aware of empathy, they don't know much. They think very selfishly. Especially at the beginning of the semester, if something was beautiful or ugly, they would say it directly, but now, towards the end of the semester, they are a little bit better at understanding the feelings of the other person, putting themselves in his/her place,

with the emotional work we do, what would you feel if you were you? What did he/she has to do to make him/her feel good? They observe very well what is complete, what is missing or what is wrong (T-9)

I don't use peer assessment much. They are a bit cruel because they don't talk about this and that. That upsets the children a little bit. You know, their peers can be a little crueler. (T-3)

At the beginning of the semester, it is ruthless, but towards the end of the semester, since it is one of the behaviors that we want them to acquire, we teach them respect for differences, and then we see that in the second semester, instead of saying that any mistake they see in their friend is ugly or bad, they can treat their friend in a more respectful way and act more accepting. (T-10)

Interestingly, participating teachers stated that it is not appropriate for children to undergo peer assessment in early childhood, depending on their age group. Accordingly, some teachers express their opinion that they do not prefer to provide an environment and opportunity for children to make peer assessment in terms of planning and implementation. For example, T-10 said, "I mean, they shouldn't do it too much with each other... I don't think they should do peer assessment; I don't think children should get into each other." Because, as I said, this is not the behavior I want, especially in the classroom. Of course, not everyone is like this. He always saw the bad qualities of his friend, you know, he warned him at that moment... but sometimes he also sees the good qualities of his very nice friend and what can he do? The child can take that too. What comes to our mind is negative, but many friends also have good things they do. If the child sees something nice from his friend and can take it for himself, if we can highlight it, why not make such an assessment, but I definitely do not approve of negative assessment among friends." While T-1 stated "There are generally children at a certain level in pre-school education. So, frankly, I don't include each other in many assessment processes. You know, I've never experienced it. That's why they have handicaps before school, but sometimes children can do something, but if you can't do it, it won't happen. You know, they can say such things more clearly. "It may demotivate the child directly in front of me, that's why I don't prefer to use it much."

Although the interviews indicated that preschool teachers did not include peer assessment in their practices in a planned manner, they revealed that teachers included practices related to peer cooperation, peer teaching, or children getting support from each other within this framework. For example, regarding the effects of children on each other in their learning processes, T-5 said, "I mean, it is an activity where I allow them to assess each other, I mean, I didn't do anything for that purpose, but of course, this happens during the activity." For example, I pair two children together and have them do a study. Like group work, they do things because they work together, for example, they say to each other, "You can draw this better, you should draw this one." I'm doing something like this. For example, they do a lot of this, too, if it is called peer

assessment", while T-1 stated that the children received support from each other according to the situations developing at that moment in the learning process: "For example, I taught some things about paper folding. In one process, they did the folding of an airplane by sitting down and watching how he did it, one of them said, "What you did flies very well, it flies very well." For example, how did you do this? He explained it to his friends, step by step. Such things can happen spontaneously and develop in a natural process, but I do not prefer it because it may have handicaps. It may not be controllable, you know, it is not an area in which I am very expert because it is a subject of peer assessment. That's why I don't use it myself, but sometimes children can use it naturally, as I said."

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate preschool teachers' views and experiences regarding assessment as learning. In the current study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine the views and self-reported experiences of ten preschool teachers, and the findings were shared under the themes of feedback, questioning, self-assessment and reflection, and peer assessment. Participants often stated that they gave feedback to strengthen learning, develop positive behavior, and provide motivation. Interviews revealed that teachers generally give feedback at the end of the activity or task. It has also been found that teachers provide feedback for children who encounter difficulties on a task. The findings assert that teachers describe children's artifacts or performances and give feedback with expressions of appreciation. Feedback has long been understood to be a crucial part of assessment that supports learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Effective feedback encourages learning and assists children in enriching their learning experiences (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Sadler, 1989). It is very important to provide effective feedback while children are on task (Wiliam, 2012). It is advocated to provide feedback that supports learning moments without waiting for the end of the activity (Aras, 2023). Feedback loses its effectiveness when it is given to children too late for them to act upon it or relates to problems that have already happened and won't come up again since they will just ignore it and take no action to further their current learning (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004).

Interview results indicated that preschool teachers aimed to provide children with the opportunity to express themselves by asking questions. Besides, there are teachers who established a relationship between learning and asking questions and stated that they asked questions to support children's thinking processes and creativity. As Wallace and Hurst (2009) indicated that teachers use questions to support children's learning and understand where their current learning level is. The emphasis that teachers place on open-ended questions is among the prominent findings. In fact, some teachers shared that there is a widespread orientation that closed-ended questions should not be given much place in preschool education. In the literature, the importance of asking open-ended questions has been emphasized in many studies

(e.g., Almeida, 2012; Lee et al., 2012; Svanes & Andersson-Bakken, 2021). At this point, the recommendation to use open-ended questions in the national education program (MoNE, 2013, 2024) may have led teachers to report that they use open-ended questions. Teachers also stated that they ask questions more actively in the morning, when they start the day, and during circle times. In other words, teachers use questioning more intensively in group activities. Similarly, in studies examining when teachers tend to ask questions, it is known that teachers ask more questions to the whole group compared to individual ones (Bay & Hartman, 2015). Asking questions is one of the important strategies that educators often use to involve children in educationally meaningful conversations (Boyd & Galda, 2011).

In the interviews, some teachers stated that children make self-assessment by comparing themselves with their peers. However, in the assessment as learning approach, self-assessment is achieved through children's reinforcement, reflection, and revision, thus providing an environment for children to gain meaningful experiences of their learning (Dann, 2012). Reviewing previous learning processes and examining past experiences with children contributes to their self-assessment and reflective skills (Yılmaz et al., 2023). Therefore, teachers need to provide learning environments where children can express their own learning experiences in different ways beyond comparing themselves with their peers. Participating teachers stated that it is not appropriate for children to undergo peer assessment in early childhood. This may be since teachers are used to the traditional assessment approach. In more recent years, having the child's voice in the assessment process is an important factor and makes the assessment more effective (Aras, 2019). Although the interviews indicated that preschool teachers did not include peer assessment in their practices intentionally, they revealed that teachers included practices related to peer cooperation, peer teaching, or children getting support from each other within this framework. The role of self-assessment and peer assessment on children's self-regulation and metacognitive skills has been frequently investigated recently. It is an important finding that teachers' experiences in this regard should be supported through various and continuous professional development.

The results of this study indicate that preschool teachers' experiences on assessment as learning is open to be improved due to the child roles. Among the components of assessment as learning, the participant preschool teachers provided more experiences related to questioning and giving feedback. Although the teachers mentioned the critical role of child-centeredness, children's decision-making, or children's role, they provided limited experiences on self and peer assessment. Therefore, assessment as learning, which is a part of formative assessment in the early years, needs to be examined in research contexts to draw attention to the issue of assessment as learning. It is important to identify what teachers' current practices are, which this study seeks to reveal and to draw attention to the development of these practices in a process-oriented and child-role-centered way. Repeating this study in different contexts will renew the understanding on assessment considering all these

studies. In addition, this study revealed that preschool teachers have different practices in assessment as learning, so it would be valuable to examine the reasons for the differences in teachers' practices in more detail and to provide professional learning to improve teachers' skills on the components of assessment as learning.

Ethical Considerations

For the current study approval was received from the Social and Human Research Ethics Committee of the university in which one of the researchers works. Before starting the interviews, information about the purpose and content of the study was shared with the participant teachers verbally and in writing. It was stated in the consent form that the information of the participants would be kept confidential, and their names would not be included at any stage of the study. Consent indicating that they agreed to be audio recorded and that they participated voluntarily was also received in writing.

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Geniřletilmiř Özet

Günümüzde deęerlendirmeye ilgili kavramlar, özellikle çocukların devam eden okul süreçlerindeki gelişim ve öğrenmeleri nedeniyle, öz düzenleme, özerklik ve bağımsızlığın desteklenmesi açısından çocukların artan rolüne odaklanmaktadır (DeLuca vd., 2020). Bu noktada "öğrenme olarak deęerlendirme", öğrenme süreci ile deęerlendirme arasındaki kritik bağlayıcı olarak öğrenenin rolünü vurgulamaktadır (Earl, 2003). Öğrenme olarak deęerlendirme, çocuklara ne öğrendikleri ve daha da önemlisi nasıl öğrendikleri konusunda doğrudan geri bildirim sağlar; bu, bağımsızlığı ve öz düzenlemeyi teşvik etmek için gereklidir (Clark, 2012). Bu süreç aynı zamanda çocukların güçlü yönlerini daha iyi tespit edebilmeleri ve öğrenme ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak için neleri farklı yapmaları gerektiğini belirleyebilmeleri için öğrenmelerine aktif olarak dahil edilmelerine odaklanır (Earl, 2013; Hattie & Timperley, 2011).

Öğrenme olarak deęerlendirme, gözlem, analiz/yorumlama ve her bir çocuğun performansının açık kriterlere göre deęerlendirilmesini gerektiren ve çocuğun deęerlendirme sürecindeki rolüne vurgu yapan temel bir öğrenme sürecidir. Çocuğun öğrenme kazanımlarını teyit eder ve daha iyi öğrenme için çocuęa ve daha iyi öğretim için öğretmene geri bildirim verir. (Mentkowski, 2006). Yan ve Boud (2022) öğrenme olarak deęerlendirme tanımını "öğrenenin kanıt arama, ilişkilendirme ve kullanmadaki aktif katılımları yoluyla zorunlu olarak öğrenme fırsatları yaratan deęerlendirme" olarak önermiştir (s.13). Bu deęerlendirme yaklaşımı, deęerlendirmeyi çocuklar için üstbiliş geliştirme ve destekleme süreci olarak kullanmayı vurgular. Öğrenme olarak deęerlendirme, deęerlendirme ve öğrenme arasındaki kritik bağlantı olarak çocuğun rolüne odaklanır. Aktif, ilgili ve eleştirel deęerlendiriciler olarak çocuklar bilgiyi anlamlandırır, önceki bilgilerle ilişkilendirir ve yeni öğrenmeler için kullanır. Bu, üstbilişteki düzenleyici süreçtir. Çocuklar ne öğrendiklerini kişisel olarak izlediklerinde ve bu izlemeden elde ettikleri geri bildirimleri, anladıkları şekilde ayarlamalar, uyarlamalar ve hatta büyük deęişiklikler yapmak için kullandıklarında ortaya çıkar. Öğretmenler öğrenme olarak deęerlendirmeye odaklandıklarında, sınıf içi deęerlendirmeyi çocukların öğrenmelerini yansıtmaya ve eleştirel analiz etmeye konusunda gelişmelerine, uygulamalarına ve rahat olmalarına yardımcı olacak bir araç olarak kullanırlar (Earl, 2007).

Yılmaz ve dięerleri (2023), erken çocukluk eğitiminde öğrenme olarak deęerlendirmeyi teşvik etmek için bir araç olarak çocuk portfolyolarının rolünü kavramsallaştırmıştır. Öğrenme olarak deęerlendirme sürecini, çocuk Portfolyosu bağlamında çok boyutlu bir yapı ile açıklamışlardır. Daha yakın yıllarda literatürde, tüm eğitim kademelerinde deęerlendirmeye ilişkin çalışmaların, öğrenenin rolünü

merkeze alan "öğrenme olarak değerlendirme" perspektifiyle ele alındığı görülmektedir (Schellekens vd., 2021; Lee vd., 2019). Ancak erken çocukluk eğitiminde değerlendirmeyi bu perspektiften ele alan çalışmalar oldukça sınırlıdır (Yılmaz vd., 2023; DeLuca vd., 2020). Bu noktadan hareketle mevcut çalışma, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öğrenme olarak değerlendirmeye ilişkin görüş ve deneyimlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla aşağıdaki sorulara yanıt aranmaktadır:

1. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öğrenme olarak değerlendirme sürecine ilişkin görüşleri nelerdir?
2. Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öğrenme olarak değerlendirme konusunda söyleme dayalı deneyimleri nelerdir?

Çalışma, yaşadığımız dünyada olaylar, deneyimler, algılar, eğilimler, kavramlar ve durumlar gibi çeşitli şekillerde karşımıza çıkabilen, farkında olduğumuz ancak derinlemesine ve ayrıntılı bir anlayışa sahip olmadığımız olgulara odaklanan fenomenoloji deseninde yürütülmüştür (Creswell, 2013). Bu çalışma, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öğrenme olarak değerlendirmeye ilişkin anlayış ve deneyimlerini araştırmayı amaçlayan nitel bir çalışmadır. Çalışma grubu, geniş kapsamlı durumları ve önemli ortak örüntüleri belirlemek için kullanılan maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme ile belirlenmiştir (Patton, 2014). Çalışma grubunu 10 gönüllü okul öncesi öğretmeni oluşturmuştur. Öğretmenlerin çalıştıkları okul türleri, mesleki deneyimleri ve eğitim düzeyleri katılımcıların çeşitliliğini oluşturmuştur. Mevcut çalışmada veri toplamak için araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan bir görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Nitel araştırmalarda en sık kullanılan veri toplama aracı olan görüşmeler, bireylerden önemli ve detaylı bilgiler sağlamada etkilidir (Creswell, 2018). Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme, standardizasyonu ve esnekliği nedeniyle belirli bir konuda derinlemesine bilgi edinmeye yardımcı olduğu için tercih edilmiştir (Robson, 2011). Görüşme soruları için uluslararası literatür taranmış ve bu taslak form erken çocukluk eğitimi alanından iki uzmana gönderilmiştir. Sorulara kapsam ve anlam açısından verilen geri bildirimlerden sonra forma son hali verilmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öğrenme olarak değerlendirmeye ilişkin görüş ve deneyimlerinin çocuk rolleri bağlamında çok sınırlı olduğunu göstermektedir. Öğrenme olarak değerlendirmenin bileşenleri arasında, katılımcı okul öncesi öğretmenleri soru sorma ve geri bildirim verme ile ilgili daha fazla deneyim sunmuşlardır. Öğretmenler çocuk merkezliliği, çocukların karar vermesi veya çocuk rolünün kritik rolünden bahsetmiş olsalar da, öz değerlendirme ve akran değerlendirme konusunda sınırlı deneyim sunmuşlardır. Bu nedenle, erken yıllarda biçimlendirici değerlendirmenin bir parçası olan öğrenme olarak değerlendirme konusuna dikkat çekmek için araştırma bağlamlarında daha çok incelenmesine ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın ortaya çıkarmayı amaçladığı, öğretmenlerin mevcut deneyimlerinin neler olduğunun belirlenmesi ve bu uygulamaların süreç odaklı ve çocuk-rol merkezli bir şekilde geliştirilmesine dikkat

çekilmesi önemlidir. Bu çalışmanın farklı bağlamlarda tekrarlanması, tüm bu çalışmalar ışığında değerlendirmeye bakış açısını yenileyecektir. Ayrıca bu çalışma, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öğrenme olarak değerlendirme konusunda farklı deneyimlere sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur, bu nedenle öğretmenlerin uygulamalarındaki farklılıkların nedenlerinin daha detaylı incelenmesi ve öğretmenlerin öğrenme olarak değerlendirmenin bileşenleri konusundaki becerilerini geliştirmeye yönelik mesleki gelişim süreçlerinin geliştirilmesinin değerli olacağı düşünülmektedir.