

A CROSSCULTURAL STUDY ON OUTDOOR PLAY: PARENT AND  
TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **A CROSSCULTURAL STUDY ON OUTDOOR PLAY: PARENT AND TEACHER PERSPECTIVES**

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The aim of this multiple case study aim is two-fold: first is to explore Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment and second to focus on Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten settings. The sample of the study consisted of 28 participants including Turkish early childhood teachers (n=7) and parents (n=7); and Finnish (n=14) early childhood teachers (n=7) and parents (n=7). Data sources of current study involved semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, and observation of teachers' outdoor play practices. Taking its unique features into account, first each case was individually analyzed to identify themes and subthemes. Secondly, within the principles of cross-case analysis, the researcher attempted to draw comparisons and contrasts looking for similarities and differences across cases. Findings of the current study indicated that both Turkish and Finnish teachers and parents believed outdoor play was important for children's

development and learning. However, this study found that Turkish and Finnish parents have distinct beliefs about to barriers to outdoor play. While Turkish teachers believed that there are many barriers to outdoor play such as parental concern, inclement weather, teacher's inactivity, Finnish teachers believed that there are no barriers to applied outdoor play. An important finding was that Finnish and Turkish parents had distinct beliefs for the provision of outdoor play in kindergarten. While Turkish parents had health concerns about the provision of outdoor play in winter, Finnish parents stated that season and weather is not concern for them.

**Key words:** outdoor play, outdoor environment, early childhood teachers, parents

## ÖZ

### DIŞ MEKÂN OYUNLARINA YÖNELİK KÜLTÜRLERARASI BİR ÇALIŞMA: AİLE VE ÖĞRETMEN PERSPEKTİFLERİ

YALÇIN, Fatma

Yüksek lisans, Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Bölümü

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Bu çoklu durum çalışmasının iki amacı bulunmaktadır. Bunlardan birincisi Türk ve Fin okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ve ebeveynlerinin dış mekân oyunu ve ideal dış mekân ortamlarına ilişkin inançlarını incelemesi iken, diğeri Türk ve Fin okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarında bulunan dış mekânlarda gerçekleştirdikleri etkinlikleri ortaya koymaktır. Çalışma dâhilinde 28 katılımcı Türk okul öncesi öğretmenleri (n=7) ve ebeveynlerinden. (n=7) ; ve Fin okul öncesi (n=7) ve ebeveynlerinden (n=7) oluşmaktadır. Çalışmanın verileri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve araştırmacının öğretmenlerin dış mekân etkinlikleri üzerine yaptığı gözlemlerden gelmektedir. Bu kapsamda, her bir durum çalışmasının kendi içerisinde analizi yapılmış, tema ve alt temalar belirlenmiştir. İkinci aşama olarak ise çapraz durum analizi ile araştırmacı durumlar arası benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları Türk ve Fin öğretmenlerinin ve ebeveynlerinin dış mekân oyununun çocuğun gelişimi ve öğrenmesi için önemli olduğunu düşündüklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Öte yandan bu çalışma Türk ve Fin

ebeveynlerin dış mekân oyunu hakkında öngördükleri engelleri de ortaya koymaktadır. Türk öğretmenler ebeveynlerin endişelerinin, soğuk hava koşullarının, yetersiz ve uygun olmayan dış mekân materyal ve donanımlarının, kendilerinin dış mekân oyun uygulamalarına engel teşkil ettiklerini iler sürerken, Fin öğretmenler dış mekân oyun uygulamalarına engel teşkil eden herhangi bir durum olmadığını ifade etmişlerdir. Bu çalışma, Türk ebeveynlerin, okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarında kışın yapılan dış mekân uygulamalarına yönelik sağlık endişesi taşıdıklarını, ancak Fin ebeveynler için soğuk hava koşullarının her hangi bir kaygıya sebep olmadığını bulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dış mekân oyunları, dış mekân, okul öncesi öğretmenleri, ebeveynler

To my husband **Orhan YALÇIN**...

To my son **Ömer YALÇIN**...

To my parents...



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

When the history of early childhood education is examined, it is seen that the outdoor play is not a recent issue for early childhood practitioners. The roots of outdoor play and outdoor learning practices are based on the educational implications of the pioneers of early childhood education. Froebel, Mc Millan, Montessori, Isaacs, and Steiner placed a particular prominence on the provision of outdoor play and learning environments in early childhood education (Bilton, 2010; Garrick, 2009; Tovey, 2007). To Froebel, creator of the kindergarten concept, the garden should be at the centre of educational practices (Bilton, 2010; Borge, Nordhagen, & Lie, 2012; Garrick, 2009; Tovey, 2007). To this end, in his first kindergarten, he gave each child their own garden to tend. He believed that in this way children could be encouraged to grow in harmony with the natural environment. For him, the concept of *'kindergarten'* had metaphorical sense referring to the relation between “*child*” and “*garden*”. That is why; he preferred the term “*garden*” rather than “*school*”. Froebel’s educational ideas influenced many early childhood professionals (Bilton, 2010; Tovey, 2007). Margaret McMillan, inspired by Froebelian thinking, opened first open-air nursery school in Deptford, London in 1914. In this school, most of the educational experiences were carried out in garden whereas indoor environment was used when the weather was too cold. The main purpose of Mc Millan was to provide an accessible outdoor environment and fresh air for young children (Bilton, 2010; Garrick, 2009; Tovey, 2007). Unlike Mc Millan, Susan Isaacs, who was the third respectable person in this tradition, worked in a very distinct social context, with children coming from high socio-economic status. She established the Malting House School in Cambridge in 1924 (Garrick, 2009; Knight, 2009; Tovey, 2007). In this school, a major part of learning environment consisted of garden and outdoor buildings which involved rich and stimulating materials and equipment such as spaces for bonfires, bricks in a building area, and an unusual seesaw (Garrick, 2009;

Tovey, 2007). Montessori, unlike Froebel, Mc Millan and Isaacs, did not accept the idea that natural materials could be used as educational materials. However, in her first “*children’s house*” the garden was a special place including open areas for running, playing games with hoops, balls and ropes, as well as trees for shade. In addition, Montessori was the first person who suggested the idea of open access from indoors to outdoors (Montessori 1989 p.9 as cited in Tovey, 2007). Rudolf Steiner, developed the Waldorf approach in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and contrary to Montessori believed that natural materials should be used in both indoor and outdoor environments to stimulate the child's imagination and give a multi-sensory experience (Steiner, 1995 as cited in Carolyn Pope, 2002). In the Waldorf curriculum, outdoor play in the carefully designed yard and nature walks have special place in order to address and develop motor sensory development and powerful concentration skills (de Souza, 2012; Carolyn Pope, 2002; Schmitt-Stegmann; 1997).

The pioneers of outdoor play and education generated their ideas related to early education in very different social and cultural contexts from those of today. However, many contemporary early childhood practitioners, working in various cultures and traditions, also make an effort to provide qualified outdoor play and learning environments for young children (Garrick, 2009). These efforts are based on the various studies conducted by many contemporary early childhood researchers. Those studies put forward outdoor play support children’s holistic development by presenting rich learning experiences in a stimulating environment (Davies, 1996; Fjortoft, 2001; Maynard & Waters, 2007; Rivkin, 1997, 2000; White, 2008).

While the pioneers of early childhood education and contemporary scholars alike assert that the provision of outdoor play is essential for children’s healthy grow and holistic development and should be an integral part of early childhood curriculum, as well as indoor play, such efforts afforded for the provision and preparation of outdoor play are far from universal (Garrick, 2009). The levels of outdoor play provision in different countries can vary depending on their policy and practice. According to the thematic review of early childhood education policies of countries (OECD, 2006), the differences in commitment to outdoor play depend on the early childhood education tradition of countries. For instance, in several OECD countries including France and several English-speaking ones, national policy of early childhood education is based on “readiness for school” That is why, indoor

buildings are stated as major learning environments (OECD, 2006). On the contrary, Nordic countries such as Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway equally pay attention to the provision of outdoor and indoor learning experiences by allocating financial budget to outdoors and referring outdoor play at the policy and practice levels of early years education (Marttila, 2013; OECD, 2006).

Early childhood teachers and the other practitioners in this area are affected by cultural tradition and the related policies (Garrick, 2009). However, the only thing, which influences early childhood teachers' educational practices, is not cultural tradition and national policies. According to Spodek (1988), teachers have a system that constructs their curriculum and that is derived from the consequences of various experiences and the interpretation of facts. In addition, Spodek (1988) stated that teachers' belief is one of those constructs that affect teachers' actions and planning process. Likewise, Nespor (1987) and Tatto and Coupland (2003) reported that teachers' beliefs might have key role while planning their curriculum. At that point, the beliefs early childhood teachers which might affect the function or provision of outdoor play comes to question. In the field of early childhood education, the issues such as; the importance of play, the relation between teachers' beliefs, perception related to play and attitudes towards play or how those feelings influence teachers' actual indoor play practices were frequently studied by scholars (Brett, Valle-Riestra, Fischer, Rothlein, & Hughes., 2002; Cooney, 2004; Kontos, 1999; Logue & Harvey, 2010). In contrast to indoor play, the significance of outdoor play is just appreciated in a number of countries, yet there is not sufficient effort for the planning and provision of outdoor play. To add, teacher training programs and teacher education textbook rarely referred the outdoor play and outdoor environment (Renick, 2009). That is why; there is a strong belief in early childhood education about outdoor play practice. According to this belief, teachers generally consider that outdoor environment requires less teacher care and participation when compared to indoor environment. In addition, teachers believe that their primary role is to ensure safety and supervision when children freely play in outdoor playground. For that reason, during outdoor play, they behave as if they were allowed to take a break (Bowman, 1990; Davies, 1997; Louv, 2008; Renick, 2009).

Whereas outdoor play is considered as a break time by early childhood teachers, for children it has very different meanings. For them, outdoor environment

is a setting which provides many things that indoor environments can never ensure. For instance, most of the children enjoy being outdoors as they take pleasure from activities including running, climbing and jumping which are not likely provided by indoors. In addition, it presents various sensory qualities such as; the smells, the sounds and the feels that naturally draws children's attention. Plus, outdoor is dynamic learning and play environment in which children explore the world at first hand because it enables children to experience the natural phenomena including weather conditions, changing seasons or shadows (Rivkin, 1997, 2000; White, 2008; Wilson, 2008). Last but not least, rich, sensory and natural outdoor settings support children' both individual explorations and collaborative learning. For that reason, it is accepted as an ideal space where children may naturally and easily learn the concepts, knowledge and skills that most of curriculum required (Fjørtoft, 2004; Maynard & Waters, 2007). Nevertheless, conducted studies proposed that at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century children played more outdoors when compared to at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century (Clement, 2004; Knight, 2009; Rivkin, 1998; Thigpen, 2007). Most of children nowadays spent their time inside buildings since children's access to the outdoors has decreased owing to several reasons. This situation is justified by the researchers in two ways. Firstly, parental concerns including traffic, kidnapping, injury, insect-borne, diseases and pollution are put forward as major causes which prevent children to access outdoors. Besides, increase in working parents and the use of technology at home are suggested as reasons for the decline of the time spent outdoors (Clement, 2004; O'brien & Murrey, 2007; Rivkin, 1997, 1998, 2000; Thigpen, 2007; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997).

As a result of the decline of the time spent outdoors, the pattern of children's play and movements has been changed. Traditional games including lots of moving around are changing into sitting in front of private computers to play computer games (Fjørtoft, 2001). On account of less time spent outdoors at home, the role of kindergartens in provision of outdoor play and learning environment becomes crucial (Renick, 2009). At that point, the quality issue for provision of outdoor play comes into question. The role of teachers in outdoor play and rich, sensory outdoor learning environment are suggested as the main components which influence the quality of outdoor play (Chakravarthi, 2009; Davies, 1997; Storli & Hagen, 2010; Rivkin, 1998; Niklasson & Sandberg, 2010). However, in early childhood education, it is widely acknowledged that family engagement is also very critical for better child

development. In other words, as parents and teachers are partners dealing with the same purpose, parental partnership is essential to enhance healthy child development and learning (OECD, 2012). Within this regard, it could be affirmed that parental partnership is also significant for the provision of qualified outdoor play at kindergartens. However, parents' negative views about the provision of outdoor play, particularly in winter, are stated as one of the main barriers by early childhood teachers (Chakravarthi, 2009; Renick, 2009). However, those conducted studies obtained their data from participant teachers. In other words, parents were not applied to get their views regarding the provision of outdoor play in the kindergartens. That is why; the current study aimed to get parents and early childhood teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment in order to understand the issue from their own perspectives.

Kos and Jerman (2013) examined play and learning in the natural environment and on the playgrounds of Slovene preschools, with 140 preschool teachers and 264 parents of children who attended preschools in 21 Slovene towns. They concluded that parents' opinions show a positive attitude towards outdoor play and learning (Kos & Jerman, 2013). At that point, the question, whether there is any culture effects on teachers' and parents' opinions on the issue of the provision of outdoor play in kindergartens, might be emerged. As previously mentioned, in OECD countries, the provision of outdoor play may vary at their policy and practice levels of early years education. Depending on their tradition and policies, commitment to outdoor play and differences in levels of outdoor play practices can be significant (OECD, 2006).

In line with this tradition and policies, Nordic countries do not limit outdoor play to the outdoor environment of kindergartens. Outdoor play sessions might be carried out in forests or challenging woodland environment in order to enrich the relation between child and nature. In those countries, there are many kindergartens which carry out outdoor play sessions once a week in forests, while there are other kindergartens applying *Forest School Approach* which require carrying out outdoor play sessions every day of the years in Forest regardless of weather conditions (Amus, 2013; Borge, Nordhagen & Lie, 2003; Knight, 2009; Linde, 2010). Even if those educational implications originated from Nordic countries, several other countries, which were inspired by Scandinavian ones, put the outdoor education and Forest School Approach into practices in their early years education. For instance,

Germany, Lithuania, Japan, Russia, England, Wales and Scotland are the ones following Nordic countries on this issue (Linde, 2010; Robertson, 2008).

As for to Turkey's position, although awareness toward outdoor education, play and learning environment has been rising, those are quite new issues in Turkish early childhood education. That is why; in comparison with many European and in particular Nordic countries, outdoor play is a field which needs to be improved at both policy and practice levels in Turkey. In this regard, Öztürk (2009), who evaluated the recent conditions of outdoor education in Turkish early childhood education, asserted that outdoor environments of public kindergartens are not capable to enrich outdoor education. The claim of the researcher is parallel to the results of the studies which are conducted to investigate the current status of playgrounds in public and private kindergartens (Çelik, 2012; Olgan & Kahrıman-Öztürk; 2011). In addition, Öztürk (2009) claimed that outdoor environments of kindergartens are used just for the purpose of free play in exclusively spring. Lastly, Öztürk (2009) put forward that daily plans of kindergartens are arranged in a way that require carrying out activities indoor environment. Within this regard, when updated National Early Childhood Education Program (MONE, 2013) is examined, it is seen that it includes quite detailed description about learning centers and their organization in indoor environment whereas it does not attribute special value and emphasis to outdoor play and learning environment. However, this curriculum is based on objectives and indicators which children are expected to acquire. In other words, teachers are not expected to teach any specific theme in a particular learning environment. Even, teachers are suggested to practice all kinds of activities as possible as in outdoor environment (MONE, 2013). Depending on this suggestion, it could be stated that teachers have key role in the provision of outdoor play. As teachers are decision makers of the educational practices in kindergartens, it is significant to reveal the issues which affect their decision-making process. In addition, based on related literature it might be suggested that there are differences in levels of outdoor play practices of various countries (Garrick, 2009; OECD, 2006). Depending on the idea that tradition and national early childhood education policies of countries might influence individual practitioners, this study was conducted in two in two different countries; Finland, one of the Nordic countries, and Turkey.

## **1.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of current study is two-fold, first is to explore Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and outdoor environment. Second is to investigate Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten settings. To this end, the present study addressed the following research questions;

1. What are the Turkish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to ideal outdoor environments and outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting?
2. What are the Turkish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten setting?
3. What are the Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to ideal outdoor environments and outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting?
4. What are the Finnish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten setting?

## **1.2 Significance of the Study**

The conducted studies in the field of early childhood education demonstrated that the value of play for children's holistic development and learning is widely acknowledged. On the other hand, the role of outdoor play is very recent issue for early childhood professionals. For that reason, there are very few studies that give empirical attention to outdoor play. That is why; the current study is significant as it is expected to make contribution to the field by bridging gaps in outdoor play literature. In addition, related literature indicated that the previous studies, which are similar to the current study, generally focused on just early childhood teachers' beliefs regarding outdoor play and their outdoor play practices (Davies, 1997; Rennick, 2009; Chakravarthi, 2009). However, this study, in contrast to previous ones, involved parents as participants of the study and aimed to investigate not only early childhood teachers' beliefs but also parents' beliefs related outdoor environment and outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting. For the current study, parents were involved as participants in accordance with two aims. First, as previously mentioned, in the former studies early childhood teachers reported parents as a barrier owing to their concern about the provision of outdoor play in winter.

That is why, the researcher aimed to explore their beliefs from their own perspectives. Second, applying two different sources (teachers and parents) on the same issue, the scholar aimed to present much more broaden and valid perspective for the reader and further studies. It was assumed that this holistic and integrated perspective enables the reader to objectively evaluate the issue (beliefs related to outdoor play). Additionally, this study, unlike the previous ones, was conducted as multiple case study. Stake (2006) stated that multiple case studies aim to investigate how the phenomenon performs in various environments. Likewise, Creswell (2007) proposed that the aim of selecting multiple cases is generally to present different perspectives on the issues. From this point of view, multi-case study design made this study unique as it examined the same phenomenon in two different settings (two kindergartens in Finland and Turkey) in order to introduce diverse perspectives on the same issue. In this way, the findings of this study would be rationale at, not only national level but also global level. Those are reasons which made this study significant owing to its design and participants. However, the current study is also important in terms of its educational implications. As previously mentioned, in Turkey, curriculum for early childhood education suggested teachers suggested conducting learning activities in outdoor environment as much as possible (MONE, 2013). Correspondingly, in Finland, free curriculum model is implemented under the supervision of National Curriculum Guidelines on ECEC (2003) and National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education (2010). Based on those guide curriculums, teachers are expected to create their own curriculums. At that point, it is crucial to reveal early childhood teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play since they are decision makers of the classroom and curriculum. In addition, observation of teachers' behaviour in their natural setting is significant to understand how their beliefs shape their practices. Findings of this study related to teachers' beliefs and practices regarding outdoor play would be a base for pre-service and in-service teacher training programs that influence on teachers' beliefs and practices.

At last but not least, as many research referred, the quality of early childhood education depends on the collaboration between teachers, parents and children (Bryant, Burchinal, Lau, & Sparling, 1994; Ghazvini, & Readdick, 1994; OECD, 2012). Therefore, it is impossible to claim that a qualified early childhood education could be provided without support, collaboration, and communication of teachers and parents. This issue is also valid for appropriate outdoor play practices in a



kindergarten. That is why; it is momentous to reveal parents' beliefs related to outdoor environment and outdoor play practices in order to identify what is needed to be improved. That is to say, under the guidance of emerging findings, this study is significant in terms of presenting current conditions of outdoor play in Turkey and Finland and determining what parts require to be improved.

### **1.3 My Motivation for the Study**

Undergraduate years of my education led me gain valuable knowledge about importance of education in early ages and the value of play in young children's development and learning. In my undergraduate years, I have tried to improve myself about early childhood education. To this end, I went to the Belgium as an ERASMUS student. Through this experience, I had chance to practice in different kindergartens implementing different approaches. I observed that children in Belgian preschools played outside even in too cold weather conditions. Additionally, in my graduate years I visited three different kindergartens in Netherlands. In those schools, I observed the same kind of experiences related to outdoor play and outdoor learning. Moreover, the early childhood professionals having chance to visit Scandinavian countries informed me that outdoor play and outdoor learning are the most important components of their early childhood curriculums.

The question "why those countries give much importance to outdoor play and learning?" led me read about outdoor play and outdoor learning literature. While I was reading the related literature, I realized that there were many conducted research about the importance of outdoor play for children's learning and development. Another thing which drew my attention was that most of those conducted studies were originally from Scandinavian countries where winter conditions are too harsh and long period. Coming from Turkey, where children are allowed to play outdoors mostly in warmer weather, I wondered the differences between viewpoints of Nordic and Turkish in this issue. Based on the review of literature and my informal experiences, I realized three components of outdoor play including teacher, parent and outdoor environment. As previously mentioned, parents and teachers are the primary decision makers who enable children to play outdoors. Therefore; considering limited conducted outdoor play studies in Turkey, I intended to conduct a study to investigate early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to outdoor play. However, I thought that conducting this study with participants

including just Turkish early childhood teachers and parents would probably make me obtained data which I expected. On the other hand, to conduct a study including one of the Nordic countries would be a golden opportunity to gain and present much more broaden perspective in this issue. That is why I wanted to conduct this study as cross-cultural. When it comes to the reason why I would visit Finland for my research, I can justify this choice in two ways. First, as the other Nordic countries, Finland is the second forested area of European Union and Finnish legislation present free access to natural environments (Ministry of Environment, 2015). Thus, Finns eagerly utilize this occasion when they have free time (<http://www.outdoors.fi>, 2015). This occasion demonstrates that outdoor activities and outdoor life is a tradition of Finland. More importantly, outdoor and nature activities are involved in teaching to a varying degree at almost all school levels (Marttila, 2013). Besides, compare to many OECD countries, Finland has strong and rooted education system which was referred as a good example (Kyrö, 2011; Maatta & Uusiautti, 2012; OECD, 2012). To illustrate, Finnish pupils have had great success in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies (OECD PISA, 2012). As mentioned in most of the study, the success of Finnish pupils in PISA was associated with Finnish early childhood education system (Kupiainen, Hautama`ki, & Karjalainen, 2009; Va`lji`rvi et al., 2007; Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012). For that reasons, I believed that to conduct this study involving Finland would be a good opportunity both to learn a great deal about Finnish early childhood education and integration of outdoor play into early childhood daily practices. To this end, I designed my study in a way not only to investigate Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and environment but also to examine early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten settings. This design enabled me to present current position of outdoor play practices in terms of such issues; how outdoor play is integrated daily curriculum, how outdoor environments of kindergartens are used, and what kind of activities are implicated... Within the guidance of emerging findings of current thesis, it was aimed to do best contribution for the well-being future of children by referring existing outdoor play practices and the parts which are needed to be improved.

#### **1.4 Definitions of Terms**

*Early Childhood Education:* Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a term that involves developmentally appropriate programs serving children from birth to age 8 (Essa, 2003).

*Early Childhood Teacher:* Early childhood teacher is an educator with an approved early childhood teaching qualification to work in early childhood institutions (Copple, Bredekamp, & NAEYC, 2009)

*Play:* Play is a process that includes a range of voluntary, intrinsically motivated activities which are engaged in for the purpose of enjoyment (Frost, Wortham & Reifel, 2008).

*Outdoor Play:* Outdoor play consists of structured or instructed play activities that take place in outdoor environment (Parsons, 2011)

*Outdoor Environment:* In the current study, the term of outdoor environment is synonymously used with outdoor play environment of kindergarten which includes generally playground and outdoor habitats.

*Belief:* Belief refers a person' strongly and psychologically held understandings, premises or propositions about the world which are accepted as true. Beliefs are felt to be true by the individual holding the belief, yet they do not require epistemic warrant (Richardson, 2003).

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The aim of this chapter is to present a review of the empirical literature concerning outdoor play and learning in early childhood education. The first part addresses the historical background of outdoor play and learning, referring to outdoor play practices applied by pioneers in early childhood. Additionally, with mention to recent research, this section aims to reveal the importance of outdoor play for children's holistic development and learning. In the second part, the current policy and practice of outdoor play in various countries is discussed. The third part, offers a brief insight into Turkish and Finnish early childhood education and the place outdoor play holds in each system. In the last part, the role of adults (teachers and parents) in the provision of outdoor play in a kindergarten setting are presented by referring their beliefs and teachers' outdoor play practices as observed by teachers.

#### **2.1 Historical and Theoretical Base of Outdoor Play in Early Childhood Education**

Early childhood education arose out of the recognition of childhood as a distinct life phase holding the keys to lifelong development. Jean Jacques Rousseau, (1712-1778) considered childhood as a distinct phase of life, gave importance to the natural outdoor environment which were pivotal for educating young children (Graves, Gargiulo, & Sluder, 1996). Although Rousseau never had the chance to apply his educational ideas to practice, he inspired educators and philosophers alike to do so (Wellhousen, 2002). That is why the provision of outdoor play has been a special feature during the early years of childhood for more than two centuries (Tovey, 2007). For instance, Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was influenced by Rousseau's appreciation of nature and further developed the notion that children should be free to gain experience from nature. He favoured actions like

observation and admiration of nature through nature walks. In this way, teachers are encouraged to support children in learning and collecting resources from nature while also enabling them to utilize their senses for discovering those materials (Frost, 1942). Like Pestalozzi, many other pioneers including Froebel, McMillan; Isaacs, Montessori, and Steiner have emphasized that nature is a medium through which children learn; therefore children ought to have the opportunity and the freedom to play freely in nature as they observe, analyse, explore, and appreciate the things they see in a natural setting (as cited in Bilton, 2010; Herrington, 2001; Garrick, 2009; Knight, 2009; Tovey, 2007).

Linking the connection between garden design to the philosophy of children's learning and recognizing the holistic nature of children's learning, Froebel was perhaps one and only amongst the pioneers. According to Froebel, the garden had both literal and figurative meaning. For Froebel, the word 'kindergarten' signified a place in which the children can grow up and develop in tune with nature. In Blankenburg, Germany, his kindergarten's garden played an important and major role. This garden had an open space for play. The area was specially designed for free play, games and musical entertainment times for kids. It also included a paved area where parents and visitors could sit. In the central area of the garden there was plot ground for each child. In their own plots the children were able to do anything they liked from painting the ground to growing plants. They also had to work together as a group in the shared, communal gardens and take responsibility. In Froebel's garden children were in tune with nature and would begin to hear their own voice in the natural world. Thus, Froebel's garden was a spiritual place (Froebel, 1987 as cited in Herrington, 2001).

Froebel's radical educational theories had many followers in his native Germany. His ideas then proceeded to Europe, Japan and North America in the following decades. During the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Margaret McMillan was influenced by Frobelian thinking, when she was working in England (Garrick, 2009). When McMillan was running an open air camp for children in the slum areas of South London, disease was rife. McMillan was convinced that the outdoor time would dramatically increase the healthiness levels of the children and she focused on the youngest. She created an open air nursery and a garden for children. The garden was the first and foremost area of the nursery. The

indoor spaces provided shelter for bad weather. She enounced that everything would take place outdoors, playing, sleeping, eating, story-telling etc. (Tovey, 2007).

The third important figure of this tradition is Susan Isaacs. She worked with highly advantaged children and opened the Malting House School in Cambridge in 1924. These children were between the ages of 2 and 8. They were almost free all the time, and had the chance to explore the expansive outdoor environment. Main part of the learning experience was formed by the garden and the outdoor buildings. Isaac's most interesting and exciting writing focuses on the children's experiences outdoors. The resources in the outdoor environment were abundant and roused different ways of thinking in children. There were spaces for bonfires, building areas full of bricks and an unusual seesaw that had movable weights fastened underneath. From time to time it also included a number of common, domestic pets and some more unusual ones, such as snakes, silkworms and salamanders. Apart from the animals there were also lots of plants and trees with a diverse natural environment (Garrick, 2009).

The founder of the Montessori Method, Maria Montessori, highlighted the importance of children being in nature and supported gardening as an educational tool as it would encourage children's imaginations. In Montessori's first 'Children's House', there was a central courtyard within the garden that was surrounded by tenement flats and an open space where children could run and play. The children were able to play with hoop, balls, ropes aside from a garden, which was bordered with trees that provided shade. In the garden plants and vegetables were cultivated and just like Froebel's garden it also included individual plots. Montessori pioneered the notion of open access to outdoors from indoors and as well as free choice and self-direction (Montessori 1989, as cited in Tovey, 2007).

Rudolf Steiner, the creator of the Waldorf Approach, emphasized outdoor play by including outdoor play sessions in the Waldorf curriculum daily schedule. He believed outdoor play enabled children to experience natural changes in the environment and seasonal change. Additionally, Waldorf teachers carry out many outdoor activities such as telling stories and reciting poems about nature and it's beauty. The aim is demonstrating to children through those stories and poems how people need nature for survival and wellbeing. In addition, the acts of planting and harvesting are used as tools through which children develop a love for nature and a sense of responsibility toward their natural surroundings ((de Souza, 2012; Carolyn Pope, 2002; Schmitt-Stegmann; 1997).

Across the US and Europe, from the early nineteenth century onwards a tradition of outdoor education shaped a different approach to outdoor play (Bilton, 2010). As discussed above, there are significant differences among ideologies in this tradition. However, the presence of a garden and a specific place where children are able to play as they learn outdoors is always constant (Tovey, 2007).

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

An understanding system is necessary to investigate early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs and how those beliefs affect their practices of outdoor play. In an attempt to explore these perspectives, L.S. Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory informed the current study. According to Sociocultural theory, "social experience shapes the way of thinking and interpreting the world available to individuals" (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p.12). Vygotsky suggested that human behaviours should be clarified by considering human intentions as individual behaviours and their culturally defined dimensions serve as a base for the actions. In this regard, sociocultural theory was utilized to investigate the intentions of teachers as well as their cultural and educational beliefs. In addition, this theory was used to bring out how those beliefs affect teachers' behaviours regarding outdoor play practices by referring the intents of the early childhood teachers' decision making in the outdoor play process.

Vygotsky focused on the connections between people and the cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences (Vygotsky, 1930, pp.24 as cited in Crain, 2005). That is why, this theoretical framework enabled an understanding how culture influence the way of thinking of people. For instance, the beliefs of different cultures regarding to importance of outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment were identified through this framework.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasized the role of teacher-child interactions. In this regard, one of the most widely recognized and well-known concepts associated with Vygotsky's scientific production is the term *zone of proximal development*. According to Vygotsky; the zone of proximal development is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined through problem solving and level of potential development as determined through problem solving under the adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers"

(Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). Guided activities with adults and collaboration with more capable peers might occur in both indoor and outdoor learning environment during play sessions.

Vygotsky's definition of the zone of proximal development is based on the idea that learning is evidently mutual (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). In other words, depending on the interaction level of between peers or between teachers and children, a zone of proximal development is generated while learning occurs. In an outdoor play session, for instance, children might be interested in investigating the outdoor environment and attentively examine snails emerging after rain. If early childhood teachers engage this investigation and provide additional information about the habitat of snails such as 'where they live, what they eat...' children learn more than the things that are derived from their own explorations. However, during this process, children are not the ones who learn new information, teachers simultaneously might learn regarding the interests of children in their groups. Depending on their learnings, they may create new activities according to children's needs and interest. This type of interactions between teachers and children in outdoor environment might result in changing teachers' beliefs related to their practices.

### **2.3 The Importance of Outdoor Play within Framework of the Recent Studies**

Though ideas about outdoor learning have changed over the last hundred years, a children's needs have not. They still want to play outside and being outside is healthy for a child (Bilton, 2010). So, outdoor play is an essential type of child's play, and it is vital for child's holistic development. For instance, during outdoor play children make use of their gross motor and co-ordination skills. This includes a wider range of muscle movements, they: run, jump, chase, dodge, climb, dig, slide, roll, throw, balance, swing, pedal, push and pull; all requiring usage of different muscles and skills by which they co-ordinate sequences of movements (Fjørtoft, 2000, 2001, 2004 ; Rivkin, 2000; Tovey, 2007).

Though outdoor play contributes greatly to physical development, it is important not to overlook its significance to children's cognitive development. . Ouvry (2000) points out that when children are outside playing they not only practice their muscles but also exercise their minds. Outdoor play encourages the development of perceptual competences such as depth, form, shape, size and



movement perception (Rakison, 2005) as well as general spatial orientation (Bjorklund & Pellegrini, 2002).

According to research while children are playing outdoors they learn about risk (see e.g. Little, 2010; Sandseter, 2010, 2012). Play offers situations in which children can try out, have a go at risk taking and learn from these risks. Through these experiences they become more confident, competent, and adventurous individuals. They are not afraid when they are dealing with the unknown, and less afraid of stepping outside their comfort zone. They manage risk and they know how to be safe (Ball, 2002; Sandseter, 2010, 2012; Smith, 1998; Stutz, 1999; Tovey, 2007).

While playing outdoors children engage in social interactions and it is an important and valuable way for children to learn about democratic values (Aasen, Grindheim, & Waters, 2009).

When children are learning in nature they become more confident and have higher self-esteem because they can manage the environment in which they live, play, and explore. Their sense of self-worth increases and they become more aware of their surroundings (Nilsen, 2008).

#### **2.4 Importance of Outdoor Environment**

For young learners, education should not be restricted in a school building. It should go beyond the school walls as outdoor environments are critically significant in terms of running and releasing energy and acquiring the scientific research skills such as; observation, examining and exploring. Educators need these types of environments to enhance the children's skills mentioned above, and to provide them new learning opportunities (Ünal, 2009).

The outdoor environment is a unique learning setting that is qualitatively different from indoors. For instance, it provides an open space and a greater degree of freedom to try things out, to explore and experiment without the constraints associated with an indoor environment. Therefore, the outdoors provide an environment with 'more scope' for children to have 'have a go' at something without worrying about the consequences (Rivkin, 2000, Towey, 2007). Additionally, indoors spaces are domains where adults are more in control while outdoors is considered to be a place where children can escape the watchful and controlling eyes of adults (Maynard, T & Waters, J. 2007, Towey, 2007).

The air, temperature, light, weather conditions, seasons are in constant flux outdoors. This dynamism provides another unique aspect that sets the outdoor environment apart. Some obvious examples of this include: puddles appear and disappear, clouds move, flower buds open, snails emerge after rain. In addition to this, the entire space can transform on a foggy day, which provides attractive exploring opportunities for a young child. The unpredictability of the outdoors and the its sheer variability make it a unique learning environment. On the contrary, an indoor environment is relatively static, and, does not allow exploring the natural changing. In other words, the life occurs outdoors (Rivkin, 1998, Towey, 2007).

## **2.5 Outdoor Play in Early Childhood from Recent European Perspectives**

During the last century in Western countries, children's play in nature has shown a dramatic change (Brussoni, Olsen, Pike, & Sleet, 2012). Within a generation, general understanding of the outdoors changed in Western countries when adults started monitoring and watching their children as they play. This resulted in children having fewer opportunities for outdoor play (Clements, 2004; Francis & Lorenzo, 2006; Ginsburg et al., 2007). As time passes children have less time spent outdoors and this means lower expectations in the amount of contact with nature (Karsten, 2005). Children's opportunities for outdoor play at school and in child care have undergone significant erosion. Urban changes have prevented children from engaging freely in outdoor play in their environment. Children stopped going out on the street and playing (Francis & Lorenzo, 2006). Urban scene changes resulted in children's restrictions, and now children stay inside in homes, kindergartens and schools (Kernan, 2010). Yet, there are still some countries where children's free play spaces are important, such as Scandinavian countries (Sandseter, 2010, 2012; Årlemalm-Hagsér & Sandberg, 2013). On levels of policy and practice, the OECD report on early childhood education (2006) clearly shows the differences between countries.

The OECD report on early education and care (2006) demonstrates the differences between English speaking countries and Nordic/central Europe countries. In English speaking countries there is the 'schoolification' of ECEC. Schoolification focuses on the learning standards especially in the cognitive–linguistic academic domains. Nordic/central European countries have a more holistic approach on the issue. In these countries there is a strong emphasis on 'learning to live together and

support children in developmental tasks and interests.’ Both approaches have positive effects on children’s learning. However, if the emphasis is not strong and broad enough on abstract skills in the schoolification, it becomes easier to view play as a dispensable element in early childhood education. Then, a very easy transition from outdoor play and learning environments to indoor structured play and learning is possible. The current situation in England and North America is also as such. There are direct threats to play during recess time with a push to increase the time spent on traditional curriculum activities (Waller, Sandseter, Wyver, Arlemalm-Hagser, & Maynard, 2010) .

In Scandinavia, there are forest or nature kindergartens where children can connect with nature and are able to play freely. In these kindergartens the children are encouraged to play freely, discover, explore in a natural setting despite the weather (Amus, 2013; Borge, Nordhagen, & Lie, 2003; Knight, 2009; Linde, 2010).The Adults play an important role in children’s experience in these kindergartens (Robertson, 2008). Children in these kindergartens, who are between 2 and 6 are outdoors almost everyday. Forest kindergartens are also known as “Waldkindergarten”in German and “I Ur och Skur” (Rain or Shine) kindergartens, in Swedish (Robertson, 2008; Amus, 2013).

The roots of the forest and nature pedagogy belong to Sweden. Since 1892, a non-profit organization called “Friluftsliv” (Outdoor Life) offers activities in the area of nature education for all ages (Linde, 2010).

A Swedish sports officer Gösta Frohm (1908-1999) became actively involved in the development of outdoor schools. Frohm believed that urbanization was alienating children from nature and was concerned about the relationship between Swedes and nature. He wanted the children to play in nature, around the plants and trees in the forest, near the cliffs and waterfronts instead of indoors, parking spaces and streets. So in 1957, Frohm created the idea of “Skogsmulle”, “Skog” meaning wood in Swedish and “Mulleé originally meaning earth or soil. Frohm started teaching children about nature with the help of the fictional character Skogsmulle and the Skogsmulle schools began. In the beginning Skogsmulle schools were rigid until the concept was connected with play parks. The first combination opened in Stockholm. As a result of this, Skogsmulle activities became common around the whole country. In 1985, kindergartens called “I Ur och Skur” (Rain or Shine schools)

were established together with the Frohm's model of Skogsmulle activities and outdoor, nature-based institutions (Linde, 2010; Robertson, 2008).

In the city of Kauniainen, Finland in 1979, Skogsmulle (Metsämörri) activities were held in Swedish for the very first time. In 1992, a Finnish organization called Suomen Latu promoting the outdoor activities made an agreement with the outdoor recreation organisation Friluftsförbundet to develop Skogsmulle (Metsämörri) activities. And in 1998, the first I Ur och Skur kindergarten was founded by Gunilla Cavonius. The kindergarten, as a Swedish medium school in Kauniainen, was working under Friluftsförbundet. The first Finnish language speaking kindergarten working with the same principles was Latu's first pilot kindergarten called Luonnossa Kotonaan (At home in nature pedagogy). It was founded in the southern part of Finland in 1999 (Nikkinen, 2011, pp.13-15 as cited in Amus, 2013). Skogsmulle activities and methods for teaching children in nature have also expanded to other countries other than Sweden and Finland such as Norway, Germany, Latvia, Japan, Russia, Lebanon, England, Wales and Scotland (Linde, 2010; Robertson, 2008).

## **2.6 A brief insight into the Finnish and Turkish system of early childhood education**

To assess and evaluate the outdoor play and learning in Finland and Turkey's early childhood education system presenting a brief insight is necessary.

In Finland, the early childhood education for 1 to 6 year olds combines the care, the education, and the family. That is why; it is called "*Edu-Care*" (Finnish National Board of Education, 2003; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012). Pre-primary education which services children aged 6-7 is distinguished from day-care as a separate institution, at the national policy level, but in practice it is a part of the municipal provision of day-care services (Finnish National Board of Education, 2010). The Finnish early education system is known for its high quality and well-trained staff. The staffs of Finnish day-care centers are composed of teachers, nursery nurses, special kindergarten teachers, social educators of social sciences. The educational background of the highly equipped staff is a sign of diversity. To this end, in any day-care center, one in three of the staff have tertiary education-level degree (Bachelor of Education, Master of Education, Bachelor of Social Sciences) and two of the staff member in three qualified with a secondary school-level

qualification in the field of social welfare and healthcare (Finnish National Board of Education, 2003; Finnish National Board of Education, 2014). In addition to this, for a qualified ECEC the adult-child ratio is an important component. Therefore, the ratio of adults to the number of children is one trained adult for every four children under the age of 3, and one trained adult for every seven children over the age of 3 (Karila & Kinos, 2012). Children between the ages of 0 to 6 have a subjective right to early childhood education even though ECEC is not compulsory. And 15% of the total cost is composed of the contribution accounts of the parents, so affordability is not an issue. Moreover, the cost of the day care services and fees are determined by factors such as family size and income level. This also offers families with lower incomes the opportunity to enroll their children in day care services without a fee. For all 6 year olds the pre-school hours are free. Parents can get private services with financial support from the municipalities but most day care centers are already provided by the municipalities (City of Helsinki Social Services Department, 2012).

In Turkey, Early Childhood Education (ECE) means an optional education for children between 36-66 months in public and private services, which are run by the Ministry of National Education. These services include kindergartens and practical classes for 36-66 month old children, and pre-school classes for 48-66 month-old children (Ministry of National Education, [MONE], 2014; EURYPEDIA, 2014). In addition to these institutions, the crèches, which are under the liability of General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection offer education and childhood care for 0-72 month-old children (Regulation of Child Care Homes, Article 2).

The staffs of these early childhood institutions include teachers who are graduates of four-year higher education where they are educated on child development and preschool education. There are also trainers with contracts who preferably come from the same background if not vocational high school graduates in child development. All kindergarten teachers are required to have higher education degrees regardless of the education level they teach at (UNESCO, 2008).

In the public and private early childhood institutions, 50 minute long lessons are given with at most six lessons a day, double shift of the students. However, even if all children are enrolled in kindergartens, if the number of children for double shifts is not enough only one shift education is given. It is important that the number of children in a group is less ten. A second group is created if there are more than ten

children. However, a new group cannot be created before the maximum number of ten children is reached. In the main class and in the application class, the capacity of removal when the number of children is considered is up to 25. And for groups containing less than ten children, combining them with other groups is this necessary. This becomes possible only when the groups continue until the end of the academic year (MONE, 2014). Early Childhood Education is financed by the government. One of the responsible bodies is the Parent-School Association which helps with extra school expenses and so on. Parent-School Association organizes different kind of activities and events to collect the sum they need (EURYPEDIA, 2014).

### **2.6.1 Outdoor play and learning in the context of Finnish and Turkish early childhood education**

In Finland, nature activities and outdoor play are a part of the education system at all school levels (Marttila, 2013). Because there is no certain curriculum in Finland teachers are somewhat free as they teach. There is a level of flexibility in kindergartens both for children and for teachers. In Finnish kindergartens children go out at least two hours a day. They generally go out twice a day, first in the morning and later on in the afternoon. But this system is flexible, and can change. It is sometimes only in the morning or only in the afternoon. Though the two hour minimum is the desired case, this is not always the situation when the teachers are short on number. In many kindergartens, children go to the forest regularly. However, due to the reasons mentioned before these trips can be cancelled (Amus, 2013).

*Metsämörri* (Forest Troll) activities enable adults to take children outdoors where they play freely in the nearby forests. These activities have a greatly positive effect and increased children's exposure to forests. According to the information provided by Suomen Latu, there are currently more than 10,000 trained *Metsämörri* leaders in Finland, and most of them work in day-care centers. Almost 10,000 children have been reached through by *Metsämörri* activities (Amus, 2013).

In Turkey it is safe to say that the approach to outdoor play is changing as awareness has been rising. Yet, there are new issues concerning Turkish early childhood education. Because of this, outdoor play is a whole new area that needs to be improved at both policy and practice levels. For example, outdoor environments

of public kindergartens are suggested as places that are not capable to enrich outdoor play and learning (Çelik, 2012; Öztürk, 2009; Olgan & Kahriman-Öztürk; 2011). Moreover, outdoor space is only used to be played in freely during the spring season (Öztürk 2009). Öztürk (2009) also tells us that the daily activities of children are planned in such way that they can only be carried out indoors which mean the children spend most of their time inside. When the National Early Childhood Education Progame (MONE, 2013) is examined, it is clearly seen that it does not include any emphasis on outdoor environment while it includes detailed information on learning centers and indoor environment. However, the curriculum does not dictate any subjects to teachers that they need to teach the children. This means that the teachers are not so restricted, and they can choose where to practice the activities. On the other hand, it is suggested that the teachers should practice all kinds of activities outdoors as well (MONE, 2013).

In Turkish and Finnish National Early Childhood Education Systems and Curriculums, teachers have an important role considering outdoor play and the daily plan. For this, an important part of this study includes teachers' beliefs about outdoor play and environment and examining their practices during outdoor play. The next section is an overview of the literature on the concept of belief followed by teacher beliefs and practices of outdoor play

## **2.7 Concept of Beliefs**

Beliefs have always been the main subject of inquisition in many fields such as law, anthropology, education, sociology, political sciences, psychology, etc. In these fields attitudes and values have been a focus of social and personality research (Pajares, 1992). The terms like disposition, attitude, value, judgement, opinion, perception etc. are used to explain someone's beliefs systems (Raths, 2001). Harvey (1986) tells us that beliefs represent an individual's understanding of reality and therefore has enough and validity to guide thought and behaviour. Richardson (1994) also explains that beliefs reflect how a person sees the world around him/her. It is a sign that shows us how a person perceives the mechanics of the world. Beliefs consciously or unconsciously bring meaning to one's actions. In addition to this, Rokeach (1968) argues that beliefs represent components that form personal knowledge, and are also an affective component to individual emotions. We see that

all these definitions and explanations have a common understanding that beliefs play an important role in our actions and behaviours.

### **2.7.1 Teachers' Beliefs and Practices**

A person's belief systems are formed as a child through their upbringing, culture, and life experiences. Also teacher's experiences come from their own personal experience, which they have had as a child. It comes from their education and the values they hold. The teachers unconsciously can make assumptions about children, classrooms, and curriculum (Vartuli, 2005). Beliefs are a key determinant of teacher behavior in the classroom (Fang, 1996; Isenberg, 1990; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). Child's behavior and decisions are perceived according to the teacher's belief system. Fang (1996) put forward that teacher beliefs about people, objects, and events influence their planning, interactions, and decisions. (Vartuli, 1999).

The connection between the teacher's beliefs and practices were clearly seen in a study by Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, and Hernandez (1991) conducted with 113 kindergarten teachers. In this study, teachers who had developmentally appropriate beliefs also engaged in developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom. And, the teachers who had developmentally inappropriate beliefs engaged in developmentally inappropriate practices in the classroom.

When teacher's beliefs and practices are unsuitable, their teaching becomes ineffective. Studies have found small correlation between teachers' self-reported beliefs and actual practices used in the classroom (Bryant, Clifford & Peisner, 1991; Kemple, 1996). Charlesworth and her colleagues (1993) found a strong association between the teacher's inappropriate beliefs and practices. However the teachers who believed that developmentally appropriate activities were important did not engage in such activities in their classrooms.

For early childhood teachers, their beliefs on outdoor play and practices are examined by their indoor classroom practices. Rarely have studies analysed teachers' beliefs about children's outdoor play and outdoor time (see e.g. Davies, 1997; Rennick, 2009; Chakravarthi, 2009). That is why the current study aims to explore the links between teachers' beliefs and behaviours during children's outdoor play As a result, teachers' beliefs about outdoor play exercises are examined with the help of the limited literature on the subject.



That is the reason why, the current study aims to explore the links between teachers' beliefs and behaviours during children's outdoor play.

### **2.7.2 Early Childhood Teachers**

The early childhood period is the time begins at birth and last until a child's eighth birthday. It is very critical time human life. It is during when we learn about emotions, and we acquire all our knowledge of social-emotional, physical, and cognitive skills. During this period we also acquire our habits, communication skills as well as personal traits. In this century, there is an increase in number of working parents and primary takers. That is why; children spend the greater portion of their days in early childhood institutions. At that point, the role of professionals and teachers who take care of the children becomes curial. They should have the professional knowledge to analyse and respond accordingly to children's needs in this period. The educators must have the ability to recognize their personal beliefs, which may sometimes clash and interfere with their teaching act (Aldemir & Sezer, 2009; Vartuli, 1999).

### **2.7.3 The roles of teacher in outdoor play**

Promoting autonomous peer play, supporting focused pretend play, and maintaining autonomous peer play are the major goals for teachers in supporting healthy play relationships (Perry, 2001). In this respect, promoting autonomous play could be considered the easy one, since many children perceive independent play as easy and natural. On the other hand, some children may find play independent from their teachers difficult. In this case, teacher intervention becomes crucial for these children. Secondly, teachers should hold responsibility for focusing (supporting?) children's pretend play in the playground, as this self-directed pretend play promotes children's development. Children's natural tendency to create an imaginary world and pretend roles in it, makes additional effort to focus from the teacher to understand children's pretend play minimal. Once autonomous and pretend play are established, the final aim is to maintaining the duration of autonomous peer play. Children have a natural motivation to affiliate with one another. Pretending in self-directed play in long durations helps children develop intellectual and social skills through creative problem solving, organizing and remembering information, and attempts to control their impulses to keep the game going (Perry, 2001)

In this respect, teachers can take into consideration two types of strategies to support autonomous pretend play with peers on the playground. The focal point of one type of strategy is coordinating ecological features through preparation and observation indirectly. The physical environment is defined clearly by the setup and makes children eligible to meet with ecology. As a second strategy more direct interventions and interactions are required particularly when play loses focus or the environment becomes unsafe. This includes soliciting, verifying, and reinforcing information or intervention with the play process to maintain the focus and insure safety. At this point, it is also possible for the teacher to participate in the context of play theme form either inside or outside. Literally, intervention from the inside context is much more fitting, since the idea is considered to be a pivotal feature of ecology.

What is more, the teacher's role can be elaborated in play at a minimal level of "uninvolved" to the maximum involvement of director/redirector (Johnson, et al., 2005). The roles of teacher as facilitator and onlooker, stage manager, co-player and play leader are distributed in the middle of the continuum (p.271).

When teacher has a role as director or redirector, teacher takes over the control of the play. Herein, teacher's intervention disrupts children's play. In this regard, a director teacher has the role to tell children what they do or what they should not do while they are playing whilst, redirector teachers just shape children's play through questioning to direct children's attention toward academic content (Johnson, Christie, & Yawkey, 1999, p.214). Additionally, as an onlooker, teacher has the role to watch and listen to children's play. A teacher should be located at the sideline, and s/he could make verbal and non-verbal comments through gestures, smiling, and asking questions about play process. In this way, teacher has chance to gain clues about children's interests. At this point, the stage manager would locate themselves out of the play and do not do anything to disrupt it as the onlooker would. However, they have the role to provide suggestions and facilitate to organize the play setting, materials, and props. The teacher in the role of co-player participates in children's play directly. That is to say, s/he becomes one of the play partners of children and takes some minor roles in the play process. During the play, s/he displays role playing and peer interactions (Johnson, Christie, & Wardle, 2005). As play leader teacher, s/he has responsibility to participate. The adult engages in joint activities to extend and enrich the play process through providing direct suggestions

and clear demonstrations of how to keep on a specific pretend act or social interaction (Griffing, 1982, p. 44).

Johnson, Christie, & Wardle (2005, p.273) noted that “adults often switch to this role when children have difficulty getting play started on their own or when an ongoing play episode is beginning to falter.”

#### **2.7.4 Early Childhood Teachers’ Beliefs Related to Outdoor Play and Observed Outdoor Play Practices**

Many teachers believe that outdoors is secondary compared to indoors within the context of learning (Chakravarthi, 2009; Henniger, 1993; Davies, 1997; Rennick, 2009). Margaret Davies, an Australian researcher conducted a study to examine preschool teachers’ curriculum, conception and practices with children’s outdoor experiences (Davies 1996). Davies interviewed teachers and asked them about the value and the purpose of outdoor play. She conducted the interviews in 22 different preschools. Her study shows that 68% of the responsive teachers believed that outdoor play was necessary for physical development. 50% said it was necessary for social development. An internet survey conducted to psychometric properties of the ‘Preschool Teacher Beliefs of Outdoor Play and Outdoor Environment’ scale (Chakravarthi, Hatfield, & Hestenes, 2009), reports that the teachers believed physical and social development were more likely outdoors than cognitive development. Teachers’ beliefs of outdoor play and environment are affected by five factors: science and nature experiences, social and language experience, calm/quiet experiences, physical and loud experiences and unstructured time. Davies (1997) examined teachers’ perceptions and practices and analysed their role in children’s outdoor play. Interviews that she made with 8 preschool teachers show that most of the teachers believed that children need to be watched over even though they need freedom as they are involved in the activities that they chose. Teachers believed that they needed to set up play for children, monitor them, and direct them by showing appropriate behaviour and safety. Very few of the interviewed teachers talked about participating in play and only two of the teachers made references to being a part of the play by asking questions, commenting or making suggestions. The teachers’ understanding of outdoor play and their own role in the outdoor play was shown by the actual behaviour during the play. The teachers were present at all times to monitor the children but they were also interacting with the children on occasion.

Chakravarthi, Hatfield, and Hestenes (2009) also tell us that, for the teachers it is more important to have a certain location from where they watch the children's safety than to set up literacy activities during the play. The relationship between the teacher's perception of their role and their reported practices was also analysed. It was revealed that teachers' beliefs and behaviours concerning outdoor play are correlated. A study that was also conducted by Rennick (2009) examined how teachers' beliefs and practices influence the function of preschool outdoor play. In this study ten early childhood teachers were interviewed face-to-face. Teachers were asked to write journal entries on their beliefs, understanding, and perceptions of outdoor play and outdoor play environment.

Rennick (2009) found that the teachers believed that supervision is primary during the outdoor time and play. For the teachers the physical design of the environment limited their planning, preparation, and implementation. The teachers' memories and experiences from their own childhood play activities provided a shared value for the outdoor play and freedom. However, during outdoor play teachers preferred to follow the rules; a philosophy-reality variance (Hatch, 2002). The teachers believed that outdoor play is important to the development of young children, but there was minimal evidence of the knowledge in outdoor play and the motivation for it.

Chakravarthi (2009), in contrast to Renick (2009), also conducted a study examined preschool teachers' beliefs and practices. The study was when children were playing outdoors in childcare centers. By using accelerometers children's physical activities were measured. Videotapes which were filmed during teachers and children were playing were analysed thoroughly to understand teachers' practices and children's play behaviours. Teachers were also interviewed to understand their beliefs of outdoor play and outdoor environment. The results showed that children's activity levels were higher when teacher's activity levels were higher. Children played more and better when the teachers showed interest in the play. Results also showed that for the teachers, outdoor play meant an important time for the children to physically, socially develop, and learn about nature. Teachers believed that their role was to supervise children and direct them during the play as well as interaction. The practices of teacher outdoors were to monitor the children, help them with the play, but the teachers did not participate in the plays much.

Overall the teachers' beliefs and understanding of the practice and children activity levels differed high and low quality outdoor settings.

The study by Kos and Jerman (2013) examined closely the opportunities for outdoor play and link between learning while playing freely from the view point of the teachers, parents and the children in Slovenia. They evaluated the time pre-school teachers set aside for play and learning in the yard, in natural environments, the activities the children were engaged in these spaces, the barriers of outdoor play and the values to the parents. According to the results, Slovene children spend 23% of their time at preschool outdoors during the warm months and 13% during the cold months. They generally spend 3 hours every week in a natural setting during the warm months, and 1.5 hours during the cold. The answers show that, children's activities outdoors and in nature are not effectively used. In addition to this, the results also demonstrate that a majority of Slovene pre-school teachers and also the parent perceive the outdoor activities as a part of every day life in pre-school children. They emphasized the need for children to go out as much as possible and spend time in a natural setting.

Based on the existing literature on this issue, it is possible to argue that there haven't been many studies done on this field that examines the link between outdoor play and learning, especially from the view point of the teachers and parents. For this reason, the current study will be engaged to investigate the teachers' and the parent's perspective.

## **2.8 Parenting Styles**

It is widely acknowledged that primary caregivers and parents have a significant effect on the holistic development of young children. For this reason, developmental psychologists and many other professionals search for the answer to this question: "What is the best way for parents to raise their children?" To approach this question, different forms or styles of parenting can be identified and the influence of those styles on children's outcome observed. Baumrind researched just this, and she focused on the contextual matter of parenting socialization (Baumrind, 1967). She described parenting styles in terms of child care and discipline and searched for how different styles affect child behaviors (Baumrind, 1971). Baumrind's (1971) typology of parenting styles consisted of four main ones namely; authoritarian authoritative, permissive, and neglecting parenting. In addition to

Baumrind, many additional professionals and researchers conducted studies to investigate the influence of those parenting styles on children's development and they found that positive parenting interactions results in a favourable outcome in the holistic development of young children (Bakeman, 1980; Hess & McDevitt, 1984; Karabekiroglu et al., 2013; Love et al., 2005). However, some studies found that parenting styles and parenting practices represented differences in different cultures (Lim, & Lim, 2004; Peterson, Steininetz, & Wilson, 2005). For instance, Aksoy, Kılıç, & Kahraman (2009) suggested that the factors such as structure of family, meaning of mother and father, communication within the family influenced parenting styles and parenting practices in Asian cultures. In addition, Aksoy, Kılıç, & Kahraman (2009) pointed out Asian parents tend to be more protective and controlling as they do not trust strangers. Depending on this type of parenting style, Asian individuals indicate independence behaviours (such as left the parent to leave alone) much later compares to European or American individuals. As for Turkish parenting styles, the current literature is limited owing to the reason that most of the conducted studies concentrated on Turkish immigrant mothers in European countries (Çitlak et al. 2008; Durgel et al. 2009). Nonetheless, immigrant families might not exemplify all Turkish parents living in Turkey as they are the offspring of Turkish workers that immigrated to Europe in the 1960s due to economic reasons. Özdemir and Cheah (2015) suggested that there is a difference between previous and recent studies which focused on Turkish parenting styles due to the fact that Turkey has been experiencing a rapid social and economic change. Özdemir and Cheah (2015) claimed that previous studies (e.g Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982) found that children were expected to be dependent on and obey the parents without questioning while the recent ones (e.g Kağıtçıbaşı, & Ataca, 2005) found that children were expected to be self-reliant and autonomous as much as to be obedient.

Nowadays, different from the parenting styles defined by Baumrind, overprotective parenting has become widespread in public lexicon depending media effects. Even, the phrases like "hyper-parenting" has been used to define the families that curtail their kids' risk taking behaviours (Honoré, 2008; Hillman *et al.* 1990). In this regard, several conducted studies investigated predictors of parental overprotective behaviour and its results on children's social and mental development (Thomasgard & Metz 1997; Thomasgard 1998; Kennedy *et al.* 2004; Hastings *et al.* 2008).

## **2.9 Parents and Outdoor Play**

Children's chances and opportunities for outdoor play are affected by changes to social and environmental contexts. Over the last 30 years, many studies (see e.g., Brussoni et al., 2012; Clement, 2004; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997) have demonstrated that over-protective parenting is on a rise and the children are being limited in mobility and activity and engagement with their surroundings, neighbourhood. For example, the study by Valentine and McKendrick (1997) that was made in North-West England examined the limits of the extents to which parents let their children play freely in public facilities. The study focused on whether children's play opportunities change in their neighbourhoods and whether the experiences are changing. Valentine and McKendrick (1997) compared the current children's play to academic studies for children's usage of space with parents' own childhood experiences. The study found out that most of the parents were not satisfied with the public provision of the play areas in their own neighbourhoods. Valentine and McKendrick (1997) put forward that temporal and spatial changes also happen in patterns over the last 30 years. Moreover, the results of this study suggested that less children are playing outdoors and the location of these outdoor spaces is now closely centered on the home rather than being out in the street. The researchers also tell us that, the most important affect to children's access to free and independent play is parental worries about safety, not the level of public provision. Clement (2004) investigated children's participation in active outdoor play in the US by comparing generation differences. Participation in active outdoor play was compared with previous generations. 830 mothers all over the USA were surveyed on their outdoor play experience as children and their children's outdoor play experience. Clement (2004) found out that, when mother's play experiences were compared with the child's, children spend considerably less time playing outdoors now, then their mothers did when they were children. Additionally, the study also put forward that the main reasons of this decline are the television, digital media and digital games as well as the concerns of safety and crime.

The past decade, we have seen an increased amount of discussion on children's changed play environments and activities in the media and in academic literature. This is the result of our changing social and environmental contexts, especially in the western world. It is undoubtedly clear that the children are growing up in a world which is very different from the former generations. Yet the same

argument can be put forward about the previous generations as well. The importance of how children are affected by these changes and how children experience the world during their childhoods (Little, 2015).

### **2.9.1 Parents' Beliefs about Outdoor Play**

In a child's life cooperation and coordination is essential between the parent and the teacher. It is needed for a qualified early childhood education. As a researcher, I believe that parents' opinions on outdoor play and learning directly affects its applications in the kindergartens. This study will deal with the parents as participants with the aim of investigating their own beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal play setting in a kindergarten.

As we mentioned before, there is few literature on the subject, and not many studies have examined the parents' beliefs on outdoor play. The studies that have already been conducted often focus on the relation between parent beliefs and children's risk taking attitudes as well as behaviours (see e.g., Little, 2010; Little, Wyver, & Gibson, 2011; Little, 2015). For example, in the study 'Relationship between parents' views and beliefs and their responses to children's risk-taking behaviour during the outdoor play Little (2010), examined the children's and the parents' in everyday outdoor play setting. Parents' own risk-taking beliefs were analysed with the help of Attitudes Towards Risk Questionnaire (ATR). Additionally, there were interviews with parents (11 mothers, one father) on children's risk-taking attitudes while parents monitored 4 to 5 year old on a playground. Little (2010) saw that the parents scored predictably on ATR. The researcher reported that parent generally supervised the child's play and supported them when they thought that the play was challenging. They did not interfere with the play but gave advice to children on how to safely complete the game with the equipment they were playing with. Parents stressed out that the risk-taking context were variable.

Little, Wyver and Gibson (2011) also explored the adults' approach on risk-taking, the children's experience of risky play and if it differs according to the context. They saw that for the mothers and early childhood practitioners, risky play was a very important part of learning, development, and they supported risky play. But as children were playing in a local playground and in early childhood centers, these contexts provided limited opportunity for such play. Playground safety had an



impact that deteriorated the quality of the play in these settings while it created tension between adult understanding of risky play and its provision.

In a different study that was conducted, semi-structured interviews were carried out with mothers of 4 to 5 year-old children. Little (2015) analysed the beliefs on children's outdoor play opportunities and potential risks children face outdoors. While mothers accept and settle for the potential risks there was still tension; their wish to provide their children with opportunities for safety during the play and overcoming their fears of the children's safety.

It is also interesting to mention that the studies we have exemplify share a common ground that scholars have studied parent beliefs about risky play in playgrounds or in public spaces. So, parents' views and belief on outdoor play has not been examined. However, the conducted studies (Rennick, 2009; Chakravarthi, 2009) show that for the teachers, parents were one of the main barriers to provision of outdoor play in a kindergarten because of their concerns on safety and health. Nevertheless, this issue has not been investigated from the parent point of view. However, in existing literature, a study by (Kos & Jerman, 2013), 264 parents of whose children attended preschools in 21 Slovene towns were analysed on their beliefs and approaches to outdoor play and learning. Kos and Jerman (2013) found that majority of Slovene pre-school teachers and parents thought that outdoor activities were important, and believed it to be a part of the everyday life. The highlighted the need for children to spend time outdoors, in a natural setting. However, for the Slovene teachers, parents were still a barrier because of their parental attitudes. They stated that parents exaggerated the safety issue in a preschool. With the finding of the study above mentioned, it is safe to say that the variables and discrepancy between parents' and teachers' point of views need to be fulfilled in a different context.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the methodology employed in the study, including research questions, the design of the study, school settings and the participants, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, and the limitations.

#### **3.1 Research Questions**

The aim of current study is two-fold, first is to explore Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and outdoor environment. Second is to investigate Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten settings. To this end, the present study addressed the following research questions;

1. What are the Turkish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to ideal outdoor environments and outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting?
2. What are the Turkish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten setting?
3. What are the Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to ideal outdoor environments and outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting?
4. What are the Finnish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten setting?

#### **3.2 The design of the Study**

Within the framework of qualitative approach, the present study was conducted as a multi-case study. Merriam (2009) suggested a case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event. Likewise, Creswell (2007) defined the case study as a

qualitative research approach in which the inquirer investigates a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time by collecting in-depth data through various source of information including observations, interviews, audio-visual material, documents and reports. In addition, Creswell (2007) put forward that types of case studies are determined according to the size of the bounded case or the motivation of the case analysis. Single instrumental, multiple, and intrinsic case studies are the types of the case studies distinguished in terms of intent of the case analysis. According to Stake (1995), the scholar, conducting single instrumental case study, focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects a bounded case to illustrate the issue. However, the researcher, applying multi-case study, again focuses on an issue but selects multiple bounded cases to illustrate the issue. Creswell (2007) proposed that by selecting multiple cases researcher aims to present different perspectives toward the issue. Correspondingly, Yin (2009) stated that multiple case study design is based on the replication logic. According to replication logic, the researcher replicates data collection and analysis procedures for each case. From this point of views, multi-case study was considered eligible for the current study due to several reasons. First, this study included an issue (early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs regarding ideal outdoor environment and outdoor play practices, and teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten setting) within two bounded cases (a public kindergarten in Ankara, Turkey and a public kindergarten in Helsinki, Finland) and time (over a period of two months). Second, two different perspectives (Turkish and Finish early childhood teachers and parents) were applied to understand their beliefs on the same issue (outdoor play). To this end, this study involved the replication of data collection process including interviews and observations for two bounded cases. At last but not least, as Miles & Huberman (1994) reported case study requires to examining an issue in its real-life context which fits the design of this study. Nature of the study requires in-depth investigations about early childhood teachers' actual outdoor play practices in their kindergarten settings. Based on referred assumptions, this study utilized from qualitative multi-case study design.

### **3.3 Schools Settings and Participants**

As Miles and Huberman (1994) enounced, qualitative researches should include rich, thick descriptions of the study context in order to enable the reader to understand the real life situations of the setting where the study takes place. Rich and

thick description of settings and participants allows the reader to decide whether the emerging findings of any qualitative study might be transferred due to similar characteristics (Creswell, 2007). In addition, as Merriam (2009) suggested, rich descriptions including words and pictures about the setting are considerably important to define the boundaries of the studies. That is why; the current study presented highly detailed description about the participants and both settings of study. On the other hand, in addition to description about setting and participants, it is also significant to present a rationale regarding chosen setting(s) where the study conducted. In this regard, Hatch (2002) suggested that many factors might influence on decisions about settings. Accessibility, feasibility, and familiarity are some of those factors. However, the major consideration should be regarding choosing an appropriate setting which enables the researcher to address research questions. Taking research questions into consideration, the researcher chose the kindergartens having an outdoor environment as settings of the study due to the reason that this study focused on the practices that took place in outdoor environment. In addition, the second criterion set by the scholar was related to daily schedule of selected kindergartens. Since the nature of the study required focusing on how outdoor play practices were carried out and to understand how teachers and parents describe their beliefs related to those practices and ideal outdoor environment, the inquirer chose the kindergartens which included outdoor play in their daily schedule as much as possible. To this end, the researcher previously met the principals of selected kindergartens to gather information about their daily schedule.

When it comes to selecting multiple cases, there are some suggested criteria to select the cases (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2006). According Stake (2006), the cases should provide diversity across the context. Likewise, Creswell (2007) recommended qualitative researchers, conducting multi-case study, to use maximal variation strategy when they seek to gather different perspectives. In line with those suggestions, maximal variation was sought to select the cases of current study. Based on the research questions and the review of literature, two cases were selected from two different country (Finland and Turkey) that have different culture and early childhood education system. Decision about selecting the cases in different cultures was guided by the review of literature related to outdoor play and outdoor environment. This variation in the cases enabled the researcher to gather different perspectives on the same issue.

### *School Setting in Helsinki, Finland*

The school this study was conducted in Finland is a public kindergarten established in 2002, Helsinki. The school serves 12-72 month-old children under the supervision of National Curriculum Guidelines on ECEC (2003) and National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education (2010). Additionally, *Metsämörri* activities are implemented in this kindergarten. *Metsämörri* (a fairy tale character who lives in the woods) is Finland's nature and environmental education program, which is carried out only by trained counsellors. The goal of *Metsämörri* activities is to get the kids to enjoy nature and outdoor activities whatever the weather is like all year round. In addition, *Metsämörri* activities aim to teach children to recognize and protect the environment. Within the scope of *Metsämörri* activities, all children attend weekly *Metsämörri* trips to neighbouring fields in the middle of forest.

When the study was conducted, the school had approximately 110 students and 26 teachers consisting of 13 early childhood teachers and 13 babysitters. Mix aged grouping is applied in this kindergarten. However, 60-72 month-old group which is called as *pre-primary school* consists of the same aged children. The other groups include 12-30 month-old children and 30-60 month-old children. The children may attend full-day program in this kindergarten, which is open Monday to Friday from 6.15 to 22.00. However, they generally start their routine at 9 a.m. finish the day 17.30 at p.m.

This kindergarten has single storey building established in 1100 meter square space. Each group has its own class, in addition to common areas, such as a winter garden, workshop, bay windows, library, hall and bedroom. Each class has a gate which provides an open-access from class to the outdoor playground of kindergarten. There are also shelves, just next to those gates, particularly used to keep for children's own outdoor play costumes such as raincoat, and snow and rain boots etc. To add more, each group has a tumble dryer which is used to dry children's wet coats and gloves after outdoor play session in rainy and snowy days. In addition, this kindergarten has four storages, which have also open-access to the playground, used to keep outdoor play materials. When it comes to the outdoor playground, it is located in almost 5500 meter square places. The ground of the yard consists of different surfaces including soil, concrete and grass. This playground comprises of front and back yard. While the back yard is a place used for planting flowers and vegetables, the front yard is an area where generally outdoor play sessions take place.

Therefore, most of equipment exists in the front yard. In the front yard, there is a hill covered with artificial turf. In addition to this hill, this yard includes various equipment and loose parts such as slides, swings, wooden house, seesaws, benches and different sized wooden logs.

#### *School Settings in Ankara, Turkey*

The school in which this study conducted in Turkey is a public kindergarten established in 2006, Ankara. It serves 36-66 month-old children under the supervision of National Early Childhood Program (MONE, 2013). In addition, the kindergarten was a member of Eco-school project of Foundation for Environmental Education (TÜRÇEV). Eco-school project is a program that is applied to create environmental awareness on children through education for sustainable development (TÜRÇEV, 2015). To add more, the school is also a member of “Minik TEMA”, which an environmental education program in TURKEY which targets to strength children’s relation with nature in order to improve their physical, social-emotional and intellectual development through nature activities (TEMA, 2015).

When the current study was conducted, the school had approximately 150 students, 7 teachers and 7 assistant teachers. The groups in each class are formed according to children’s age. In this respect, the kindergarten includes children of 36-48 month-old, 48-60 month-old and 60-66 month-old groups. The children attends full-day program in this kindergarten. They start their routine at 9:30 a.m. finish the day 15.30 at p.m.

This kindergarten has two storey building established in almost 600 meter square space. Each group has its own classes, in addition to common areas including a winter garden, workshop, and hall. In the entrance of the school building there are hangers and cabinets to keep children’s shoes and coats. Outdoor playground of this kindergarten is located in almost 2900 meter square places. The ground of the yard consists of different surfaces including soil, gravel, concrete and grass. In the yard, there are different areas used for different aims. To illustrate, the play equipment including slides, swings, seesaws, and climbing materials are placed in the middle of the yard while planting areas, pergolas and a small zoo are located around the play equipment.

## Participants

Investigation of either a single unit or multiple bounded systems is decided only by taking the research questions into account (Hatch, 2002). As previously mentioned, this study was conducted as multiple case study in accordance with research questions and the review of related literature. To this end, purposive sampling was considered eligible to select the cases in this study. Purposive sampling method requires a procedure in which the inquirer selects individuals and settings for study who can best help us to learn or understand occurrences for the issue to be investigated (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009). As previously defined, the issue of the study is Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs regarding outdoor play and teachers' outdoor play practices. Considering the research questions and the issue to be explored, two kindergartens having an outdoor environment and implementing outdoor play as possible as were chosen as settings for this study. Participants of the study consisted of people including early childhood teachers that were employed at those kindergartens and the willing parents whose children were enrolled in those kindergartens. The study was conducted with early childhood teachers (N=14) who teach 36-72 month-old children and the voluntary parents (N=14) that have at least one 36-72 month-old child who was enrolled in the target kindergartens. While 7 of the early childhood teachers and 7 of the parents were Finnish the other 7 teachers and 7 parents were Turkish. The Finnish teachers and parents were the voluntary people who feel comfortable while speaking English.

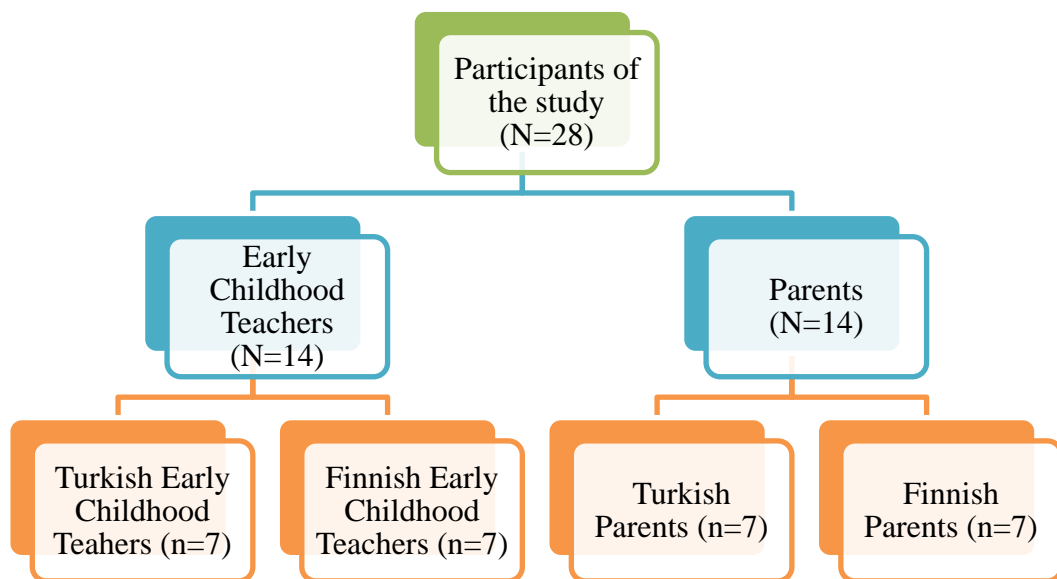


Figure 3.1 Participants of the study

### 3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Various data collection procedures including semi-structured interviews and observations were used to build the study on the strengths of each method and to minimize the weaknesses of any single method. As Patton put forward (1999), the inquirer might use a variety of technics of data collection in order to increase the credibility of the study and to construct an in-depth, rich-detailed case study.

Two sets of semi-structured interview protocols (Appendix A & B) were used as instruments of the current study. According to Creswell (2007), interview is a way to allow the researcher to enter other people’s perspective. Likewise, Merriam (2009) suggested that interviewing is essential when the inquirer aims to find out the feelings of people which cannot be directly observed. To this end, the first interview protocol (Appendix A) was used to gain in-depth information about early childhood teachers’ beliefs related to outdoor play and outdoor environment, in addition to their outdoor play practices. The second interview protocol (Appendix B) was used to get the beliefs of the parents regarding outdoor environment and outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting. In addition to interview protocols, observation form was used as a second instrument of the study. According to Merriam (2009), observations are conducted for many reasons such as triangulation data, providing some knowledge of context and gathering information that an interview would not reveal. Based on those assumptions, in the current study, observation form was used in order to realistically examine early childhood teachers’ actual outdoor practices in their natural settings by gathering some knowledge of outdoor environment.

Table 3.2 Shows the data sources used in relation to the main research questions

The Main Research Questions	The Data Sources
1. What are the Turkish early childhood teachers’ and parents’ beliefs related to ideal outdoor environments and outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting?	Semi-structured interview protocol for early childhood teachers and semi-structured interview protocol for parents
2. What are the Turkish early childhood teachers’ outdoor play practices in their kindergarten setting?	Observation protocol Semi-structured interview protocol for early childhood teachers



Table 3.2 (continued)

3. What are the Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to ideal outdoor environments and outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting	Semi-structured interview protocol for early childhood teachers and semi-structured interview protocol for parents
4. What are the Turkish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten setting?	Observation protocol Semi-structured interview protocol for early childhood teachers

### 3.4.1 Semi-structured Interview Protocols

The interview protocols were developed in two languages as Turkish and English by the researcher through reviewing related literature and feedbacks from two academicians in the field of early childhood play and qualitative research in education. Additionally, revision is done in terms of belief concept by an expert who is engaged in research about belief of whom. Before the last version of Turkish interview protocols were constructed, four pilot interviews were conducted with Turkish teachers and parents, who are different from the participants of main study, to appreciate the usability and clarity of the questions. An American native speaker, who also speaks in Turkish, employing as early childhood teacher in Helsinki, Finland also revised the both English and Turkish interview questions in order to make them be synonyms for both languages. After revision of English interview protocol, it was also piloted with four Finnish teachers and parents who are different from participants of main study. Piloting the interview questions in both contexts provided the investigator with some advantages such as eliminating and revising questions for Turkish and Finnish participants. After piloting, it was decided that the order of some questions should be changed in order to prevent the loss of data. In addition, it was noticed that some words used in interview protocol had not the same meaning in Finnish early childhood terminology. Therefore, a commission consist of three people including the researcher, a Turkish early childhood teacher who can speak English and Finnish and a Finnish early childhood teacher revised the questions in terms of cultural appropriateness. Some words were changed with similar or different ones because of some differences between Turkish and Finnish early childhood education and culture.

*Semi-structured Interview Protocols for Early childhood Teachers*

The first part of the interview protocol for early childhood teachers (Appendix A) consisted of seven questions that addressed participant teachers' background information such as; age, gender, year of experience, graduated school, attended course, seminars, workshop or conferences related to play or particularly outdoor play and lastly the age group and the number of children that they teach. The second part of semi-structured interview protocol for early childhood teachers included nine questions to investigate their beliefs related to outdoor play and outdoor play practices in their kindergarten settings. The first four questions with sub-questions were particularly prepared to obtain teachers' outdoor play practices. For that purpose, the participants were asked about if their daily schedule includes outdoor play time. In addition, they were asked about how much time the children spend outdoor in different seasons and what happens in a typical outdoor play time and lastly if they take any materials from the classroom to outdoor. Next six questions aimed to explore early childhood teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play. To this end, the participant teachers were asked about the purpose of the outdoor play for children's development and learning, the ideal outdoor environment of a kindergarten, and the teachers' role in outdoor play. Table 3.3 shows main issues regarding semi-structured interview protocol for early childhood teachers.

Table 3.3 The example questions that are interested in the main issues

Main Issues	Example Interview Questions
Outdoor Play Practices	<p><i>-Does your daily schedule include outdoor play time? If yes, how much time does your class typically spend outdoors in a day when the weather is nice? What about during the other seasons?</i></p> <p><i>- Could you describe what happens in a typical day during outdoor play?</i></p>
Beliefs related to outdoor play	<p><i>-Ideally, how would you describe a teacher's role during outside time? What is your role on the playground when children are outside?</i></p> <p><i>- What is the purpose of children's outdoor play? How does this purpose work for children's imagination, social skills, motor and cognitive development?</i></p>

Table 3.3 (continued)

Beliefs related to outdoor play environment	<p><i>-In your view, which environment (outdoor or indoor) provides more learning experiences for children? Why?</i></p> <p><i>- How would you describe an ideal outdoor environment (playground) for children in a kindergarten?</i></p>
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*Semi-structured Interview Protocols for Parents*

Semi-structured interview protocols for parents consisted of 7 questions with sub-questions. The interview protocol starts with a question that addressed the participant parents' background information such as age, educational background, hometown and the number of children that they have. The aim of next six questions was to explore the parents' beliefs related to outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting. To this end, the participant parents were asked about their opinions related to outdoor play practices in the kindergarten where their children attend. In addition, the parents were asked about the importance of outdoor play for children's development and learning. Lastly, they were asked about how should be an ideal outdoor play environment. Table 3.4 shows main issues regarding semi-structured interview protocol for parents.

Table 3.4 the example questions that are interested in the main issues

Main Issues	Example Interview Questions
Beliefs related to outdoor play	<p><i>-In your view, what is the purpose /importance of outdoor play for your child' development and learning?</i></p> <p><i>-What do you think about your child's outdoor play at kindergartens? What about other seasons?</i></p>
Beliefs related to outdoor play environment	<p><i>-How would you describe an ideal outdoor environment for young children in a kindergarten?</i></p> <p><i>-Is the environment of the kindergarten your child attends an ideal outdoor environment? If not, which different from existing features would you like to have?</i></p>

### **3.4.2 Observation protocol for early childhood teachers**

Observation is one of fundamental and essential methods for qualitative studies to collect data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Observation is used as a research tool to address a specific research question and to produce trustworthy results (Merriam, 2009). In the current study, observation was used to answer the research question which is about early childhood teachers' actual outdoor play practices. In addition, Merriam put forward that participant observer gather first-hand data about the phenomena of interest rather than relying on obtained information in an interview (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, observation is used as a second research tool for this study because of the reason that it provided a confirmation for the data about teachers' outdoor play practices reported by them in the interview session. Additionally, as Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggested, observation enabled the researcher to examine the behaviours of teachers in their natural environment.

In qualitative studies, observations are required systematically to record events, behaviours and objects in the settings. This recording is frequently called as field notes (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Field notes generated the main observational data of the current study, in addition to photographs outdoor environments which were taken to convey the characteristics of settings (Yin, 2009). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), the content of field notes includes two parts. The first is descriptive part that is aimed to produce a word picture of the setting, people, and actions as observed. Second one is reflective part which consists of the researchers' ideas, mind and concerns. Likewise, Merriam (2009) states that field notes encompass the elements such as; the physical setting, the participants, activities, interactions, conversation and observer's behaviour. Based on the related literature and the suggestion of Bogdan and Biklen (1998) and Merriam (2009), an observation form was prepared for the current study to give a direction to observer. Observation form included three parts. In the first part, the general information about the setting such as the number of teacher and children, the name of target teacher, name of kindergarten, date, time and lastly weather of the day were noted. In the second part, depending on the guide questions which are prepared based on related literature, the activity type engaged in outdoor play, the equipment, materials and loose parts used in the activity and the role of target teacher in the process of activity were recorded. In the last part, activities, interactions and conversation were descriptively noted without any subjective interpretation of the observer. In addition

to descriptive field notes, observation paper included a part to note reflective field notes of observer. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) assert that the aim of reflective field notes is important for not only collection of data but also its analysis because of the reason that any instrument or machine is not capable of carefully codified procedures exist. Therefore, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) recommended the researcher to be extremely aware of relationships in the settings. That's the reason why the observation form of the current study was included the reflective field notes (See Appendix, C).

### 3.5 Data Collection Procedures

As previously mentioned, various data collection procedures including semi-structured interviews and observations were used to build the study on the strengths of each method while minimizing the weaknesses of any single method (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Figure 3.1 shows the data collection procedures and timeline for the current study

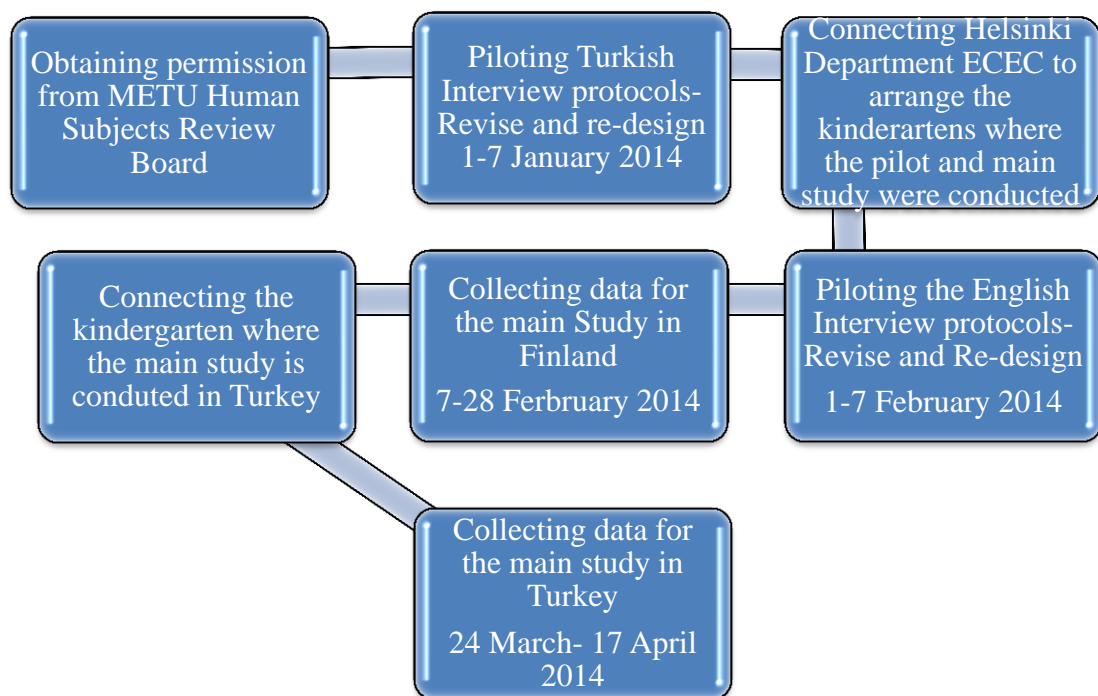


Figure 3.2 Data collection procedures and timeline

Before conducting pilot and main studies in two different settings, required ethical measures were taken for this study. To this end, Middle East Technical University (METU) Human Subjects Review Board was applied to obtain necessary permission in order to conduct the study. After getting permission, firstly Turkish

interview protocols were piloted in a kindergarten which is different from main study. Participants including voluntary teachers and parents were informed about the aim of the study using the prepared consent form. Based on the findings of pilot study, Turkish interview protocols are revised and re-designed. Simultaneously, the producers and requirements to collect data in Helsinki, Finland were executed. To this end, the researcher, under the supervision of an early childhood professor in Helsinki University, connected with City of Helsinki, Department of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) to arrange kindergartens where to pilot the English interview protocols and to collect data for main study. The Department of Early Childhood Education and Care was informed about the aim and procedure of the study in order to reach appropriate kindergartens which enable the investigator to promote the answers of research questions. Through this department, the researcher contacted with the principals of suggested kindergartens via e-mail. Firstly, as previously mentioned, pilot interviews were conducted in order to make required revision after getting necessary permission from the principles of kindergartens. Secondly, the main study, in Finland was conducted to obtain the data including the ones gathered from interviews with Finnish teachers and parents and observational field notes of Finnish teachers' outdoor play practices. In this process, the researcher met teachers individually in order to inform them about the aim and the process of the study. Through the consent form, they were asked to be willing participants of the study. The investigator and willing teachers arranged a time convenient to teachers to conduct interviews. Conducted interviews took approximately 30-40 minute sessions. Simultaneously, through inducement of Finnish teachers, the researcher prepared a paper, which would be presented on the information board of each group, to contact and ask willing parents to interview about the target issue. This paper included information about the researcher's educational and ethnic background, the reason of her existing in the kindergarten and the aim of the study. In this way, voluntary Finnish parents contacted with the investigator via teachers. Parent interviews were conducted approximately 15-20 minute sessions at time convenient to the parents. Obtaining permission participants consist of teachers and parents, interviews were audio taped which provided transcriptions of the information discussed in the interviews and helped to assure accuracy. In addition to interview, observational data obtained through field notes. While Finnish teachers applying outdoor play activities, field notes were collected. Since Finnish

kindergarten had a specific schedule to use outdoor play area, the researcher organized schedule of the observations depending on time schedule of kindergarten. The researcher spent the whole day in the kindergarten when observation sessions were conducted. To spend whole day in the kindergarten enabled the scholar to note the frequency of outdoor play in the schedule of kindergarten. In addition, it gave the opportunity the researcher to interact with teachers and administrator, which provides her to get much more broaden perspective regarding the issue of the study. Finnish kindergarten did not restrict outdoor play activities to the outdoor play area. Outdoor play times were sometimes spent in forest or ice-skating rink in winter. Nevertheless, as the time and duration of those outdoor play activities were also determined for each group one week in advance, the researcher easily organized schedule of observations. Based on outdoor play time and activity, the duration of observation lasted approximately one and half hour or two hours. When it comes to total amount of time spent collecting data, as Merriam (2009) stated each observation experience has its own rhythm and flow. In other words, there is no ideal amount of time to spend observing. Therefore, Merriam (2009) suggested depending on the purpose of the study, over an extended period or shorter periodic observation might be appropriate for different studies. The researcher decided where to stop observation sessions for each teacher, based on the suggestion of Merriam. In this respect, at least three outdoor play activities that each target teacher applied were observed in order to enable observational data to make sense the determined research questions and the purpose of the study. Observations were conducted in a manner that the researcher did not disturb the routine of outdoor play activities. To this end, the observers located themselves in a place where they could focus on outdoor play activity process and the interactions between target teacher and children. Data collection procedure in Turkey was almost the same as the one in Finland. Firstly, in line with required permission, the researcher contacted with the principle of the Turkish kindergarten where the data of main study was collected. Interviewing process was mainly the same as Finland. On the contrary, the process of obtaining observational data was little bit different from the one in Finland. In Turkey, owing to the lack of specific outdoor time schedule of the kindergarten, observations were scheduled with the collaboration of the Turkish teachers and researcher. The time and duration of each observation were changed depending on applied outdoor play activities. Based on the outdoor play activities, outdoor play observations lasted the time between ten

minutes and two hours. Thirty percent of total amount of observations were conducted with a second observer. Due to lack of written source about second observer in a qualitative study, a qualitative study researcher in educational sciences was applied to decide how much time of total observations should be conducted with a second observer. The qualitative researcher, depending on the setting and phenomena, suggested that a second observer is needed during whole data collection process or 20-30 % of whole process. In other words, if the conducted study is required to carry out observations in various settings with different issues, second observer might be needed during whole process. On the other hand, as in the current study, if observations are conducted in the same or similar setting with the same phenomena, the amount of time that a second observer should attend may be 20-30 % of whole process. That is the reason why field notes of the current study were collected with a second observer during stated amount of time. At last but not least, the immediately after visiting each site, the investigator anecdotally noted details of visiting in a journal to include personal reflections and impressions in data collection process.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Procedure**

As Yin (2009) stated, the least developed and the most difficult part of conducting case studies is the analysis of case study data. Even though the basic strategies for analysing data for all types of qualitative research are applicable for case studies, data analysis of case studies might vary because of its some features (Merriam, 2009). When it comes to multiple case studies, they require analysing data from several cases in consequence of collecting data various cases. Therefore, unlike the case study, the analyses of multiple case studies involve two stages including the within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. For the within-case analysis, the inquirer studies each case to investigate the uniqueness of each case. In line with these investigations, contextual variables in each case are presented through obtained data from each case. When the analysis of each case is finished, cross-case analysis is conducted (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) defined cross-case analysis as an analytic technique when the inquirer studies two or more cases to look for similarities and differences among cases. Even though the specific details of unique cases might differ from each other's, the researcher attempts to develop naturalistic generalization that fits individual cases (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009).



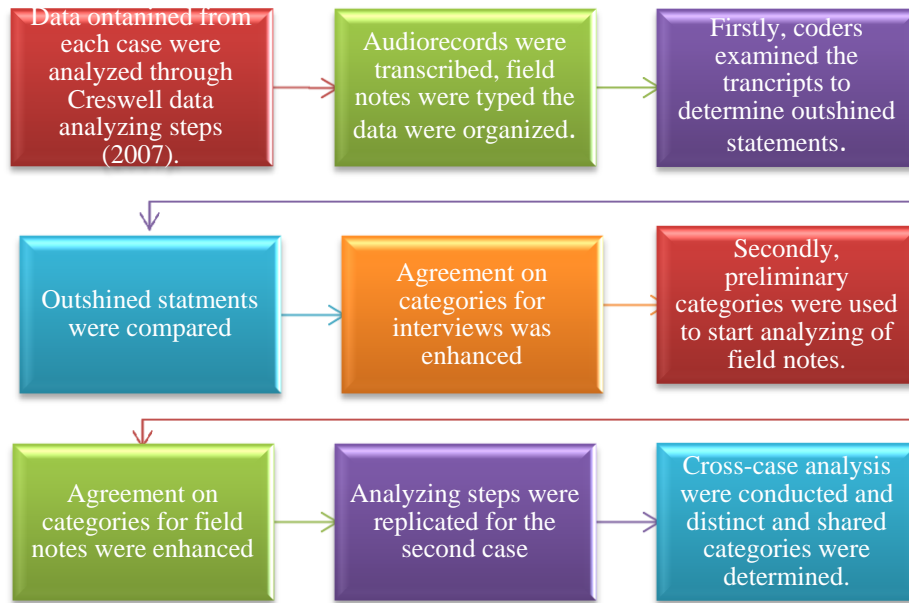


Figure 3.3 Data analysis process

Based on the related literature and the design of the current study, this study applied two-stage analysis of the data obtained from two different cases as the researcher studied two cases with the same phenomena. To this end, firstly each case was individually analysed taking its unique features into account. Secondly, within the principles of cross-case analysis, the researcher attempted to draw comparisons and contrasts looking for similarities and differences across cases.

In the current study, interviews and field notes were analysed through Creswell's (2007) data analysing steps including (a) organizing and preparing the data, (b)making general sense of information, (c)coding (d)describing, (e)representing and (f)interpreting.

Data analysis procedure of current study started with researcher's typing field notes and transcribing audio records and to organize and prepare obtained data. The second coder, a research assistant in field of early childhood education and interested in outdoor play and learning in early years, were included in the analysing procedure. First, the researcher and second coder independently examined and coded organized interview data in order to highlight the more significant sentences and the words that are interrelated with the content of study. Second, coders compared the codes in order to determine common themes and discussed possible themes emerged in the independent coding process. Field notes were also coded by the second coder, who had role in observation process. Preliminary codes obtained from interviews and

related literatures were used while analysing field notes. The codes from all field notes were reviewed to check whether there was any themes emerged from them. The analysing process involved the examination of both field notes and interviews separately. Based on analysis of interviews with teachers the researcher identified five major themes related to early childhood teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play and their self-reported practices namely (a) importance of outdoor play (b) ideal outdoor environment (c) ideal role of teachers (d) planning outdoor play. In addition, depending on analysis of interviews with parents, the scholar identified three major themes related to parents' beliefs of ideal outdoor environment and outdoor play practices in kindergarten setting namely (a) importance of outdoor play (b) ideal outdoor environment (c) views related outdoor play practices. Based on the analysis of field notes five major themes were defined namely (a) type of outdoor activities, (b) the role of teachers, (c) used materials and equipment, (d) interaction and communication between teachers and children. Lastly, within the principles of cross-case analysis, the researcher searched for the shared and distinct beliefs of all participants and the practices of teachers. Based on shared and distinct themes and subthemes, the scholar drew comparisons and contrasts looking for similarities and differences across cases.

### **3.7 Trustworthiness of the Study**

In qualitative studies, the aim of trustworthiness refers to produce evidence for some issues such as representing the reality of the case and controlling potential biases that can be occurred in the processes including the design, implementation and analysis of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Merriam, 2009). To this end, various strategies are applied to address and increase the credibility (validity), dependability (reliability), and transferability (generalizability) of the qualitative studies (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, reflexivity, peer review, audit trial are the methods that any qualitative researcher can use to ensure the validity whereas rich thick description and maximum variation are the ones to increase generalizability of the study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2007) suggested the qualitative inquirers to use at least two of those methods in any study. As validation strategies, the current study applied the methods including triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement and thick description examining those methods and their procedures.

When it comes to reliability perspectives, it deals the extent to which research findings might be replicated. However, this traditional perspective is problematic in qualitative social studies because of the reason that human behaviour is not immutable. Therefore, since replication of any qualitative study will not likely produce the same results, reliability in qualitative studies focuses on the consistency between the presented data and findings of given studies (Merriam, 2009). For that reason, while analysing transcript data, this study put inter-coding agreement and ethical issues into practices to enhance reliability of the study.

### **3.7.1 Validity**

Validity of the study, particularly internal validity, refers the question of how much findings of the given study consistent with the reality of the case. However, in contrast to quantitative research, the qualitative social science studies search for the reality which is multidimensional and ever-changing. Additionally, as human beings are the major instruments of the data collection and analysis process of the qualitative studies, the reality depends on their interpretations of the data (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Even if a qualitative study requires a difficult process to capture an objective “reality”, as previously mentioned, there are a number of certain strategies that are employed during data collection, analysis and interpretation process of qualitative studies. During the conduct of the current study, the following methods, which were explained in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the study, were employed to make the study more credible.

#### **3.7.1.1 Triangulation**

As Merriam (2009) proposed, the most common and well-known validation strategy is the one which is called as *triangulation*. There are four triangulation strategies that are argued by Miles & Huberman (1994), namely the use of multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators and multiple theories. For the current study, multiple methods including interviews and observations were used in data collection process. The purpose of using multiple methods was to check what the participant teachers report about their outdoor play practices in interviews through observations. In addition, multiple sources of data were another triangulation strategy applied in the study. To this end, observations of participant teachers’ outdoor play practices were conducted at different times of three weeks to compare and cross-check observational data. To add, interview with parents regarding to

outdoor play practices in a kindergarten settings were conducted to get data from different perspectives. At last but not least, investigator triangulation was employed by applying two different persons to analyse the data obtained from interviews and observations and to check their findings on same qualitative data.

#### 3.7.1.2 Prolonged Engagement

Prolonged engagement refers to the sufficient time spent in data collection procedure to build trust with participants and to learn the culture of research field (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). However, Merriam (2009) stated that decision about adequate time to collect data depends on each unique study. Therefore, Merriam (2009) suggested the qualitative researchers complete data collection when they start to see and hear the same things repeatedly. Based on those suggestions, the researcher of the current study conducted the data collection process by spending independently three weeks in both settings of the study. What is more, observations were carried out at different times of those weeks. This extended period of time enabled the researcher to see the participants' real understanding of the investigated phenomena.

#### 3.7.1.3 Member Checking

Member checking includes the process to take rough draft transcripts and analysis back to some of the participants in order to prevent misinterpreting the data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). For the current study, this strategy was particularly paid attention owing to the reason that one case of this study consists of participants using English as a second language. That is why; the inquirer took the transcripts and preliminary analysis to the participants in order to accurately interpret what participants told.

#### 3.7.1.4 Rich thick description

Rich thick description is another validation strategy that allows the reader to decide whether the emerging findings of any qualitative study might be transferred due to same or similar characteristics. To this end, the inquirer provides fairly detailed and descriptive information about the setting, participants and emerging findings with adequate evidence (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). For the current study, the settings, participants and findings for both cases were independently and

descriptively presented with adequate detailed information so that any reader can determine related to transferability.

### **3.7.2 Reliability and Ethics**

According to Merriam (2009), from a traditional perspective, the relation between validity and reliability depends on the assumption that a more valid study will probably produce more reliable results. That is why; triangulation methods and sources might be acceptable as strategies to obtain consistent and dependable data. For this study, those methods have already been explained within the context of conducted study. In addition to those strategies, reliability of a qualitative study is directly related to consistency between responses of multiple coders on the same data. In order to increase the reliability of this study, intercoder agreement was also applied in the analysis process of the current study by seeking agreement on codes, and themes. Lastly, ethical issues, which are to a large extent base for validity and reliability of any study, were taken into consideration in data collection, analysis and report process.

### **3.7.3 Limitations**

The current study, like most of the case studies, included some restrictions. The first one is due to the nature of the study. Even though the study conducted as multi-case study, each case had unique characteristics. That is why, it made difficult to generalize the emerging findings for the other settings. However, as previously mentioned, rich, thick description was provided to eliminate this restriction. The second limitation of the study was due to restricted time to conduct study. Since the study conducted two different cultural context (Finland and Turkey), the researcher limited data collection procedures to two months. This limitation restricted the researcher to conduct the observations on the same season of the year. Since teachers' outdoor play practices in each season were not observed, the findings about this issue were limited to the findings obtained from interviews with teachers and parents. The further researches might be conducted by observing teachers' outdoor play practices in different seasons of the year.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

This multiple case study aimed to explore Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment. Additionally, the current study focused on Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten settings. Data sources of current study involved semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, and observation of teachers' outdoor play practices. Taking its unique features into account, firstly each case was individually analyzed to identify themes and subthemes. Secondly, within the principles of cross-case analysis, the researcher attempted to draw comparisons and contrasts looking for similarities and differences across cases. This chapter present findings of each case by referring their participants, and themes and subthemes. Subsequently, themes, and subthemes are discussed based on the cross-cases analysis. Research questions addressed by study are;

1. What are the Turkish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to ideal outdoor environments and outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting?
2. What are the Turkish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten setting?
3. What are the Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to ideal outdoor environments and outdoor play practices in a kindergarten setting?
4. What are the Finnish early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices in their kindergarten setting?

## 4.1 Case Study 1/ Turkey

Depending on research questions, findings of case study one were divided into four sections: (a) findings on Turkish teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment and their self-reported outdoor play practices (b) findings on teachers' observed practices during outdoor play (c) findings on Turkish parents' related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment.

### 4.1.1 Turkish Teacher Beliefs and Self-Reported Practices of Outdoor Play and Outdoor Environment

Teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment and their self-reported practices were assessed through semi-structured interviews made with the teachers. While four major themes with a number of sub-themes were defined regarding to beliefs of outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment, two major themes with several subthemes were identified in relation to self-reported outdoor play practices. Figure 4.1 shows major themes related to Turkish teachers' beliefs and self-reported practices and Figure 4.2 presents major themes with subthemes related to Turkish teachers' beliefs and self-reported practices



Figure 4.1 Major themes related to Turkish teachers' beliefs and self-reported practices

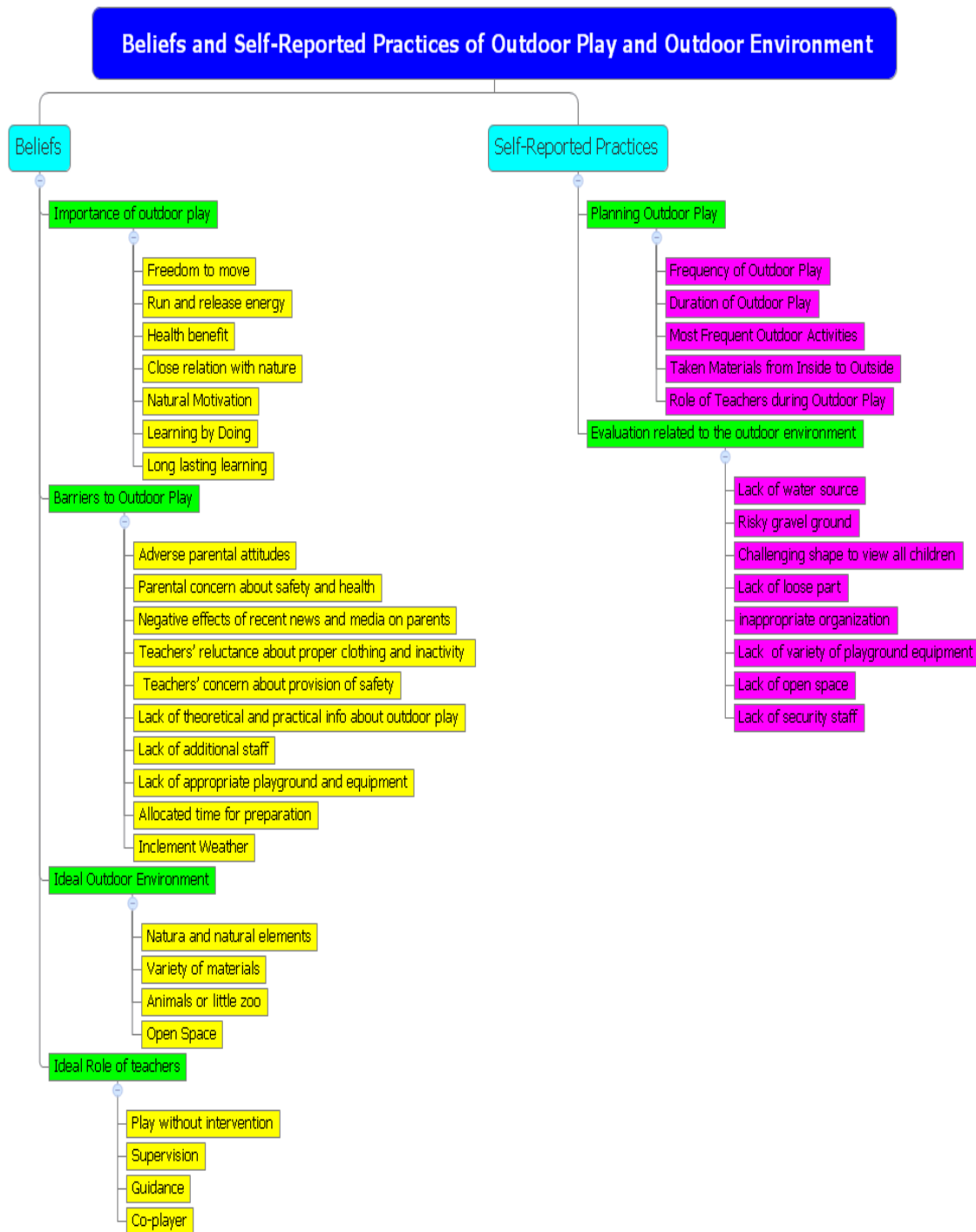


Figure 4.2 Major themes with subthemes related to Turkish teachers' beliefs and self-reported practices



#### 4.1.1.1 Participant Teachers

Seven Turkish early childhood teachers participated in this case. To maintain confidentiality, participants were coded as TT1 (First Turkish Teacher) to protect their identities. Table 4.1 outlines the demographic characteristics of the participant teachers in this case.

Table 4.1 Turkish Participant teachers' demographic characteristics of first case

Turkish Teachers	TT1	TT2	TT3	TT4	TT5	TT6	TT7
Age of teacher	35	32	43	36	42	39	30
Educational level	BA/ECE	BA/ECE	BA/ECE	BA/ECE	BA/ECE	BA/ECE	BA/ECE
Years of experience	14	9	23	10	18	17	8
Age group	36 month-old	36 month-old	48 month-old	60 month-old	48 month-old	48 month old	60 month-old
Child number in the group	18	21	23	21	21	20	23
Educational training related to play	Undergraduate course	Undergraduate course	Seminar	In-service training and Seminar	In-service training and Seminar	Undergraduate course	Undergraduate course
Educational training related to outdoor play	-	Undergraduate course	Undergraduate course	-	-	-	Undergraduate course

Based on table 4.1, all of the Turkish participant teachers were female and had a bachelor's degree. Their ages vary between 30 and 43 years old. While five of them had been teaching for ten years or more, two of them had been teaching for less than ten years. Whereas two of the teachers were teaching 36 month-old children consist of groups including 18 and 21 students, three of them worked with 48 month-old children consist of groups including 20, 21, and 23 students. Other two teachers were teaching 60 month-old children consist of groups including 21 and 23 students. While four of teachers stated that they attended undergraduate course related to play in early childhood education, there of them reported that they attend seminar

regarding play. In addition to seminar, two of teachers told that they attended in-service teacher training related to play. Lastly, three of teachers pointed out they attended an undergraduate course about outdoor play, four of them stated they did not attend any special educational training or course related to outdoor play.

4.1.1.2 Importance of outdoor play

All Turkish early childhood teachers acknowledged that outdoor play is significant for children. While describing importance of outdoor play Turkish teachers referred the developmental benefits of outdoor play and the effects of outdoor play on learning. Table 4.2 outlines beliefs of teachers regarding to importance of outdoor play.

Table 4.2 Turkish Teachers’ beliefs of importance of outdoor play

Turkish Teachers	Importance of Outdoor Play						
	Healthy Development				Effective Learning		
	Freedom to move	Run and release energy	Health benefit	Close relation with nature	Natural Motivation	Learning by Doing	Long lasting learning
TT1	√	√		√		√	
TT2			√			√	√
TT3	√	√		√	√	√	√
TT4	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
TT5	√		√	√	√		
TT6	√					√	√
TT7		√	√		√	√	

Based on table 4.2, teachers viewed outdoor play is important for young children’s healthy development and effective learning. Five teachers stated that outdoor environment support children’ healthy development by providing open space for freedom to move. For example, one teacher reported that children feel freedom in outdoors, compare to more structured indoor environment. For instance, TT1 stated “In classroom, you have limited space so all your movements are restricted. However, outdoor environment provides open space where children freely move. Even if you define some rules for outdoor play, you have wider limitations.” Four

teachers also suggested that outdoor play is an opportunity to run and release energy. One teachers support this view by telling that letting the energy out is also important to prepare children's mind for learning. "When children go out, they discharge themselves. They feel relaxed because they release negative energy. When they return to the classroom, they feel happy. If you do not allow children to play outdoors, they do not want involve any activities in class, or they get easily bored." (TT4)The importance of outdoor play for children's health was also mentioned by four teachers who refer to the effects of fresh air on feeling vigorous and sleeping habit. One teacher specify this view by telling; "...It make children feel physically more vigorous. For example, after outdoor play, children sleep better" (TT2). Another teacher reported that outdoor play is essential for both physical and mental well-being of children. "When I came to the class, first action I did was to open the window. Why? Because the class is stuffy, there is no fresh air. But, children feel relaxed both physically and mentally in the garden." (TT4).

Four teachers also focused on the importance of outdoor play in terms of provision of close relation with nature. The teachers believed that outdoor play is an opportunity for children to keep in relation with nature as nowadays children spend their time inside buildings by playing with iPad, computers or the other technological devices. A teacher supported this idea as she said, "I believe that outdoor play and nature are important for children because they have already been playing with instruments such as iPad, computer and their parents' phones or they watching T.V at home. They grow like this way." (TT1). Another teacher referred importance of outdoor play by expressing child and nature relation should be built.

*Nowadays, unlike our childhoods, we are not in relation with nature. Thus, I believe that outdoor play is important to introduce nature to children. They are afraid of nature. Since they do not know nature, they do not know how they live without destroying it. They need to know how to protect and like the nature in order to feel freedom of nature. (TT5).*

In addition to developmental benefits of outdoor play, most of teachers point out outdoor play is crucial for effective learning. In this respect, four teachers reported that children have natural motivation to be in outdoors. This motivation is considered as an important component for effective learning by several teachers. TT4 specified this issue by telling; ".... On Monday, we did an art activity. Before the activity, I asked children whether they want to do activity indoor or outdoor. They all wanted to be outdoors by offering me to freely play after completed activity. In outdoor environment, they are more willing to involve activities." One another

teacher promoted this issue by referring children are naturally drawn to outdoors. “After we do our routines in a typical day, when I tell children to go outdoors, a sound ‘oley’ comes from children. Actually, they are happy outdoors” (TT3). Besides, the importance of outdoor play and environment for effective learning is mentioned by almost all teachers with six teachers stating that outdoor play present opportunities for learning by doing. A teacher described this case by exemplifying. “In outdoor environment, you can teach some concepts using real natural materials rather than using pen and paper. For instance, after collecting stones, you can count the number of them, or collecting leaves you can sort the colour of leaves from dark to light” (TT1). The other teachers emphasized outdoor environment in terms of its dynamism which enable them to raise awareness of its change during the seasons. “... They notice the nature. Even if we tell something about the seasons, they learn by feeling” (TT7). “... Then they see the trees when they are in bloom. They learn by experience” (TT6). As a consequence of learning by doing in outdoor environment, several used the term of long lasting learning while describing the importance of outdoor play for effective learning.

*I can clearly tell that outdoor play is more effective on learning because children learn by doing. They learn the truth by observing rather than looking pictures or listening verbal expressions. They build the knowledge on their own. That is why; I believe it ensures long lasting learning (TT2).*

#### 4.1.1.3 Ideal Outdoor Environment

Turkish Teachers defined an ideal outdoor environment for children as one which includes nature and natural element, an open space to apply play with rules or freely to move, various materials to enrich children’s play and lastly a little zoo. Table 4.3 summarize components of ideal outdoor environment that all teachers described.

Table 4.3 Component of ideal outdoor environment

Ideal Outdoor Environment	Turkish Teachers						
	TT1	TT2	TT3	TT4	TT5	TT6	TT7
Nature and natural elements	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Variety of materials	√			√	√	√	√
Animals or little zoo		√		√	√		
Open Space	√			√	√		

Based on table 4.3, all of teachers believed that ideal outdoor environment should include nature and natural elements. For instance, TT2 expressed her ideal outdoor environment as a place “where children interact with soil and nature, we can make planting activities. A place which includes some animals, and where children make observation. In my ideal, kindergarten should be close to the forest or sea. Even, it should be in the forest.”

Five of teachers referred variety of materials in an ideal playground. However, the teachers also described ideal outdoor environment including open space for children’s freedom of movement. In this respect, TT4 described her ideal outdoor environment like;

*The garden of an ideal kindergarten should be a safe place children can play comfortably. It should not include too many equipment that limit the field, rather it should include wide space. Instead of park equipment, it should include components which improve children’s creativity. For instance a sandbox which is close to the water source such as fountain. Real plates, bowls, work pans. Additionally, it might include little animals or various plants. Children are given the responsibilities of those animals and plants.*

#### 4.1.1.4 The Role of Turkish Teachers during Outdoor Play

Turkish early childhood teachers described their ideal role, which is believed as optimal role a teacher should apply, by referring their actual role they take in the outdoor environment. In this regard, they have distinct and shared beliefs. Table 4.4 outlines the actual roles that teacher took in outdoor playground and the ones that they idealized.

Table 4.4 the role of teachers during outdoor play

Turkish Teachers	The Role of Turkish Teachers During Outdoor Play	
	Actual role	Ideal Role
TT1	Supervision	Play without intervention
TT2	Guidance & Co-player	Play without intervention
TT3	Supervision & Guidance & Co-player	Supervision& Guidance & Co-player
TT4	Guidance	Guidance
TT5	Guidance	Guidance
TT6	Guidance & Co-player	Guidance & Co-player
TT7	Co-player	Co-player

Based on table 4.4, the roles that are most frequently mentioned as ideal roles by teachers are guidance and co-player. Four of teachers also reported that guidance and co-player are the roles which they take in the outdoor setting.

*In outdoor environment, if we play a game with rules, I play with them or I am guide. But, if it is free play, I am observer during free play. I think the role of teachers in outdoor should be like the ones that I applied, because I believe that garden is a place where children feel freedom compare to more structured indoor environment. (TT3)*

The teachers predominantly referred independency of children while describing the role of teacher during outdoor play. For instance, TT4 point out the issue by telling;

*In my opinion, the role of teacher is just explaining the rules of games. Otherwise, in every step of his/her behaviour, s/he needs to be confirmed by looking teachers' eyes. S/he hesitates while acting. This prevents children to enjoy play. In my practice, I explain the rules of play and then I monitor them. I intervene if it is required, but I prefer not to.*

Two of the teachers stated their actual roles during outdoor play are different from the ones that they normally apply. Although TT1 and TT2 described their actual roles as supervisor, guide and co-player, they believed that depending on their own choice, children should have freedom to engage in play without unnecessary intervention from teachers.

*Sometimes, I feel that I restrict children as I would like to control them. Actually, I think I should not take this role. The children should more independent. I do not know why I could not overcome this situation. May be it is because of safety concern. (TT2).*

#### 4.1.1.5 Barriers to Outdoor Play

The Turkish early childhood teachers defined what they believed as barriers that prevent them from applying outdoor play in their kindergarten. Only one teacher did not refer so many barriers while the other teachers eagerly told about this issue by spending a great deal of time to define the barriers. Defined barriers included a broad spectrum consist of obstacles arising from parents, teachers, kindergartens and the other reasons. Table 4.5 shows Turkish teachers' beliefs related barriers to outdoor play.

Table 4.5 Beliefs of teachers related barriers to outdoor play

Barriers to Outdoor Play	Turkish Teachers
Factors associated with parents	TT1, TT2, TT3, TT5, TT6, TT7
a. Adverse parental attitudes	
b. Parental concern about safety and health	
c. Negative effects of recent news and media on parents	

Table 4.5 (continued)

Factors associated with teachers	TT1, TT2, TT3
a. Teachers' reluctance about proper clothing and inactivity	
b. Teachers' concern about provision of safety	
c. Lack of practical info about outdoor play	
Factors associated with facility of kindergarten	TT1, TT2, TT3
a. Lack of additional staff	
b. Lack of appropriate playground and equipment	
Other factors	TT1, TT2, TT3, TT4, TT5, TT6, TT7
a. Allocated time for preparation	
b. Inclement Weather	

Based on table 4.3, the main barriers stated by almost all teachers are inclement weather and factors associated with parents. The teachers reported that they preferred to use gym rather than going outdoor environment, or to use outdoor playground for too short time during the seasons including extremely cold or hot weather. Teachers associated inclement weather with parents concern about children's health. Teachers asserted that in summer parents are worried about children's health due to sweating or sunstroke while in winter due to lack of appropriate clothing. One of the teachers explained:

*... Normally my group include eighteen children but during the winter eight, ten or twelve children could attend school because of sickness. Thus, parents are so worried about children's health. They always tell us 'oh, my child should not sweat or feel cold'. That is why we could not use the garden during the winter. (TT1).*

One another exemplified parental concern giving an example from her previous experience in this kindergarten.

*... Last year, if you remember, it snowed to Ankara. We wanted to make snowballs festivities at school. We wanted to make snowman with children. You know, when it snowed the weather becomes softer. We sent letters to parents about our wishes by advising them to send their children with appropriate clothing. Do you know how many children came to school? While we normally had 250 children, just ten of them came to school. This is our most striking example which shows our parents' view on the issue of outdoor play. (TT3)*

The teachers also referred also parents' concern about children's safety by presenting the accidents, which happened in garden, as a reason. TT7 expressed ".....The children face more accidents when we go out; in fact they are also getting responses from parents." In addition, a teacher mentioned negative effects of recent news on parents.

*Actually, yes, you may fall and may be injured. But this is not a possibility for our parents. In Turkey, recently there have been a few incidents which are seriously resulted in kindergartens. Those affected parents' views on this issue. So they are worried about their children's safety. (TT2)*

All of the teachers mentioned that parents' concern lead them to have adverse attitudes. They expressed adverse parental attitudes influence teachers' outdoor play practices. TT2 describe this influence by saying; "... Particularly, parents' concerns and pressure in this issue make us much more worried. That is why we have problems regarding to go out. Since I am also a teacher having high level anxiety, any parent having so much worry increases my concern, too." TT1 added "the more we took this kind of responses from parents, the less we become willing to go out." One another teacher concurred "I am trying to go out even in cold weather. But when I took some negative response from one or several parents, it affects my motivation in this subject" (TT6).

Three teachers viewed some factors, which are related to them, as a barrier to outdoor play. The teachers, particularly working with younger ones, stated that proper clothing to go out is an obstacle for them as children need so much help for clothing. TT3 described this barrier "To be honest, we have more than twenty students. You would go out with twenty children. Some of them are not able to wear their coat or boots ...etc. They constitute an obstacle. Then we prefer to stay at class." Teachers also stated that appropriate clothing take so much time which prevent them to apply their daily plan. TT1 expressed this case;

*It takes a long time to dress them up and out one by one. As children sleep after lunch, we have two hours between breakfast and lunch to apply our curriculum. When we go out, this clothing process including washing hand and face takes more forty-five minutes. In remaining period, which activities can we apply?*

Three teachers considered lack of additional staff working with them as a barrier to outdoor play by referring that high teacher and child ratio makes them worried about provision of safety in outdoor playground. TT2 voiced her concern by telling;

*If there is a staff to help us in outdoor environment, I feel safer in terms of children. Otherwise, I have difficulty in observing and controlling children in outdoor environment. So I do not prefer to go out with children if there is not any trainee student or assistant.*

Some of teachers referred teachers' inactivity as a barrier to outdoor play due to the fact they used prepared plan which do not include any outdoor activity. They stated that they accept it is because of their lethargy. Also they stated, they have not practical information how they apply outdoor play and learning activities although



they realize the importance of outdoor play in theory. TT1 point out this barrier as she said;

*... We have the curriculum. We have to implement this curriculum. There are plans that we prepare. I sincerely tell that I'm using prepared plan. I mean the plans prepared by teacher friends. Every day I have not written plan. We can make minor changes to the plan. You can also examine a few plans. There is no garden activity. I think we're actually a little bit lazy. I suppose the fact that this is about us.*

Although all of the teachers stated that outdoor environment of their kindergarten needs to be improved in terms of some of its components, three of teachers believed the lack of equipment and materials as a barrier to outdoor play. For example, TT3 explained this barrier;

*You do not keep the children in the soil during the day. We request the parents for shovel and pail. But they are not enough. Material is important and our outdoor environment should include some loose parts that children can manipulate. For instance, we can plant somethings with children. But, this time we face the problem of the lack of water source.*

TT1 added;

*I do not think playground is not well-equipped with appropriate materials. There is a theme parks but how much healthy is it? When children play in playground for half an hour I feel so tired. They are hanging, jumping and so on. Ground is gravel, there is no soft ground. Children may fall and they may be injured. So obviously I do not think it is healthy.*

#### 4.1.1.6 Turkish Early Childhood Teachers' Self-reported Practices

Turkish early childhood teachers were asked about their outdoor play practices in terms of frequency and duration of outdoor play, most frequent outdoor activities, the materials used in outdoor activities and the role taken during outdoor play. Table 4.6 demonstrates the summary of teachers' self-reported outdoor play practices.

Table 4.6 Turkish Early Childhood Teachers' Self-Reported Outdoor Play Practices

Planning Outdoor Play					
Turkish Teachers	Frequency of Outdoor Play	Duration of Outdoor Play	Most Frequent Outdoor Activities	Taken Materials from Inside to Outside	Role of Teachers during Outdoor Play
TT1	when the weather was good outside	15-20 min.	Free Play, Observation activity	Painting materials, Magnifying glass	Supervision

Table 4.6 (continued)

TT2	when the weather was good outside	20-30 min.	Free play, Observation activity	Magnifying glass, pail and shovel	Guidance & Co-player
TT3	when the weather was good outside	15-20 min.	Free Play, Play with rules, Observation activity,	Magnifying glass, pail and shovel	Supervision & Guidance & Co-player
TT4	Every day	30 min.	Play with rules, Environment education activity,	Pail and shovel, ball and	Guidance
TT5	when the weather was good outside	30-60 min.	Free Play, Environment education activity,	Discovery box (for insect collection)	Guidance
TT6	when the weather was good outside	15-45 min.	Play with rules, Environment education activity	-	Guidance & Co-player
TT7	when the weather was good outside	15-20 min.	Free Play, Environment education activity	Painting materials	Co-player

Based on Table 4.6, while six teachers stated that due to parental concerns, they planned outdoor activities when the weather was good outside, one teacher reported that she implemented outdoor activities every day. For instance, TT1 said “We try to include outdoor activities in our plans, but I cannot tell that I frequently apply outdoor activities. It is because of the reasons such as parental concern and the structure of playground....” TT5 added “Due to our parents’ demand, we generally go out when the weather good outside”.

Also, the teachers point out time spent outdoor changes depending on type of activity and children’s interest. They explained that durations of outdoor activities range from 15 to 60 minutes. “...so if children play freely, fifteen minutes could be

enough. If we do activity, it changes depending on activity. Sometimes it takes 45 minutes.” (TT6).

The teachers reported that they mostly apply environment education activities owing to Eco School and “Minik TEMA (*TEMA: The Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats*)” projects that aim create a connection between young children and environment. “We apply Minik TEMA and Eco School project in our school. We effectively use this garden as a part of this project because all its activities are required to use garden. So, we plan our activities to implement outdoor” (TT5).

As for play, most of teachers expressed that they implement free play activities in outdoor playground. “We usually apply observation or free play activities” (TT2). Some of teachers also reported they implemented games with rules. “As my group consists of five year-old children, we can play all kind of games with rules such as dodge ball or basketball.” (TT4).

The teachers voiced that they generally do not take materials from indoor to outdoor for the activities that they practiced. However, they stated that if they apply an observation activity, they took the magnifying glasses, or if they implement free play, they can bring the pail and shovel for children to use in sandbox. Lastly, the teachers said that they mainly taken the roles of guidance, co-player or supervision during the structured activities or free play.

#### 4.1.1.7 Turkish teachers’ evaluation related to the outdoor environment of the kindergarten where they work

The teachers were asked to evaluate outdoor environment of the kindergarten where they work considering several factors including physical appropriateness, materials and equipment, opportunities for different play and safety of outdoor environment. Based on those factors, the teachers evaluated outdoor environment by referring their outdoor play practices. They generally mentioned inadequacy and inappropriateness of outdoor environment which affect their outdoor play practices. Table 4.7 shows the inadequacies of outdoor environment reported by Turkish early childhood teachers.

Table 4.7 Turkish Teachers' evaluation related to the outdoor environment of kindergarten where they work

Turkish Teachers	Turkish Teachers' evaluation related to the outdoor environment of kindergarten where they work								
	lack of water source	risky gravel ground	snape to view all children	lack of loose part	inappropriate organization	Lack of variety of playground equipment	lack of open space	lack of security staff	
TT1	√				√		√		
TT2		√	√			√	√		
TT3	√			√	√	√	√		
TT4		√					√	√	
TT5	√			√		√	√		
TT6							√	√	
TT7	√	√		√	√				

Based on table 4.7, six teachers reported that their current outdoor environment does not include an open space. TT5 said “our playground had a narrow space for games with rules. It should have had a place where children freely run.” In addition to open space, some of the teachers viewed the organization of garden as a problem. TT3 referred this problem by telling; “We have a large space but it does not include a good organization. In the middle there is ship as a park material which includes pathways around. Remaining place is not appropriate to apply games with rules”

For most of teachers, lack of water source in garden is problem for planting act. TT3 pointed out” We tried to plant something with children, but we faced with the problem of lack of water.” TT5 added “The biggest problem of garden is lack of water source. We could not plant herb such as parsley or fresh dill because I know they will perish due to lack of water.” Some of teachers viewed gravel ground of playground as a problem for safety of children. TT2 expressed “As I said, playground contains some risks for children. For instance, ground should be covered softer material rather than gravel”. TT2 point out another problem for her by telling; “We have outdoor environment having a slope. This part also makes me worried

because, when children are freely playing, I cannot see the all children at the same time just turning my head.”

Some of teachers also referred lack of loose part and variety of materials as a problem that affects their outdoor play practices. In this regard, TT1 stated “We cannot tell to children ‘Let’s take off shoes, run on the grass. Or let’s make castles with sand and soil using our pail and shovel.” TT3 added “We can plan outdoor activities, but if we would have various materials for outdoor environment. While saying materials, I do not mean everything should be perfect, but at least outdoor environment should include some loose parts that children can manipulate.”

Five teachers believed outdoor environment of their kindergarten is safe for children. However, two teachers also stated the lack of security stuff is an inadequacy of their school. TT6 pointed out this issue; “There is no security guard in the school. When the trainees are not with us in school, I am alone in outdoor environment. At those times, any child might go out.”

#### **4.1.2 Turkish Teachers’ Observed Outdoor Play Practices**

In Turkey, observations of early childhood teachers’ outdoor play practices were conducted on the days when the weather was between 8 and 21 degrees. For the reason that the teachers did not have a specific time to apply outdoor play activities, the time of outdoor activities were changed based on teachers’ own daily plan. The following sections included findings in relation to Turkish teachers actual outdoor play practices on basis of applied outdoor play activities, the role of children and teachers during the activities, materials and equipment used in the activities and lastly interaction and communication during the activities. Figure 4.3 presents themes and subthemes related to Turkish teachers’ observed outdoor play practices

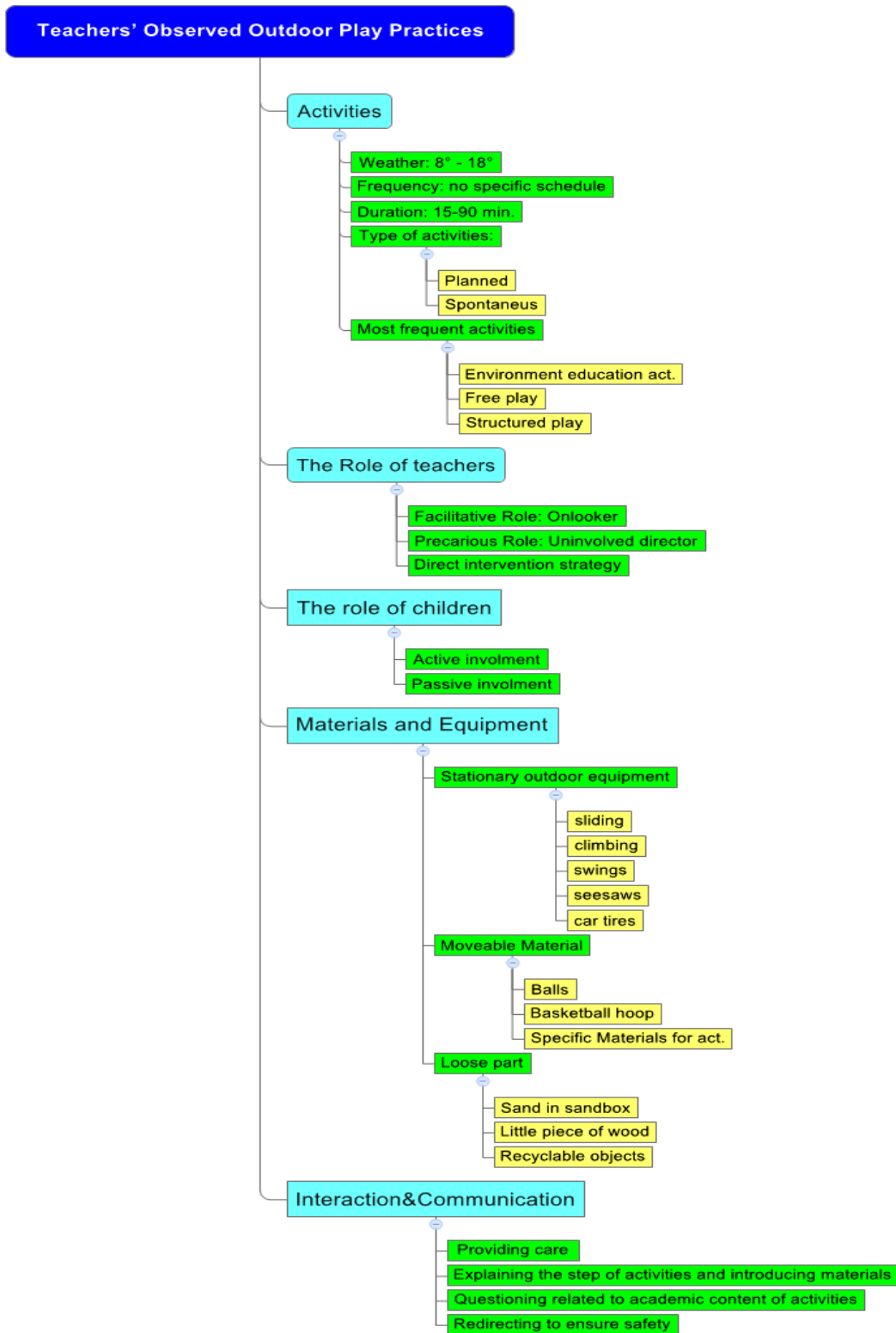


Figure 4.3 Themes and subthemes related to Turkish teachers' observed outdoor play practices

#### 4.1.2.1 Outdoor Play Activities

Depending on daily schedule of kindergarten observations were carried out in the morning or the afternoon. Duration of outdoor activities was also not fixed. That is why; time spent outdoors changed according to conducted activity types. While the shortest duration of outdoor activity was 10 minutes, the longest outdoor activity lasted half an hour.

Generally, the teachers started outdoor time with a planned activity and continued with free play. Based on Eco School and “Minik TEMA” projects in the kindergarten, planned activities mostly included observation and experiment in relation to nature. In this regard, planting sapling, flowers or potatoes, observing animals and the change in nature, and experiments related to erosion were the activities observed by researcher. As for play, free play was mostly preferred by teachers during outdoor play. In addition, some plays including games with rules were rarely applied.

#### 4.1.2.2 The Role of Children during Outdoor Play Activities

All planned activities were carried out as a whole group activity and they were teacher directed. That is why; planned activities were practiced in a way that required children’s passive involvement. During activities, children were just asked to answer some questions related to the academic content of activities. However, in some activities such as planting flowers or sapling, children’s were actively and individually involved in planting. Additionally, during free play children actively engaged in their self-motivated plays.

#### 4.1.2.3 The Role of Teachers during Outdoor Play Activities

The roles of teachers in activities were recorded considering facilitative roles of teachers, defined by Johnson, Christie, and Wardle (2005) and strategies described by Perry (2001). The roles of teachers were changed according to activity type. In planned activities, teachers were in role of director by telling children what to do while playing, or by asking questions to redirect children’s attention toward academic content. On the other hand, in free play activities, teachers took the role of uninvolved which requires minimal involvement, or the facilitative role of onlooker. In some structured play, the teachers rarely applied facilitative role of co-player. Additionally, in almost all activities the teachers attained direct intervention strategy to insure safety when either physical or psychological safety was an issue.

#### 4.1.2.4 Materials and Equipment

Out of stationary outdoor equipment, variety of materials used in planned activities and free play was very limited. In teacher-directed activities, used materials were specific for the target activities and they were introduced by teachers. Yet, they were generally in use of teachers. During free play, the children were allowed to play using stationary outdoor equipment that is housed on the playground. In the middle of playground, there is big wooden equipment as a form of ship which consists of the combination sliding and climbing equipment. Next to this equipment, swings exist. Besides, car tires embedded in ground and little seesaws and sandbox are suited around the big wooden ship. Also, a pergola, several benches and picnic tables are housed in different part of playground for use of teachers and children. Out of balls and basketball hoop, which are normally stored in gymnasium room, children were not frequently presented any materials and loose parts during their structured and free plays. Sand in sandbox was the only loose part that children can manipulate according to their imagination. However, children were observed while playing with some recyclable objects such as empty bucket of yogurt, plastic cubs, a piece of water hose and some natural materials such as small pieces of wood. Figure 4.4 presents outdoor environment of kindergarten in TURKEY



Figure 4.4 Outdoor environment of kindergarten in TURKEY

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#### 4.1.2.5 Interaction and Communication between Teachers and Children

Interaction and communication between teachers and children were mainly observed during planned activities. As teachers were generally took role of uninvolved or onlooker during free play, interaction and communication was very limited.

The teachers interacted and communicated with children for the following purposes;

- To Provide care
- To Explain the step of activities and introducing materials
- To Question related to academic content of activities
- To Redirect to ensure safety

##### *Providing Care*

During outdoor play activities, teachers were observed while they were providing care for the purpose of providing food and water, assisting children to go toilet, helping children hurt themselves in play and assisting children in dressing their coat and shoes.

“In the entrance of kindergarten, while children are dressing their coat to go out, TT1, who work with 36 month-old children, helped children to zip up their coats.”

“TT6 called freely playing children for tiffin by telling ‘You guys, did you get hungry’. All children yelled by saying “yes”. The teacher told again, ‘Okay, come to pergola and form a lie, I will give you wet wipes”.

“One of the children fell down from and started crying, TT3 hug the child and tried to make him calm down.”

##### *Explaining the Step of Activities and Introducing Materials*

In planned activities, the teachers mainly used verbal comments to make explanation related to activities and to introduce materials which are required for the activities.

In Planting Potatoes activity:

“TT6 brought a bag including potatoes. She showed germinated part of potatoes and told children ‘we will plant it in soil, it will be germinated again.”

In an experiment related to erosion:

*Showing the flowers which she removed from the pot, TT7 told 'Children, let's assume this flower is a tree'. Then she asked 'what do trees have under the soil?', but children failed to respond. At that point, the teacher directed children to tell "roots" by telling 'they have roots, have not they?' Then, she closed children one by one in order to allow them to examine the roots of flower. Taking the water bottle in her hand, the teacher poured over the flowers....*

Verbal communications between teacher and children were generally teacher initiated. Rarely, child initiated conversations were observed. The children, whose attentions were drawn by a natural object or a case, tried also to draw the teachers' attention.

In a structured play activity, while the teacher was a play leader;

*A child discovered anthill, then he tried to draw teachers' attention for a while. At the end, he could be successful. The teacher responded by telling 'Oooo, it is an anthill, very nice. After play, your friend should examine this (TT2).*

#### *Questioning related to Academic Content of Activities*

During planned activities, the teachers were frequently observed while questioning in relation to the academic content of activities. The questions were sometimes regarding to children's previous experiences or learnings or directly related to the target issues of the activities.

*TT6 called freely playing children to the place where recent planted saplings existed. She drew children attention to the newly planted sapling and asked children do they remember the things related to trees that they learned previous weeks. Children shared their learnings by telling 'Without trees, we cannot have papers', 'Trees make up steam but we could not see. The steams bump a layer and they create the clouds. Then the clouds pour rain drop.*

#### *Redirecting to ensure safety and stating rules*

During all outdoor play activities, the teachers usually redirect children for the purposes of preventing children not to engage in behaviours that teachers think inappropriate, and offering children to behave like the teachers considered appropriate. Maintaining safety was the major reason of redirecting. To this end, the teachers frequently remind the rules in the garden.

*In outdoor environment, children eat popcorn on the time of tiffin. After they finished popcorn, they filled little gravels into the popcorn cup and started to throw each other's. The teacher, who was sitting on the bench and looking children from far, stood up and directly intervened children by saying "No, No, No, I do not allow you to play this way (TT5).*

*While the teacher was planting potatoes with a group of children, the other group was playing freely in the playground. One of the children came to the teachers and told 'Çağatay threw us sand". The teacher went to the close of Çağatay and told him : ' If the sand came to your friends' eyes, it harms (TT6).*

“The teacher warned children, who press the newly planted vegetables, by telling; ‘In planting area, you are allowed to walk on the stones of which shape like foot’ ” (TT6).

“The teacher warned children by telling ‘Do not hurt each other, play nicely. Otherwise, we finish outdoor time and go inside. Tuna, we do not use ferries wheel by standing. We use it by sitting’ ” (TT2).

#### 4.1.3 Turkish parents’ beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment

Parents’ beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment were assessed through semi-structured interview with the parents. Depending on research question 3a, three major themes with a number of sub-themes were defined regarding to beliefs of outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment. Figure 4.5 presents Themes and subthemes of Turkish parents beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment.

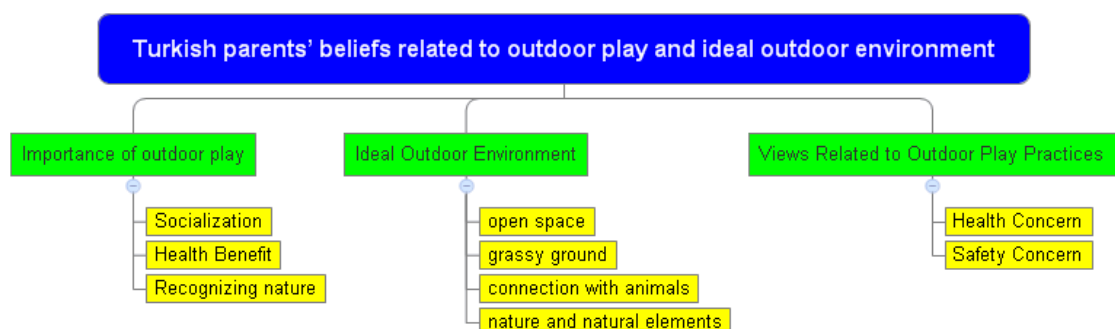


Figure 4.5 Themes and subthemes of Turkish parents’ beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment

##### 4.1.3.1 Participant Parents

Seven Turkish parents participated in this case. To maintain confidentiality, participant were coded as TP1 (First Turkish Parent) to protect their identities. Table 4.8 outlines demographic characteristics of the participant parents in this case.

Table 4.8 Participant parents' demographic characteristics of first case

Turkish Parents	TP1	TP2	TP3	TP4	TP5	TP6	TP7
Age	32	29	38	35	32	35	30
Hometown	Denizli	Çorum	Adana	Trabzon	Ankara	Ankara	Konya
Educational Background	University	High School	University	Vocational High School	High School	Vocational High School	University
Number of child	2	1	2	2	1	1	1

All of the Turkish participant parents were female whose ages range between 29 and 38. While three parents had bachelor' degree, two parents graduated from vocational high school and three parents graduated from high school. Four of parents had two children whereas three of them had a child. Participant parents were from different parts of Turkey.

#### 4.1.3.2 Importance of Outdoor Play

Turkish parents were asked about importance of outdoor play for young children's learning and development. Socialization, health benefits were mainly mentioned by parents. Just one parent expressed importance of outdoor play referring to recognize nature. Table 4.9 outlines beliefs of parents regarding to importance of outdoor play.

Table 4.9 Beliefs of parents regarding to importance of outdoor play

Importance of outdoor play	Turkish Parents
Socialization	TP1, TP2, T3, TP6, TP7
Health Benefit	TP2, TP4, TP5, TP7
Recognizing nature	TP6

Based on Table 4.9, the parents were primarily associated outdoor play with socialization. TP6 referred the socialization benefit provided by outdoor play by telling; "Outdoor play is beneficial for children because children contact with other

children in outdoor. They learn both playing and solving problems with other children”

TP3 supported this view by saying;

*I am not like the mother who cares all complains of the child about his/her friends. I told my child to find solutions for her problems with friends on their own. So, I believe outdoor play support children's communication skills*

TP7 added:

*Nowadays, parents do not have many children. So, children may have one sibling or no sibling. This situation leads child play alone at home. At that point, in outdoor, children can contact with their peers. This contact affects their communication. For instance, when we were living in Diyarbakir, we created a playground in one of rooms at home. This playground included anything such as sliding and swinging. At the end, do you know what I saw? I saw my child was not happy. All the play materials were important for her when the other children came to our home. So, I believe outdoor provide children a space to contact with other children.*

Two of the parents also stated that “outdoor play supports children’s self-confidence as children feel independency. “ TP1 and TP2

Several parents reported that outdoor play is important for children due the fact that it provides fresh air, and opportunity to run and release energy.

TP5 explained;

“In playgrounds, many materials are not existed out of sliding and swing, but children can create their own play. At least, they can release their energy by running to catch the each other.”

TP4 promoted this view;

“Outdoor play is important for children’s health because it provides fresh air. In addition, they can release their energy.”

One of the parents referred importance of outdoor play in terms of recognizing nature by telling; “First of all, children recognize the nature by touching soil, stone, examining earthworm after raining or noticing an anthill in outdoor environment. They can notice the things that you could not realize. “(TP6)

#### 4.1.3.3 Ideal Outdoor Environment

Turkish parents were also asked about what their ideal outdoor environment look like. They responded this question by comparing outdoor environment of kindergarten that their children attend and the one that they would like to have.

Most of the parents stated that outdoor environment of the current

kindergarten is similar to the playground that they believed as ideal outdoor environment. For instance, TP7 reported her satisfaction related to outdoor environment by telling “We have an ideal outdoor environment, because anything that an ideal garden should include exists in our garden. There are an animal shelter, park equipment, a planting area, and trees. I think there is no need.” However, four parents mentioned the need for a qualified sand box, and grassy ground or a ground which is covered with soft material.

TP6 explained this need of soft ground by referring their concerns about children’s safety:

*Playground now includes a gravel ground which constitutes a risk for children. We live and so we know they throw gravels each other’s. They could fall down to this ground while sliding and this cause them to be injured. That is why, ground should include soft materials.*

TT1 supported this view;

“I like this garden, gravel ground may be changed with artificial turf or natural grass. In this way, the children do not hurt each other’s.”

Another parent referred a need for qualified sand box. “In my opinion, sand box is important as much as swing. The sand box in this kindergarten is very poor in terms of sand and very little. It would be better for this kindergarten to have a more qualified sand box.” This parent also stated that she opposed the idea of other parents that gravel ground should be removed by changing with artificial turf or any other soft material. As she believed “it supports children’s creativity. I wish, park in front of my house would include gravel or sand. In this kind of places, I could not find anything to play imaginatively with my child” (TP2).

Three parents, without referring current outdoor environment of kindergarten, expressed their ideal outdoor playground “as a place which includes open space for moving, a planting areas and facilities that connect children with nature” and “as a place which includes animals such as rabbit, cat, chicken and cock, and risk taking materials that improves children’s muscles, a part consist of soil and water that enable children to play with clay, and an artificial lake” (TP3, TP4, TP6).

#### 4.1.3.4 Beliefs of Turkish Parents Regarding to Outdoor Play Practices in Kindergarten

Turkish parents were asked about outdoor play practices in the kindergarten that their children attend. Six parents responded that they support the outdoor play

practices when the weather is good outside. "...As long as the weather is good outside, it is okay for me. She can play outside at school" (TP4). "...I think it is good for children to release their energy and to keep in touch with nature in fine weathers" (TP5). "As long as she does not get ill, my child can play in good weathers..." (TP3). On the other hand, all parents stated that they are not willing about their children play outside in cold weathers.

"I am completely opposed the idea that children go out in cold weathers. I do not think they have to play outdoors even in winter. They can stay in indoor environment during cold winter days" (TP1).

TP5 promoted this view;

"All of the parents, including me, agree with the idea that children should not go out during cold weathers in kindergarten."

Two parents expressed that children can go outside in winter as long as children have appropriate clothes and the teachers changed children's wet and dirty clothes after outdoor play session.

*As long as they dress their clothes to protect themselves from cold, they can go out because they are happy in outdoor environment. But, for instance, I need to be sure about their wet clothes are changed after outdoor play ended (TP6).*

#### *Health Concern;*

Major concern of parents related to outdoor play practices is the health of their children. They reported that they believe their children would probably be sick in cold weathers.

TP4 expressed her concern by telling;

*I frankly tell that our children do not have a strong immune system. they are sick during half of the month. they are getting ill again and again. for that reason, may be it is not right way, we want to protect our children*

TP3 supported this view;

*My child is very young and so her immune system has not been very strong, yet. That is why, she is getting ill easily. When she feels sick, I have to deal with this situation. I am not a housewife. When I take day off more than three days, I face with problems in my work.*

#### *Safety Concern*

One of the parents also stated that she is concerned with safety of her child due to high teacher-child ratio.

*In our group, there are 21 children and maximum two or three adults when the trainees are at kindergarten. In my opinion, it is risky rate because they are very young. In addition, they*

*do not consider adults' warnings so much time. That is why; I believe it is risky in terms of controlling children (TP1).*

## 4.2 Case Study 2/ Finland

Depending on research questions, findings of case study two were divided into four sections: (a) findings on Finnish teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment and their self-reported outdoor play practices (b) findings on Finnish teachers' observed practices during outdoor play, and, (c) findings on Finnish parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment. Figure 4.6 outlines themes and subthemes of Finnish teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment

### 4.2.1 Finnish Teacher Beliefs and Self-Reported Practices of Outdoor Play and Outdoor Environment

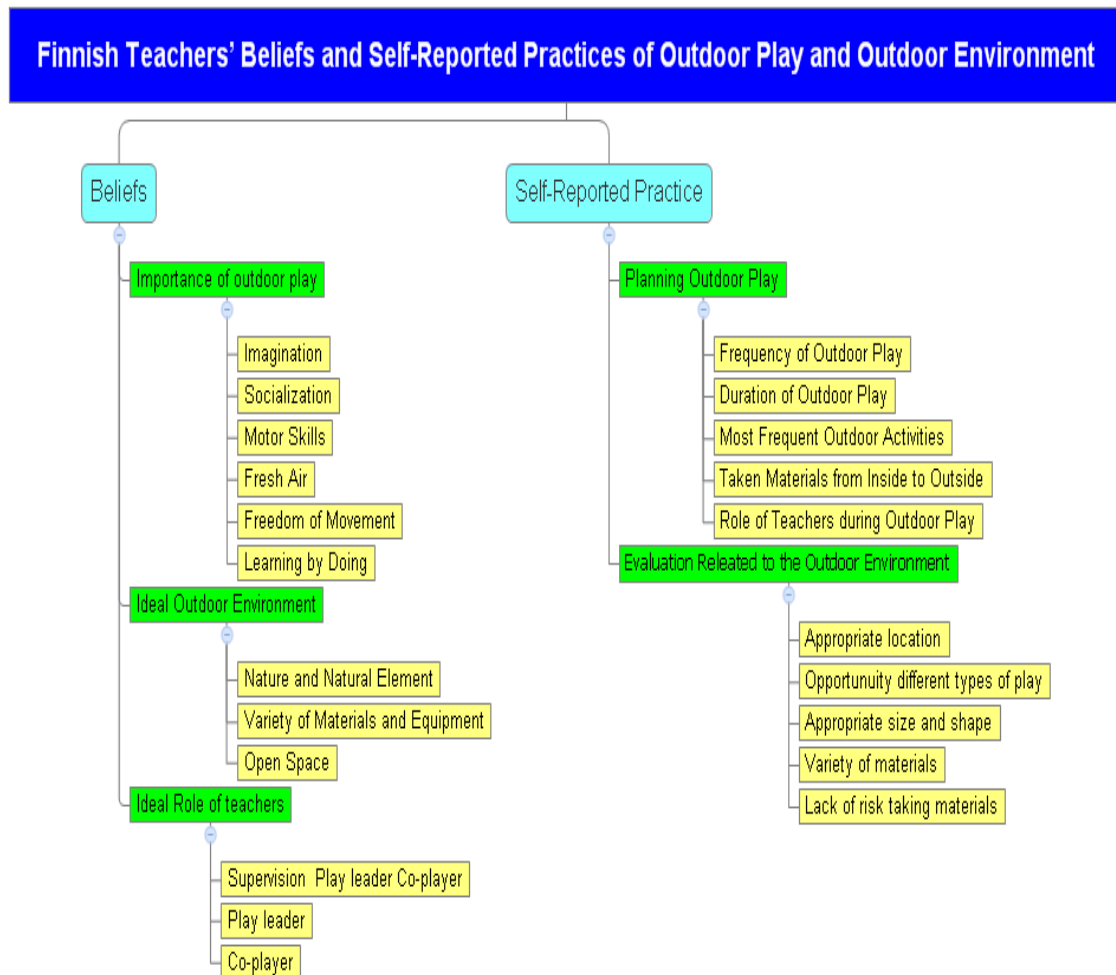


Figure 4.6 Themes and subthemes of Finnish teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment



Teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment and their self-reported practices were assessed through semi-structured interview with the teachers. While three major themes with a number of sub-themes were defined regarding to beliefs of outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment, two major themes with several subthemes were identified in relation to self-reported outdoor play practices.

#### 4.2.1.1 Participant Teachers

Seven Finnish early childhood teachers participated in this case. To maintain confidentiality, participant were coded as FT1 (First Finnish Teacher) to protect their identities. Table 4.10 outlines the demographic characteristics of the participant teachers in this case.

Table 4.10 Demographic characteristics of the participant teachers of second case.

Finnish Parents	FT1	FT2	FT3	FT4	FT5	FT6	FT7
Age of teacher	29	35	44	61	47	56	41
Educational level	University Bachelor's Degree	Vocational Upper Secondary Education	Polytechnic Bachelor's Degree	University Bachelor's Degree	University Bachelor's Degree	Vocational Upper Secondary Education	Vocational Upper Secondary Education
Years of experience	1	16	15	40	15	12	20
Age group	60-72 month old	36-60 month old	36-60 month old	60-72 month old	60-72 month old	30-54 month old	60-72 month old
Child number in the group	28	16	16	28	28	23	28
Educational training related to play	In-service training Seminar Undergraduate course	In-service training Seminar Workshop	In-service training Seminar Workshop	Seminar Workshop	In-service training Seminar Workshop Undergraduate course	Workshop	Undergraduate course
Educational training related to play	Undergraduate course	In-service training Workshop	In-service training Seminar Workshop	-	In-service training Workshop	Seminar Workshop	-

Based on Table 4.10, while one of the Finnish teachers was male, six teachers were female. Participant teachers' ages ranged from 29 to 61. Teachers' educational backgrounds were varied. Four of the teachers had a bachelor's degree whereas other three teachers studied vocational upper secondary education. Two of the teachers, having a bachelor's degree, studied early childhood education in university. On the

other hand, one of the teachers having bachelors' degree from university studied special education and the teacher having bachelors' degree from Polytechnic studied social services. Remaining teachers, who got the vocational upper secondary education, studied social and health care. While five of teachers had been teaching for less than 21 years, one teacher had been teaching for 40 years. Whereas four of the teachers were teaching 60-72 month-old children consist of groups including 28 students, two of them worked with 36-60 month-old children consist of groups including 16. In addition, one teacher was teaching 30-54 month old children. Five teachers stated that they attended workshop related to play. In addition, four teachers reported they attended seminar and in-service training regarding play while three of teachers expressed they attended to undergraduate course related to play. Lastly, three teachers told that they attended in-service and workshop training related to outdoor play whereas two teachers reported that they attended seminar related to outdoor play. Additionally, one teacher remarked she attended an undergraduate course of outdoor play, one another reported he did not attend any special education regarding outdoor play.

#### 4.2.1.2 Importance of outdoor play

All Finnish teachers agreed that outdoor play is important for young children. While explaining importance of outdoor play Finnish teachers referred that outdoor play support imagination, socialization and gross motor skills. In addition, they mentioned importance of fresh air, freedom of movement and learning by doing that are provided by outdoors. Table 4.11 outlines beliefs of teachers regarding to importance of outdoor play.

Table 4.11 Beliefs of Finnish teachers regarding to importance of outdoor play

Finnish Teachers	Importance of Outdoor Play					
	Imagination	Socialization	Motor Skills	Health Benefit	Freedom of Movement	Learning by Doing
FT1	√	√	√		√	√
FT2		√	√	√	√	
FT3	√	√	√			
FT4		√		√	√	√
FT5	√		√		√	

Table 4.11 (continued)

FT6	√			
FT7		√	√	√

Based on Table 4.11, four teachers stated that outdoor play is important due to the fact that natural materials allow children to give them new meanings in their minds. For instance, TT6 referred her observations in outdoor environment.

*The children learn that they can use their imagination. For instance, like you see, we have this natural tree. It is lovely. It's nature. When children are bored, sometimes they are just hanging there or sitting on the bench. But, sometimes they behave as if they were in forest and were playing imaginatively. They create a play as if they were in forest to have grilled. The children can use their imagination in the outside.*

FT3 agreed and pointed influence of including fewer toys in outdoor environment on children's imagination.

*Outdoor play develops children's imagination because outdoor environment includes fewer toys than indoor. So they use their imagination while playing. Also, we go to forest every Tuesday. Forest is the best play environment. When children are there, they can imagine a tree as a castle and something like that. They can give them new meanings. In this way, they can really use their imagination when they are out (FT3).*

Another teacher added;

*...And outside if there are no toys around then children start making their own toys from sticks and rocks and sand and stuff like that. They don't need the toys they can make the toys themselves. Or they don't need them at all (FT1).*

FT5 expressed her view referring their routine outdoor play practice in the kindergarten,

*Outdoor play is very important for imagination. For instance, in this day care center, we have toy-free Friday. Every week, every Friday. We don't take any toys out. They can play only those sticks and balls, but no sand toys at all. Then they run more and those passive children, they have to move more because they cannot sit down and play in sand. We don't open the storage. We say "It's Friday, we will not give you any toys. Use your imagination (FT5).*

Four Finnish teachers viewed outdoor play as a tool for socialization due to several reasons. First, it allows children to play with large groups.

*Outside children play in different groups than inside. The children that don't play together inside might play together outside because outside the group is bigger. And they have different games and plays outside. So sometimes all the children from my group may be in the same play, and then they all play together. And I don't think they fight so much outside. So I think the social skill develop (FT1).*

FT4 support this view by telling;

*"...It's very good for social skills, too. They often play in bigger groups outside. And they have to listen to each other; they have to find a common play, common rules. This also improves their communication skills"*

Second, some teachers commented that outdoor environment is an opportunity for children to interact with older and younger ones. FT3 remarked “In the common yard of day care center, children also become acquainted with the children of different groups better” and FT2 added “Outdoors children meet also members of other groups and it develops the social skills because younger ones can learn from older ones”.

Third, FT3 viewed outdoor play is a tool for learning to deal with conflicts.

*Here, in class, they have more adults and the adults are closer them. But outside we don't see everything that happens there because it's a wide area. But it's still important to social skills. Because they have to think how they manage sometimes when the adult is not close.*

Five teachers remarked that outdoor play practices and outdoor play equipment improves children's motor skills. FT1 referred open space and equipment which allows children to practice gross motor skills comparing outdoor and indoor environments.

*The motor skills of course when you are able to run outside more than inside and there is jumping and climbing and stuff like that... The nature is not flat there. There are hills and rocks and stuff like that you need to handle well. So it develops your motor skills more to be outside than inside. Inside you cannot make all these things that you can make outside.*

FT5 agreed;

*I think outdoor play improves motor skills because they can run and do that kind of things more than here, inside. Because inside you have limited rooms and it's not so much room where you run or climb and that kind of things.*

FT3 added;

*Outdoor play develops especially motor skills of children. For example, our group includes lots children who have lots difficulties in their motor skills. And that's why, climbing and running and swinging and that kind of things are very important to them.*

Three Finnish teachers also stated that outdoor play is important because it provides fresh air which is very important for children's health and development. FT2 told “...Fresh air is important for physical health” and FT7 added “Fresh air is important for children's all development.” Another teacher explained importance of fresh air referring the view of Finnish related to this issue; “Fresh air is good for their health we think so in Finland” (FT4).

Almost all teachers acknowledged that outdoor play provides freedom for children. For instance, FT7 told “In outdoor they can use their voice loudly”. Another teacher referred freedom of movement provided by outdoors. “There is more space, they can run, they can shout. You don't have so many rules. You don't have to say “Don't do, don't run” all the time. It's more free because they don't need to be ruled by anyone” (FT4). One another teacher explained that children release

their energy while freely moving.

“Outdoors, children use their extra energy and this makes them more focused on the things that they deal with” (FT2).

Two teachers also mentioned about importance of outdoor play for learning.

FT1 stated that outdoor play enables children to learn by doing;

*I think the learning is more like learning by doing things...Inside it is more like you listen to the teacher and make some different kind of stuff. But outside you learn from the nature. For example in winter they learn how the water behaves in nature. When it is cold the water freezes, when it's warm then it melts again. They learn this kind of stuff outside.*

Another teacher proclaimed that outdoor environment present opportunities for learning with real natural objects.

“We could use more outdoor situation for teaching children different kind of things. For instance, we can teach mathematics using stones and tree leaves or finding some kind of models which similar to round, square etc.” (FT4).

#### 4.2.1.3 Ideal Outdoor Environment

Finnish teachers were asked how they would describe an ideal outdoor environment for younger children. They responded by referring various components which an ideal playground should include. They mostly mentioned nature and natural elements, variety of materials and equipment and open space. Table 4.12 shows beliefs of teacher's related ideal outdoor environment.

Table 4.12 Finnish teachers' beliefs related ideal outdoor environment.

Component of ideal outdoor environment	Finnish Teachers
Nature and Natural Element	FT1, FT3, FT4, FT5, FT6, FT7
Variety of Materials and Equipment	FT4, FT5, FT6, FT7
Open Space	FT4, FT5, FT7

Based on Table 4.12, most of teachers (six teachers) defined ideal outdoor environment as a place which includes natural materials and components. For instance, FT5 told “I think it would be a place which have a lot of trees and bushes and flowers and that kind of things” FT7 agreed “it should include two landscapes. First one should include natural green areas and second include playground where outdoor equipment such as swings and climbing stuff exist “.

One another teacher described her ideal one by referring her observations;

*In many places the yards are very small and very poor. I mean they are unnatural. There is no grass at all, and only place there is sand in small sandbox. So I believe it should be more natural (FT1).*

FT4 defined a place “including trees, big trees where children can climb. We have that in the back yard. We have a tree that the children can climb” and FT3 acknowledged this view by telling; “In my ideal playground, there are plenty of trees.”

Another teacher also referred the location of kindergarten in terms of nature; “Ideal outdoor environment of kindergarten should located near the forest, and it should have smaller materials that can be manageable and natural things like stones, trees and small hills” (FT6).

In addition to natural elements, some teachers also stated that ideal outdoor environment should include various materials and equipment which support children’s development.

*.....And it should have those monkey bars and swings and slides... And of course it should include a hill which they can slide down when it’s winter. Many sandboxes should exist around and they should be big enough that they can play many children together and do those sand castles. Very big sand castles. The sandcastles and swings are also important for me because those kinds of things are really good for children (FT5).*

FT4 remarked “...I think it’s nice that there are hills like there. There could be a swimming pool at summertime. Maybe a cottage where they can play dramatic play”. Another teacher told “...it should include old tires of cars because they are safe enough” (FT3).

Different from nature and equipment, three teachers defined ideal outdoor environment as a place including open space. For instance, FT4 expressed “It has to be big enough and different kind of areas where different type of play can be played.” FT5 added by telling “... it should have a part where children can play football, that kind of things”. Another teacher expressed; “In my ideal playground there are sand and asphalt for cycling, running, and playing ball games” (FT3).

Two teachers also explained their ideal outdoor environment by referring their current outdoor environment. “Here in this field, we have exceptionally good outdoor environment compare to many other day care centers. I think it is quite ideal for me” (FT2) and “I think this one is quite ideal, but the back yard can be even more better. So it could be a secret garden. There could be more places you could hide and maybe more flowers and some magical stuff children would probably like very much” (FT1).

#### 4.2.1.4 The role of Finnish teachers during outdoor play

Finnish teachers were asked about actual role during outdoor play and ideal

role that they believed optimal role a teacher should apply. They responded firstly describing their actual roles on outdoor environment and they explained the roles that they idealized. Table 4.14 demonstrates Finnish teachers' actual roles during outdoor play and the ideal ones that teachers should apply.

Table 4.13 the Roles of Finnish Teachers during Outdoor Play

Finnish Teachers	The Role of Finnish Teachers During Outdoor Play	
	Actual role	Ideal Role
FT1	Supervision & Co-player	Supervision & Co-player
FT2	Supervision	Supervision
FT3	Supervision	Supervision
FT4	Supervision & Co-player	Supervision & Play leader
FT5	Supervision & Co-player	Supervision & Co-player
FT6	Supervision & Play leader	Supervision & Play leader
FT7	Supervision & Co-player	Supervision & Co-player

Based on 4.14, all Finnish teachers stated that their primary role during outdoor play is supervision of children. They viewed their primary consideration is to ensure safety during outdoor play. Four teachers also referred they tried to take role of co-player when it is possible. For instance, FT1 described her main role as watching children and second role as participating to children's play as play friend. She also stated that her participation depends on children's demands.

*I usually just watch children' play and make sure that they are safe and everything is fine. And if everything is good and children's games and plays are going well then I can go with them, and do some stuff like winter sports, do some sand cakes or some little things. But I have to look around all the time so that I know where the children are and everything is okay. So I cannot just go and play with them all the time. But mostly it's free play outside. And sometime the children don't want the adults to be there with them. They are like "We have our thing now" and they don't want us to interrupt. Sometimes they come and say "Hey, come with us and play us" and then we go; but sometimes they want their own things.*

When FT1 asked about ideal role that a teacher should apply she responded by referring her own role. She reported that she considered those roles ideal because she feels free to choose supervisor or co-player.

*I think so these roles are ideal because now you are able to choose your own role when you are outside. You are free to choose playing with children. And then you can choose the part of just stay there, stand there and look at the children that everything is okay. But, yeah, I think it's ideal because you can do what you want (FT1).*

FT5 also told her role is frequently supervision;

*Usually I watch them outside. We have generally free play. But sometimes if they ask "Teacher, can we play the game that we had last week?" I can do it. If it's ok that everybody wants to join or there is only small group who are playing freely, I can of course watch them also. In addition, I can help them to start the game. But I cannot join all the time, there might be something happening on the other part of the field. So I have to go help them. But I try to play with them. (FT5).*

FT5 voiced that her ideal role is co-player, in addition to supervision.

*Other than responsibility, of course I would like to play with them so much when it's possible and when there not too many children or there is no fighting or anything like that. I have to take care of them; sometimes they fight so I have to take care of them. So, I cannot play ball or do any fun things.*

Another teacher also stated that her actual role was frequently to supervise children by monitoring children during outdoor play session. Additionally, she proclaimed that it is possible for her to participate to children's play as a co-player; more than one adult exist in outdoor playground.

*Very often children play with each other and adults goes around garden and look after them. We can play with children when there are more adults outside. I mean it is more possible for us to participate to play when there are more adults outside. We don't have to look all the time what's going around here. And also, we have shy children. The adult go to him or her and say "Would you like to do something with me" because it is difficult for some children to play with other children. And if the children need adult's support of course we support (FT4).*

When the FT4 asked about ideal role, she responded supervision is ideal role when teaching with older children as they need to be independent. On the contrary, she voiced ideal teacher role should be play leader.

*Maybe it is the ideal role when they are at preschool. I mean when they are at 6-7 years old. I think it's ideal. They have to be independent. It's a little bit different when they are younger. You have to show little children how to play. But of course, for instance today I was with boys and they threw snowballs. I wanted to play. They thought this was very funny because I couldn't throw as well as them. FT4*

One another teacher agreed this view;

*It depends. The first thing is I'm watching the safety. And the second thing if there is a child who does not know what to do, I support them, tell them what to do, give example, you can play with the horses, make a sand cake or would you like to play some catching or hiding. Depending on age, my role changes because I say "Take it, and run" when they don't understand the game. So I have to tell them how to do that (FT6).*

FT6 explained her actual role by telling;

*They have to have their free time. We teach them how to make cake. We teach them how to play with ball. We teach them how to climb to these things. And after that they do that by themselves. If they still are afraid to do that and still do not know how to do it, we support them, and tell them.*

#### 4.2.1.5 Finnish Early Childhood Teachers' Self-reported Outdoor Play Practices

Finnish early childhood teachers were asked about their outdoor play practices in terms of frequency and duration of outdoor play, most frequent outdoor activities, the materials used in outdoor activities and the role taken during outdoor play. Table 4.14 demonstrates the summary of Finnish teachers' self-reported outdoor play practices.



Table 4.14 Finnish teachers' self-reported outdoor play practices

Finnish Teachers	Planning Outdoor Play				
	Frequency of Outdoor Play	Duration of Outdoor Play	Most Frequent Outdoor Activities	Taken Materials from Inside to Outside	Role of Teachers during Outdoor Play
FT1	Everyday	2-3 hours	Free Play in the yard Going forest once a week	-	Supervision & Co-player
FT2	Everyday	2.5 hours	Free Play in the yard Going forest once a week	Magnifiers, paints, fabrics	Supervision
FT3	Everyday	2-3 hours	Free Play in the yard Going forest once a week	Painting, chalks, fabrics	Supervision
FT4	Everyday	2-3 hours	Free Play in the yard Going forest once a week	-	Supervision & Co-player
FT5	Everyday	2-3 hours	Free Play in the yard	Pen, paper, paint brushes and colours, jump ropes, bolls and hula hop	Supervision & Co-player
FT6	Everyday	Almost 2 hours	Free Play in the yard Going forest once a week	Pen, paper, balls	Supervision & Play leader
FT7	Everyday	Almost 3 hours	Free Play Field trips	Paper, pencil, chalk	Supervision & Co-player

Based on Table 4.14, all Finnish teachers reported that their daily schedule included outdoor play for a specific time. In addition, they all stated that the time of outdoor play changes depending on season. They expressed that in winter they spend almost three hours in a day. On the other hand, they reported that they stayed outside almost all day in summer and spring. For instance FT3 told;

*Every day, we try to be out there for minimum two hours per day. And often we are out for almost three hours too. If there are not enough teachers in our group, it might be difficult to go out because now, in winter, we have lots of clothes for outside so we need more adults. When it is summer and spring it is so much easier to go out. Then we spend about two to four hours per day (FT3).*

One another teacher further explained;

*Usually we spend from two to four hours during one day. Our pre-schoolers are outside from 12 o'clock to 2 o'clock in the afternoon. And then they usually go back outside at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. And then they stay there until their parents come and take them home. This is only the wintertime that we spend these hours. In the summertime we spend more time outside as much as it is possible. Even, we eat at lunch and snack in the afternoon outside. We do everything outside. Inside, in the summer we just go to the toilet and to take a nap. And if it is raining then we may be inside more but when it's a lovely weather, which is so often, we want to spend it outside. (FT1)*

FT acknowledged this view;

*We apply outdoor play two or three hours in a day and in spring and summer time even more in a day. It could be five hours. Even we may be outside during the day. And only we eat our lunch inside when we have good weather (FT5).*

All teachers agreed that they rarely take materials from inside to outside owing to hygiene considerations. They reported that in summer and spring they just take the materials such as pen, paper, paint brushes and colours, jump ropes, bolls and hula hoop, magnifiers, and fabrics.

*We never take materials from indoor to outdoor because it is not hygienic. The sand gets in here and it is no good. So we have outside play system and inside play system. We only take small balls and big balls outside. But, in summer, sometimes we take a big paper, put it on the wall or somewhere, so they can paint or draw. We have pencils and pens only for outside. And it is valid for children. They have their own cars and other things that we do not take them inside. We tell them to choose using outside or inside. If they say outside, then we tell that okay you keep it in there. You can't take it here because it's mud and sand (FT6).*

Another teacher supported this view by telling;

*...Not very usual because we are in Finland are so afraid of all kind of bacteria and we have rules. You can't take the same things outdoors because they change their clothes when they come in. Even in summer they change their clothes when they come back (FT4).*

The teachers reported that they have specific outdoor play materials that are stored in storages.

*....Not wintertime so much, but in summertime sometimes we take pens and paper so they can draw there. Sometimes we take paint brushes and colours, and they can make painting there. And we can take not so structured small Legos, because the small ones may be lost. Sometimes we have balls, hula-hoops, that kind of things we can take in the summertime when they don't have so many clothes that they can do it. And of course jump ropes. In addition, we have special outdoor play materials stored in storages. They are different in summertime and wintertime or springtime or autumn time. In spring and autumn time almost the same materials exist. But we have different kind of materials (FT5).*

One another teacher explained that she rarely take some materials if she would like to teach some specific content.

*Not very frequent! Because usually there are different materials for inside and outside. Because if we take materials from inside to outside then they get messy and if it is rainy or snowy they get wet. There are different materials outside so we can use them. But if we have something that I want to teach to children outside, then I can take materials from inside. But that's quite rare. I don't do it very much (FT1).*

All Finnish teachers explained that they most frequently applied free play in outdoor play sessions. In addition to free play, they stated that they arrange small field trips to the forest once a week and sometimes they go ice-skating. Teachers described their typical outdoor play sessions. They told that the activities, which children engaged in during free play, changed depending on seasons. Table 4.15 outlines typical outdoor activities that children engaged in during winter and the other seasons.

Table 4.15 Activities of typical outdoor play session

Typical Outdoor Play Session	
Typical outdoor activities in Winter	Typical outdoor activities in other seasons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing with snows (making snowballs, snow cakes, snow man)</li> <li>• Winter Sports (Skiing and Sliding with sleds)</li> <li>• Games with rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing sand and water</li> <li>• Riding bicycles</li> <li>• Jumping ropes</li> <li>• Drawings and Paintings</li> <li>• Dramatic play</li> <li>• Games with rules</li> </ul>

For instance, FT6 described a typical outdoor play session;

*If it is a normal day they know what they do. Some of them just want to go and hide or climb. In wintertime they make balls with snow or snow cakes and these kinds of things. But, in summertime they play with sand. If there is someone who does not know what to do, we say; "Let's play. This is a horse" even if it's a stone. Then we build the house for the horse, and feed with grass. And we make a sand cake. We make little river using water. Also each season, every Wednesday we go forest. Of course, in summertime we can go to the playground over there. There is a play park (FT6).*

FT1 further explained,

*Well, it depends on weather and the season. In the wintertime when there is snow on the ground, children do some winter sports. If they have their own skies they can bring them here. Then they can ski, and then they can slide from the hill down with those sleds. They can do some snowmen from snow and snowballs, build different things from them like snow houses or make some food from the snow. In summertime they make sand cakes and in the wintertime they can make snow cakes. And in the winter they also play different games outside with bats and balls like ice hockey but with an ice ball. In the other seasons, for instance in autumn, it rains a lot. Then children play with the water a lot. They make food with the water and sand to some bowl or something like that. Then they make some food like soup from water and sand. They might put some leaves and things like that. And make some food. Or they can make rivers to the sand. Like take a stick then draws the rivers to the sand and then the water goes there. They build different things from the wet sand. And in the summertime they do everything outside. They play house, they have some games with rules. In addition, we make small trips to forests. In our schedule we have like once a week. We go there and then children play in the forest with everything. Mostly they play freely. We might have something educational there. Some small tasks. Or then we just look around and see what has happened in the nature. Like what has changed from the last time we go there.*

*Because when the season change we can see that “Oh, the leaves have fallen down from the trees” or “There are some berries now, and we can pick them.*

Another teacher agreed;

*They play depends on season. When it’s winter and when it is snow they play with snow. They make snowman and castle. We can go to the ice skating. On spring and summer and autumn time they play with sand. We have bicycles here too. They can bike and play all kinds of ball play (FT4).*

#### 4.2.1.6 Finnish Teachers’ evaluation related to the outdoor environment of the kindergarten where they work

Finnish teachers were asked to evaluate outdoor environment of the kindergarten where they work considering several factors such as physical appropriateness, materials and equipment, opportunities for different play and safety of outdoor environment. Based on those factors, the teachers evaluated outdoor environment by referring their outdoor play practices. Almost all teachers reported that they had quite ideal outdoor environment in terms of suggested factors. For instance, FT1 and FT5 stated that their current environment is big enough to allow all age group play at the same time. In the FT1 proclaimed that playground has a god shape which enables adults to monitor children at the same time.

“I think the yard is quite big, there is enough room for all the groups in our house and we also have a back yard” (FT5).

*We have really good and big playground and I think it is quite safe also. When you go to the hill, you can see almost every corner. Even if there are more groups outside, there are still room. We can use backyard to play with balls. They can play football (FT1).*

The teachers agreed that they had qualified materials. FT5 reflected that “we have really good materials, and we have different kind of materials depending on the season. And we can buy new materials every year. Almost every year, if there are broken materials or not so good materials, we buy new materials” (FT5). However, two teachers stated that they wish they would have some additional natural materials which improve children’s imagination and some additional equipment such as monkey bar that presents older children to take risk.

*I wish more would be like some opportunities for climbing. It may include a monkey bar. There are no specific things for older children like the things which would be more adventurous and which allow children to take risk. But it’s difficult because there are children from all the age groups. So, it should include a piece of barrier so smaller children wouldn’t go there (FT1).*

*We have enough place to build a cottage but we do not have. Also, we could use more natural material. Wood, sand, all kinds that. It’s not so good when you to present too many materials. I think it’s not good for imagination. And, some materials are very old and they don’t work ( FT4).*

Finnish teachers also acknowledged that the current outdoor playground provide various opportunities for different types of play. FT5 explained her view by telling,

*You can run, you can climb, you can play with sand, you can slide down the hill, you can ski when it's winter of course. Then we have those pools that we can put there in summertime. If you want to be alone with one friend or want nobody to see you, you can go to the bush and play there. You can do whatever you like. We have also another yard where we can go and do those garden activities if we want plant and take care of flowers and trees. We have grown strawberries, and cherry. We have cherry trees and apple trees (FT5).*

Two teachers also referred the location of kindergarten in terms of providing field trips and the other outdoor activities.

*"I have seen so many playgrounds and that's why I think this is very good because we have nature so near. We can go to forest; it's very easy that's why I think it's a marvellous place for children" (FT4).*

FT1 further explained

*...We have the forest nearby and we have this football field and ice skating ring just nearby. And we also have this university's fields. They have agriculture things in it. We can make a small trip there and we can see what happens there during different seasons. In the springtime they put the seed in and they do stuff with those big machines. In the summertime, it grows and when it is autumn they harvest it and so children can see what happens usually in the countryside (FT1).*

Lastly, the teachers told that outdoor playground was safe by telling "It's quite safe" (FT5) and "Our outdoor equipment are checked every two years and we also check them all the time so they are safe enough" (FT7). On the other hand, just one teacher explained her concern of safety related to outdoor play environment;

*Well I think that we have all kinds of rules and regulations about the yard. What kind of it should be. So I think that the fence is high enough and we have a gate that works very well and the only thing isn't so safe is the swings. The smaller ones go under them. There is a small fence but I think it should be a bit better and wider. Maybe there should be a gate too, so the smallest ones couldn't open. But I think it's quite safe (FT1).*

#### **4.2.2 Finnish Teachers' Observed Outdoor Practices**

The following sections included findings in relation to Finnish teachers actual outdoor play practices on basis of applied outdoor play activities, the role of children and teachers during the activities, materials and equipment used in the activities and lastly interaction and communication during the activities.

##### **4.2.2.1 Outdoor Play Activities**

In Finland, observation of early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices were conducted on the days on when the weather was between minus four and plus three degrees. During observations, coming the close of researcher some of teachers (FT1, FT5, and FT7) stated that they did not go out when the weather was minus fifteen. It was observed that outdoor play was routine in daily schedules of each

group. The groups were observed while using outdoor play environment twice in a day. The first outdoor play sessions for age groups including 30-60 month olds were carried out on time between 9 o'clock and 10.30 a.m. and second started at 3.30 and finished 5.00 p.m. For the 60-72 month old children, who are called as pre-schoolers, first outdoor play session started at 12.00 a.m. and finished 2 p.m. while second session started at 4 p.m. and lasted till 5 p.m. Another routine of kindergarten was going to forest once a week in order to conduct outdoor play session by using natural materials in nature. To this end, children were not provided any toys or play materials during the outdoor play session in the forest. Free play was the most frequent activity which was applied during outdoor play sessions in the yard and forest. In addition to free play, FT2 and FT3 were observed while applying a task that children are required to complete.

*Teachers called freely playing children in the forest. One of the teachers, FT2, asked children to find wooden sticks in different lengths. She showed how length of stick is acceptable by demonstrating her arms. Then, all children tried to find a wooden stick in different length. The teachers, FT3 and FT2, also found wooden sticks. When children came back finding a piece of wood, FT2 explained the task. She expected children to sort the sticks according to their lengths. To this end, firstly the teachers put their sticks to the ground by comparing their lengths. Then each child was asked to put his/her stick in an appropriate order. The children, who did not complete the task appropriately, were asked to check the order of sticks again. They were given enough time to complete task.*

One another observed outdoor activity was the ice-skating. The teachers (FT4, FT5 and FT5) were also observed when they went to the public ice-skating ring of nearby the kindergarten. The teachers stated that going ice-skating was a non-routine outdoor activity which they applied during winter.

#### 4.2.2.2 The Role of Children during Outdoor Play Activities

In all free play activities, children were observed while they were actively engaging in their self-motivated plays. Whereas some of children were observed playing with small groups, some of them were observed playing individually. Small groups generally included boys or girls.

#### 4.2.2.3 The Role of Teachers during Outdoor Play Activities

During observations, frequently more than one teacher existed in outdoor playground to maintain appropriate teacher-child ratio during outdoor play. That is why, the researcher focused on one teacher during one observation session. The roles of teachers in activities were recorded considering facilitative roles of teachers, defined by Johnson, Christie, and Wardle (2005) and strategies described by Perry

(2001). The roles of teachers were changed according as the type of activity, the place and the situation. In the outdoor playground of kindergarten, almost all teachers were observed as onlooker during free play.

In an observation of outdoor play session which is carried out afternoon;

*...FT3 called the roll and then direct children to the playground. Children were freely playing. The teacher walked around the children. She stayed for a while in places where children played with small groups. Some of parents came to the yard to take their children. While the teacher was talking with some parents, some of parents watched their children play or they participated to play for a short while...*

Rarely some of the teachers were observed as a co-player. For instance,

*...FT7 played ice-hockey with a group of children. During play, some the other children played freely in any part of play yard. There existed another adult who monitor freely playing children. FT7 was a member of ice-hockey team. When he left the game, the play lost the focus and children finished play. Then, a group of children started to make snowballs and they started to throw it on the wall of kindergarten. FT7 joined children's play as a play friend...*

The teachers were observed while they were applying both indirect coordination and direct intervention strategies. The teacher used indirect coordination strategy by providing materials and equipment and arranging some additional outdoor activities. In all outdoor play activities, the teachers provided children various outdoor play materials. To this end, they used the materials existing in storage of kindergarten. In addition, five teachers (FT2, FT3, FT4, FT5 and FT7) applied indirect coordination by arranging field trips to the forest or ice-staking activities.

*....FT2 and FT3 prepared children for play, they planned to go forest, they provide a natural environment for play and they did not participate in free play of children. However, when they saw some safety issue, they warned the children, verbally. When they need help while climbing, they helped children physically...*

The teachers also attended direct intervention strategy to insure safety when either physical or psychological safety was an issue. For instance;

*...FT1 saw that group children romped around the garden. The teachers immediately went to the children and asked them what the reason of this case was. The children responded by telling that it was not fight it was just a play between them...*

Figure 4.7 presents themes and subthemes of Finnish teachers' observed outdoor play practices

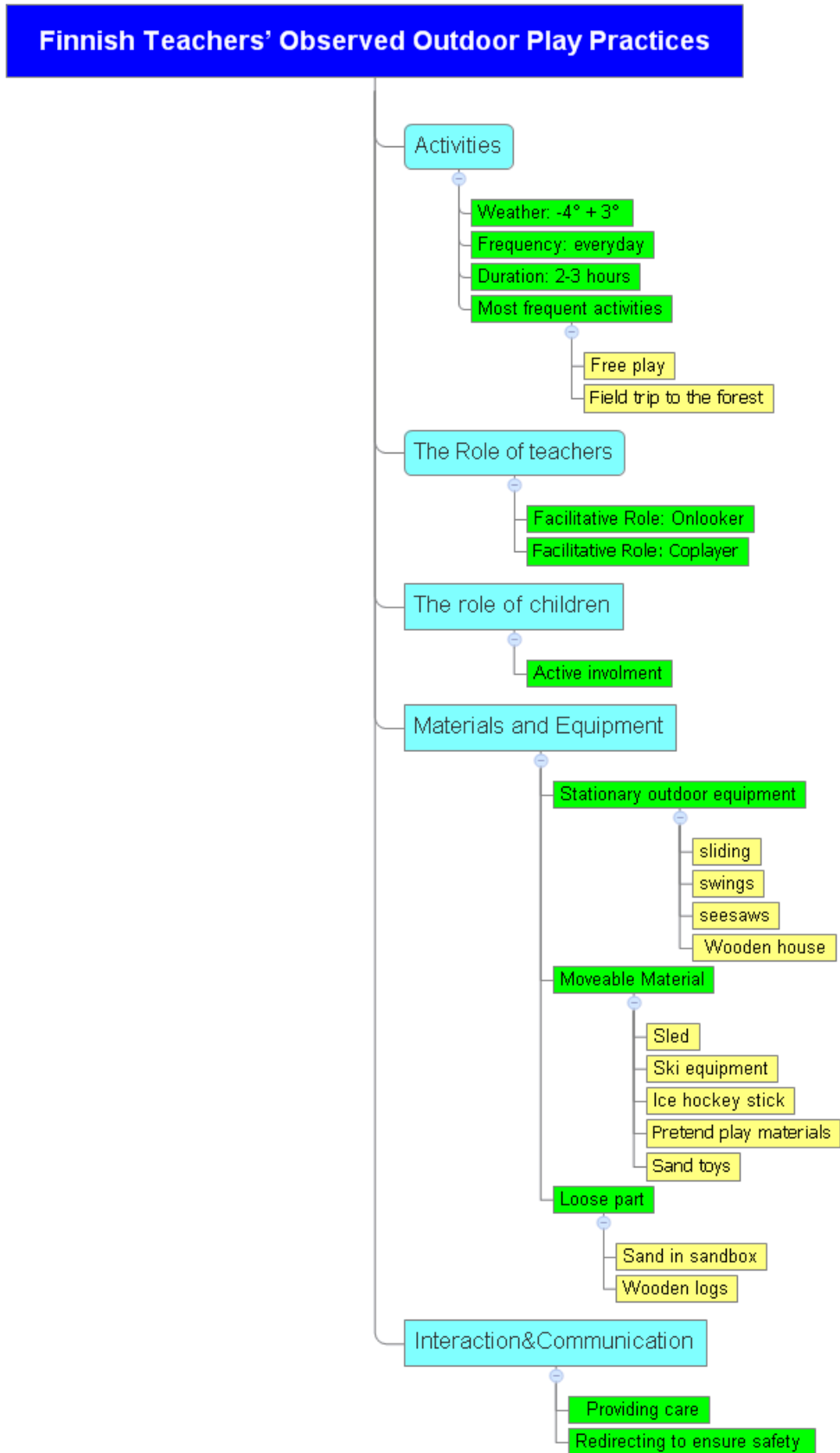


Figure 4.7 Themes and subthemes of Finnish teachers' observed outdoor play practices



#### 4.2.2.4 Materials and Equipment

During free play, the children were allowed to play using stationary outdoor equipment that is housed on the playground. In addition, out of stationary outdoor equipment, children were presented outdoor play materials in each outdoor play sessions. Children were allowed to choose any materials depending on their interest. On the conducted observations, children were observed while playing with materials such as; sled, ski equipment , ice hockey stick, pretend play materials, little pail and little sucks, some vehicle toys, vegetable boxes...On the other hand, children were not provided any materials during the outdoor play sessions which were carried out in the forest. Figure 4.8 presents outdoor environment of kindergarten in TURKEY



Figure 4.8 Outdoor environment of kindergarten in TURKEY

#### 4.2.2.5 Interaction and Communication between Teachers and Children

Most frequently, communication between teachers and children were not recorded owing to the reason that the spoken language was Finnish. Sometimes, the teachers explained the conversation between them for the researcher. As for interaction, it was observed that the teachers interacted children by providing care and redirecting them.

##### *Providing Care*

The teachers were usually observed while assisting children in dressing appropriate winter clothes. Particularly the teachers, who taught younger children, were required to help children in process of appropriate clothing.

“Children were wearing their outdoor clothes to go out; some of children had difficulty in clothing. FT6 helped children who need assisting.”

“Outdoor play session finished and FT1 gave children dry sock in order that they can change their wet sock.”

“... FT4 and FT7 make children wear ice-skates and helmets before children stated to ice-skating. I took fifteen minutes...”

“...after outdoor play session, children were required to hang their wet gloves and berets. FT3 dusted wet and sandy gloves before children hanged them”

Some of teachers also physically helped children in outdoor activities. For instance, FT7 and FT5 assisted the children who were not capable to skate well in ice-skating ring.

“ ... One of the children came to the near of FT1 to tell she had stomach-ache. The teacher hold her hand and they went to inside”.

#### *Redirecting children*

During all outdoor play activities, the teachers usually were observed while redirecting children for the purposes of preventing children not to engage in behaviours that teachers think inappropriate, and offering children to behave like the teachers considered appropriate.

“...Children were freely playing in forest while the teachers were monitoring them. Two of the children went little bit away from the place where the other children played. FT2 warned them about not to go away from common place”.

“One of the children tried to go out without gloves. FT1 sent him back to the inside in order that he takes his gloves”

“... Some of children were sliding down from hill by standing. FT1 told children ‘if you slide bending your knees, it would be easier’.

#### **4.2.3 Finnish parents’ beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment**

Parents’ beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment were assessed through semi-structured interview with the parents. Depending on research question 3, three major themes with several sub-themes were defined regarding to beliefs of outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment. Figure 4.9 presents themes

and subthemes of Finnish parents' beliefs related to ideal outdoor environment and outdoor play.

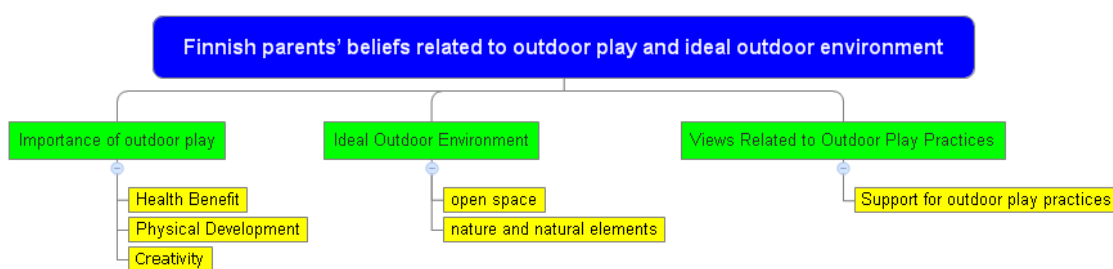


Figure 4.9 Themes and themes and subthemes of Finnish parents' beliefs related to ideal outdoor environment and outdoor play

#### 4.2.3.1 Participant Parents

Seven Finnish Parents were included as participants in this case. To maintain confidentiality, participant were coded as FP1 (First Finnish Parent) to protect their identities. Table 4.16 outlines the demographic characteristics of the participant parents in this case.

Table 4.16 Participant parents' demographic characteristics of second case

Finnish Parents	FP1	FP2	FP3	FP4	FP5	FP6	FP7
Age	33	38	41	42	36	32	38
Hometown	Tampere	Savonlinna	Vaasa	Evijarvi	Helsinki	Karkkila	Helsinki
Educational Background	BA	BA	MA	BA	BA	MA	MA
Number of child	2	3	2	1	2	2	4

Based on Table 4.16, while six of parents were female, one parent was male. Participant's ages ranged from 32 to 42. Whereas four parents had a bachelor's degree, three parents had a master degree. While four of parents had two children, the other three parents had children in number respectively, one, two and four.

#### 4.1.3.2 Importance of Outdoor Play

Finnish parents were asked about importance of outdoor play for young children. They responded this question by referring that outdoor play is significant for physical and mental health and well-being of children in numerous ways. Additionally, they mentioned about the influence of outdoor play on more effective

learning. Table 4.17 shows the beliefs of parents related to importance of outdoor play.

Table 4.17 Beliefs of parents related to importance of outdoor play

Importance of Outdoor Play	Finnish Teachers
Health Benefits	FP1, FP2, FP4, FP5, FP7
Physical Development	FP1, FP2, FP3, FP5, FP6
Freedom of Movement:	FP1, FP2, FP5, FP6
Creativity	FP2

Based on Table 4.17, five Finnish parents associated outdoor play with physical and mental health of individual. The effects of getting fresh air were frequently referred by Finnish parents while they were talking about importance of outdoor play. For instance, FP4 explained the importance of outdoor play for health by referring Scandinavia culture;

*Outdoor play is very important. Here in Scandinavia it is very essential for babies to sleep outside. And that is a thing that many people are usually surprised. They say; "What?! Are you putting babies outside to sleep?" I remember my son when he was 2 weeks old when I put him outside. And there was -20 degrees. Here, people usually put a lot clothes to baby and put them in trolls and go outside. They get to walk as well. Here it is a sign of being healthy, sport and active person when you go out and play. Comparing if you stay inside we are always complaining kids "Why do you always stay inside and watch TV. Go outside play some games. Go out and play". If you are sitting inside it is not healthy than to do something outside. Fresh air, sport, activities... It is sign of a healthy person if you go out and play. We have inside activity parks now you know. I think they are okay but you don't get fresh air!*

Another parent expressed the influence of fresh air by referring her own experience;

*Fresh air and forest and nature... There is good influence of it. . I can feel it when I'm sick. When I feel tired and frustrated, I am staying outside. Then I can feel the influence of outdoor activity. It calms, at the same time, it gives activity (FP5).*

FP1 supported this view by telling; "I think to be out is very important. I think it does something for children. It calms them to get fresh air, to get more oxygen."

FP5 also referred the importance of outdoor play in terms of health by stating;

*....Also when you touch different things you can hear, see, smell and touch very different things and the things which are very allergic for children. When I was child they used to say that 'Don't eat snow. Don't touch thing, you are going to be dirty or something else.'" But now there are researches suggesting that it's very healthy to have good bacteria and sometimes to put your mouth something" and "...our children with concentrating problems are doing sport outside and in the forest. That helps those children more than medicaments. So I think we don't know all benefits of outdoor play yet. I'm sure that there is much more we don't know.*

Five Finnish parents also agreed with idea that outdoor play contributes children's physical development, particularly gross-motor skills. For instance, FP5

stated that she thinks “it’s much more important to go outside than doing gymnastics inside. Because, when you are moving the land helps you”.

Another parent promoted this idea referring her children’s kindergarten experiences:

*Outdoor play is very important for the motoric skills. I am very happy about they go out here when they are in kindergarten. And that is really important. They go out, they go to the forest, and maybe they struggle a little bit outside. They can climb and so on. It is not typical that you are immediately very skilled in motoric way. I can see the difference between my old one and my younger one. Older one is much more careful, much more sensitive about that ‘Do I know this? Can I do this?’ When the younger one is much more encouraged that ‘I can do it! I can make it and I don’t mind!’ .She thinks that she can bicycle without those helping wheels. She can’t. But she thinks that she can (FP3).*

Four Finnish parents mentioned that outdoor play provides opportunity to move freely which allows children to run and release energy.

One of the parents stated;

*When you are outside you can run and you can scream, you can, all the energy you have inside you can get away. It’s important to go out outside and to move for children especially young children who have difficulty in sit down and stay calm, be quiet. (FP5)*

Another parent promoted this view;

*If children are sick and they can stay inside for 3 days. Then they basically start to jump to the walls. Maybe it has something related to adrenaline which allows them to run. In this way they can give their energy out (FP1).*

One another parent added;

*I would prefer them being outside because it is good for anybody’s physical and mental health and well-being. That’s what I believe strongly. Also from experience. When my kids haven’t been outside they have so much energy. Well they are 3 boys, so they have so much energy. And then they are fighting inside. I think the best place to release energy is outdoor surroundings (FP2).*

Some of Finnish parents point out that to release energy is also important for children’s learning as it make children ready to learn by influencing concentration skills. In this regard, FP1 reported that;

“I think with the kids it’s more important. They sleep better. They can concentrate better to do the things”.

Another parent supported this view by telling;

*I know some places people don’t think that it is not good for academic skills but I think the other way. When they are running outside they are so much calmer to do something else. I think physical outdoor activities are good for everybody, children and for adults. (FP2)*

One of the Finnish parents pointed out outdoor play improves children’s creativity. She referred this issue by referring her own experiences with her students and her own children.

*Outdoors, if my children have friends they usually create something. I very much like. When they are a group of children in this neighbourhood, they create this play. What I call as this is free play. They use their imagination and there is no adult. They can create themselves. In*

*addition, I teach 1<sup>st</sup> graders and now we are going to these small forested areas. And they are so excited when they can build from forest, stones, and sticks. And they are so happy. They can create. It is learning by doing. I wish to see that more in Finnish school system (FP2).*

#### 4.2.3.3 Ideal Outdoor Environment

Finnish parents were also asked about what their ideal outdoor environment look like. They responded this question by referring outdoor environment of kindergarten that their children attend. Five parents stated that the current outdoor environment of kindergarten reflects their ideals by telling “I pretty love this yard. It is beautiful in spring and summertime” (FP2), and “My ideal is look like the yards of this kindergarten, but bigger and with more natural surroundings” (FP7).

FP4 also specified her ideal outdoor environment by comparing the outdoor environment of the kindergarten;

*It has to be big enough. There has to be activities. If you take kids to an empty yard it is nothing. This is ok what they have here. The yard is big enough, the toys and swings, those kinds of things. They had lots of more trees in the yard. So the kids could climb. They also have different things like old tires from the cars. Real things and those kinds of activities. They have here is good. They have a garden. They are growing herbs. It's different outdoor play, more educational. That is a good thing. All kind of things you can do outside. We are lucky we have our own garden here. Also at the summer cottage, they teach how to plant things and so on. That is a very ideal thing. The most important is that it is big enough and also peaceful. Not besides any big roads or anything. So they get fresh air.*

FP3 added;

*I have to say that the playground they have here is I think quite amazing. It is really good and they have forest just nearby. And they use it. And they have fields and they use those ones. You are in nature and somehow you have a safety garden. I think that is very important. I think that is more or less quite ideal. As I see it... I am not a professional. But of course there could be some additional things. That asphalt could be less and maybe there could be some big trees. I think it is quite nice*

While explaining their ideal outdoor environment, all Finnish parents mentioned that outdoor environment should include natural components and open space for freedom of movement. For instance, FP5 voiced “For me, quite natural, like a forest, but it has to be beautiful” and FP6 remarked “I think, ideal outdoor environment is natural and includes space to run, jump and play in group.”

#### 4.2.3.4 Beliefs of Finnish Parents Regarding to Outdoor Play Practices in Kindergarten

Finnish parents were asked about their feelings related to their children’s outdoor play experiences in kindergarten. All of them agreed that they are very happy due to fact that the kindergartens their children attend provide children outdoor play experiences two times in a day.

FP2 proclaimed;

*I would like them to be outside as much as possible. I am very happy that they are outside few hours a day. I think they could be even more” FP3 added “... I am very happy about they go out here when they are in kindergarten. And that is really important” and FP7 remarked “Every day when I get my children from kindergarten I pray that they would have spent a lot of time outside.*

One another parents described her opinions related this issue by referring outdoor play practice of kindergarten;

*I think this is a kind of active kindergarten. They are taking them out a lot. Also they take them to rips, to forest, take sandwiches with them. They are teaching kids to be outside. There so many kids here so sometimes they have to cancel the trips if some of the nurses are sick or if there aren't enough adults to go with them. And that's sad. I know if there were smaller groups or lots of more adults they can go out often. I think it is good if they can be outside twice. I know they are trying to be twice. Morning and afternoon. I think it is good (FP4)*

Some parent voiced their contentment about outdoor play practices in this kindergarten by referring importance of outdoor play and their observation related to children. For instance, FP1 explained her ideas by exemplifying her child;

*Well I'm really happy that they are twice a day outside. Usually we come here after 9 in the mornings. Usually my children both stay outside. They always try to be there for a while. They just start to play basically, immediately. And then in the afternoons when I come, my daughter always says, almost every day “Mommy we have so good play” or “Why you came”. So I think it is really good that they are outside twice a day*

FP3 remarked her commitment to outdoor play practice of this kindergarten by referring socialization of her child.

*That is really important. My daughter has a lot of friends here and it is really good that they are doing outdoor plays together. It's good that they are doing outdoor plays with boys as well. Because I have only two girls and in our family there is not so many boys. They are getting used to playing with girls mainly*

Finnish parents were also asked about their opinion related to outdoor play practices in different seasons. They responded by telling season is not matter for them.

“Well I think it's basically the same for me. It doesn't matter the season” (FP1).

“I have similar idea for the other season” (FP3).

“Season is not a matter for me and here. When it is cold or rainy they are not scared it is good. They just take them” (FP4).

#### **4.4 Cross Case Analysis**

Within the principles of cross-case analysis, the researcher searched for the shared and distinct beliefs of all participants and the practices of teachers. Based on shared and distinct themes and subthemes, the scholar drew comparisons and

contrasts looking for similarities and differences across cases. The following sections included distinct and shared beliefs of participant teachers and parents and the teachers’ outdoor play practices.

**4.4.1 Early Childhood Teachers’ Beliefs related to Outdoor Play and Outdoor Environment**

Based on the analyses of the interviews and comparison of themes across the two cases, the same three themes were identified in order to understand what early childhood teachers’ beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment are. However, the subthemes varied in two cases. In addition to the same themes, one unique theme with several subthemes was identified for the first case. Table 4.18 outlines distinct and shared themes and subthemes of two cases which were identified by scholar.

Table 4.18 Themes and subthemes of teachers’ beliefs related to outdoor play and outdoor environment cross the two cases

Themes and Subthemes			
Importance of Outdoor Play	Ideal Outdoor Environment	Ideal Role of Teachers	Barriers to Outdoor Play (T)
Freedom to move	Nature and Natural Element	Supervision	Factors associated with parents (T)
Run and release energy	Variety of Materials and Equipment	Co-player	Factors associated with teachers (T)
Health benefit	Open Space	Play Leader (F)	Factors associated with facility of kindergarten (T)
Learning by Doing	Animals and Little Zoo (T)	Guidance (T)	Allocated time for preparation (T)
Long lasting learning (T)		Play without intervention (T)	Inclement Weather (T)
Natural Motivation (T)			
Close relation with nature (T)			
Imagination (F)			
Motor Skills (F)			
Socialization (F)			

Note. T= Case 1 “Turkey”; F=Case 2 “Finland”; Theme and Subthemes that identified at only one case is noted in parentheses by the case’s letter name.



### *Theme 1: Importance of Outdoor Play*

Based on table 4.18, participant teachers of both cases acknowledged that outdoor play is important for children's development learning. In this respect, they have distinct and shared beliefs about the reasons why outdoor play is important for children's development and learning. Both participant teachers believed that outdoor play is important owing to the reason that outdoor environment, compare to indoor, provides children freedom to move. They also agreed that children run and release energy when they are outdoors. In addition, they stated outdoor play is important for the reason that it provides fresh air which is very important for children's health. Furthermore, both participants of cases believed outdoor play enables children to learn by doing. That is why, participant of first case stated outdoor play is important for long lasting learning. As for the other distinct beliefs of participant teachers, For instance, participant of first case suggested outdoor play is important due the fact that children have natural motivation to be outdoors. Additionally, they voiced that outdoor play provides opportunity to connect children with nature. Different from the participants of first case, Finnish teachers believed that outdoor play is important as it supports children's imagination and motor skills.

### *Theme 2: Ideal Outdoor Environment*

Participant teachers of both cases described ideal outdoor environment as a place which includes various materials and equipment that enrich children's play. In addition, they agreed that outdoor play environment should include an open space for different types of play and activities. To add, they both stated that ideal outdoor environment should be natural and include natural elements as much as possible. Different from Finnish teachers, Turkish teachers stated that an ideal outdoor environment should involve animals or little zoo which provides opportunity for children to interact animals.

### *Theme: 3 Ideal Roles of Teachers during Outdoor Play*

Participant teachers of both cases described ideal role of teachers during outdoor play as supervision and co-player. Different from supervision and co-player, guidance and play without intervention were described as ideal role of teachers by Turkish participant teacher. On the other hand, Finnish participant teachers added that play-leader is also ideal role which should be applied by any teachers, who teach with younger children.

#### Theme 4: Barriers to Outdoor Play

One of the main differences between two cases was related to barriers to outdoor play. While Finnish participant teachers believed that there is no barrier that prevents them to apply more outdoor play practices, Turkish teachers believed that they have many barriers such as; parental concern of health and safety, teachers' inactivity and lack of practical knowledge, high teacher-child ratio, allocated time for preparation, lack of variety of materials and equipment and inclement weather.

#### 4.4.2 Early Childhood Teachers' Self-Reported Outdoor Play Practices

Based on the analyses of the interviews and comparison of themes across the two cases, one major theme with several sub-themes was identified in order to understand what early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices are. Table 4.19 outlines theme and subthemes related to early childhood teachers' outdoor play practices across the cases.

##### *Theme 1: Planning Outdoor Play*

Table 4.19 Teachers' self-reported outdoor play practices cross cases

Planning Outdoor Play			
Subthemes	Case 1	Case 2	
Frequency of Outdoor Play	When the weather was good outside	Every day	
Duration of Outdoor Play	15-60 min.	2-3 hours	
Most Frequent Outdoor Activities	Free Play, Play with rules, Environment education activities	Free Play, Field trips to the forest once a week	
Taken Materials from Inside to Outside	Painting materials, Magnifying glass, Pail and shovel, ball	Magnifiers, paints, fabrics, chalks, Pen, paper, paint brushes, jump ropes, bolls and hula hoop, jump rope	
Role of Teachers during Outdoor Play	Supervision Guidance Co-player	Supervision Play Leader Co-player	

Note. T= Case 1 "Turkey"; F=Case 2 "Finland"; Theme and Subthemes that identified at only one case is noted in parentheses by the case's letter name.

Based on table 4.19, there are differences and similarities between Turkish and Finnish teachers' self-reported practices. While Turkish participant teachers reported they included outdoor play in their plans when the weather was good,

Finnish teachers stated outdoor play was the part of their daily schedules. In addition, Turkish participant teachers expressed that they spent 15-60 minutes in outdoor environment when the weather was good outside. On the other hand, Finnish teachers voiced that they spent 2-3 hours in a day during winter and whereas they stayed out during the day in the other seasons. Participant teachers of both cases explained their most frequent activity was free play. However, Turkish teachers also stated they frequently applied environment education activities and plays with rules. Different from free play, Finnish teachers reported that they carry out outdoor play in forest once a week. Participant teachers of both cases told that they took the roles of supervision and co-player during outdoor play sessions. Different from those roles, Turkish teachers stated that they took the role of guidance while Finnish teachers reported that they took the role of play leader. Participant teachers of both cases proclaimed that they rarely brought materials from indoor to outdoor. Finnish teachers stated they did not rotate the materials because of the reason hygiene consideration. They also stated they did not take materials from inside to outside due to fact that they had specific outdoor play materials that were stored in storages. However, they reported that sometimes in summer they took the materials such as pen, paper, paints, balls etc.. Turkish teachers also reported they rarely took the materials such as painting materials, magnifying glass, sand toys and etc.

#### **4.4.3 Parents' Beliefs related to Outdoor Play and Outdoor Environment**

Based on the analyses of the interviews and comparison of themes across the two cases, the same three themes were identified in order to understand what parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment are. However, the subthemes varied in two cases. Table 4.20 outlines themes and subthemes of parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and outdoor environment cross the two cases

Table 4.20 Themes and subthemes of parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and outdoor environment cross the two cases.

Themes and Subthemes		
Importance of Outdoor Play	Ideal Outdoor Environment	Views related to outdoor play practices in kindergarten
Health Benefits	Nature and Natural Element	Health Concern (T)
Physical Development (F)	Open Space	Safety Concern (T)

Table 4.20 (continued)

Freedom of Movement (F)	Grassy Ground (T)	Support for outdoor play practices (F)
Creativity (F)	Connection with animals (T)	
Socialization (T)		
Recognizing nature (T)		

Note. T= Case 1 “Turkey”; F=Case 2 “Finland”; Theme and Subthemes that identified at only one case is noted in parentheses by the case’s letter name.

*Theme 1: Importance of Outdoor Play*

Based on table 4.20, participant parents of two cases acknowledged that outdoor play is important for young children’s health as it provides opportunity to get fresh air and run and release energy. However, participant parents have distinct beliefs about importance of outdoor play. While Finnish parents believed that outdoor play is important for the reasons that it improved children’s physical development and creativity, Turkish parents believed that outdoor play is important due to the fact that it improves children’s socialization. Additionally, Finnish parents stated that outdoor play is important as outdoor environment provide opportunity of freedom to move. Different from Finnish parents, Turkish parents also believed outdoor play enables children to recognize nature.

*Theme 2; Ideal Outdoor Environment*

Participant parents of both cases described ideal outdoor environment as a place which includes open space and nature and natural elements. Different from Finnish parents, Turkish parents also mentioned that ideal outdoor environment includes grassy ground which prevents children to be injured during outdoor play sessions. In addition, Turkish parents also stated ideal outdoor environment involve opportunities that connect children with nature.

*Theme 3: Views related to outdoor play practices in kindergarten*

One of the main differences across the cases is related to parents’ beliefs related to outdoor play practices in kindergarten where their children attend. They had distinct beliefs in relation to outdoor play practices of kindergarten. Turkish parents stated that they do not want their children attend outdoor play practices during winter and cold weather owing to the reason that they believed their children would be sick. In addition, some of Turkish parents reported that high teacher-child

ratio is an issue that make them concerned about children's safety. On the other hand, unlike the Turkish parents, Finnish parents voiced that they appreciated the outdoor play practices of kindergarten where their children attend. Additionally, Finnish parents reported they supported outdoor play practices of kindergarten in all seasons and weather conditions by telling season was not matter for them.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this chapter, key findings on the beliefs of Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers and parents related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment and the teachers' outdoor play practices are discussed in detail. Additionally, recommendations for further studies and implications are provided.

#### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

The focus of this study was twofold: exploration of Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' and parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and the ideal outdoor environment and investigating teachers' actual outdoor play practices. The sample of the study consisted of 28 participants including Turkish (n=14 seven early childhood teachers and seven parents) Finnish (n=14 seven early childhood teachers and seven parents). Semi structured interview protocols and field notes were utilized to increase credibility of the study through in-depth investigation. Semi structured interview protocols were exerted to understand what early childhood teachers' and parents' believed in relation to outdoor play and what an ideal outdoor environment consists of. Additionally, interview protocols were utilized to understand teachers' self-reported outdoor play practices. Field notes were also obtained for understanding teachers' actual outdoor play practices and comprehending how their beliefs shape their practices.

#### **5.2 Key Findings**

##### **5.2.1 Beliefs of Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment and teachers' self-reported practices**

Table 5.1 Key findings from interviews with teachers

Key Findings from interviews with Turkish and Finnish teachers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both Turkish and Finnish teachers believed outdoor environments provided children freedom to move due around in open space and lack of restrictive rules.</li> <li>• Both Turkish and Finnish teachers considered outdoor play as an opportunity to run and release energy.</li> <li>• Both Turkish and Finnish teachers believed that outdoor environment provided fresh air which was very important for children’s physical and mental health.</li> <li>• Both Turkish and Finnish teachers reported outdoor play enables children to learn by doing.</li> <li>• Turkish teachers believed that outdoor play was an opportunity for children to keep in contact with nature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish teachers believed that outdoor play supported children’s gross motor skills as the outdoor environment includes open space to move and equipment for improving gross motor skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish teachers stated outdoor play was crucial for effective learning as children have a natural motivation to be outdoors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish teachers stated that outdoor play improved children’s socialization as it provides opportunities to play with large groups and to interact with older and younger children.</li> <li>• Finnish teachers believed outdoor play to be important as it supports children’s imagination through natural materials.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish Teachers defined an ideal outdoor environment for children as a place which includes nature and natural elements, an open space to apply play with rules or to move freely, various materials and equipment to enrich children’s play and a little zoo.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish Teachers defined an ideal outdoor environment for children as a place which includes nature and natural element, an open space to apply play with rules or to move freely, various materials and equipment to enrich children’s play.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish teachers defined the ideal role of the teacher during outdoor play as giving guidance and a co-player.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish Teachers defined ideal role of teacher during outdoor play as providing supervision and co-player.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish teachers believed that they had many barriers to outdoor play such as parental concern, inclement weather, teacher’s inactivity, lack of practical info about outdoor play, lack of additional stuff and appropriate playground equipment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish teachers believed that they have no barriers applied to outdoor play.</li> </ul>

Table 5.1 (continued)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish teachers stated that due to parents concern they applied outdoor play activities when the weather was good outside.</li> <li>• Turkish teachers reported that they spent time between 15-60 minutes in outdoors when the weather was good outside.</li> <li>• Both Turkish and Finnish teachers told that they frequently applied free play during outdoor play sessions.</li> <li>• Both Turkish and Finnish teachers voiced that they rarely took materials from indoor to outdoor.</li> <li>• Turkish teachers stated that they mainly took the role of guide and co-player during outdoor play.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish teachers reported that they applied outdoor play activities as a routine of their daily schedule in almost all weather conditions.</li> <li>• Finnish teachers reported that they spent time 2-3 hours during winter, while they spent almost whole day during spring and summer.</li> <li>• Finnish teachers stated that supervision of children was their major role.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|
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### 5.2.2 Turkish and Finnish teachers' actual outdoor play practices

Table 5.2 Key findings from observation of teachers' actual outdoor practices

Key findings from observation of teachers' actual outdoor practices	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish teachers did not regularly conduct outdoor play activities.</li> <li>• Turkish teachers generally applied free play and activities related with nature in outdoor environment.</li> <li>• Turkish teachers used only outdoor environment of kindergarten to apply outdoor play activities.</li> <li>• Turkish teachers spent time between 15 minutes and 1.5 hours for outdoor play activities</li> <li>• Turkish teachers took the role director in planned outdoor play activities whilst they took the role of uninvolved in free play activities.</li> <li>• Turkish teachers rarely provided materials for outdoor play activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish teachers regularly conducted outdoor play activities as a part of their daily schedule.</li> <li>• Finnish teachers most frequently applied free play in outdoor environment.</li> <li>• Finnish teachers used also forest as outdoor environment to apply outdoor play activities once a week</li> <li>• Finnish teachers spent time between 2 and 4 hours for outdoor play activities.</li> <li>• Finnish teachers frequently took the role of onlooker in free play activities, rarely took the role of co-player in play with rules.</li> <li>• Finnish teachers regularly provided specific outdoor play materials for outdoor play activities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both Turkish and Finnish teachers interacted with children in order to provide care and redirect them to maintain safety.</li> </ul>	

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### 5.2.3 Beliefs of Turkish and Finnish parents related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment

Table 5.3 Key findings from interview with Turkish and Finnish parents

Key findings from interview with Turkish and Finnish parents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish parents believed outdoor play was mainly important in terms of socialization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish parents believed outdoor play was important in terms of children's physical and mental health and particularly for gross motor skills.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish parents viewed that outdoor play should be practiced in kindergarten when the weather is good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish parents believed outdoor environment provide opportunity for freedom of movement.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish parents stated that they were concerned with their children's health due to cold weathers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish parents viewed outdoor play should regularly be practiced in kindergarten during all season of the year.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both Turkish and Finnish parents believed that ideal outdoor environment should include open space and natural elements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish parents stated that weather conditions were not matter for them.</li> </ul>

## 5.3 Discussion

### 5.3.1 Beliefs of Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment.

Clark and Peterson (1986 as cited in Chakravarthi, 2009) voiced that the teaching process might be better understood when teachers' beliefs and practices are examined under the same light, searching for the relation between their beliefs and practices. With this is mind, this study aimed to investigate early childhood teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment and explore their self-reported and actual outdoor play practices in Turkey and Finland. The findings revealed that both Turkish and Finnish teachers in this study believed that outdoor play was important for children's development and learning, yet they derived their views from distinct and shared perspectives. First, both Turkish and Finnish teachers viewed the outdoor environment as a setting that enables children to move freely in open space and lack of restrictive rules. In addition, they both believed that outdoor play provided an opportunity to run and release energy and get fresh air, considered very important for children's physical and mental health. Different from Turkish

teachers, Finnish teachers believed that outdoor play supported children's gross motor skills and socialization. These findings were consistent with various studies (see e.g. Aasen, Grindheim, & Waters, 2009, Fjørtoft, 2000; Ünal, 2009) and suggestions of researchers (e.g. Bilton, 2010; Rivkin, 1998, 2000; Ouvry, 2000; Tovey, 2007) who suggested that outdoor play was beneficial for children's overall development and learning in many areas. For instance, Fjørtoft (2000) and Rivkin, (2000) pointed out that children practise a wider range of muscle movements when they play outdoors. They, run, jump, chase, dodge, climb, dig, slide, roll, throw, balance, swing, pedal, push and pull, all requiring different usage of body muscles and different body skills by which they co-ordinate sequences of movements (Fjørtoft, 2000; Rivkin, 2000). In another perspective, Aasen, Grindheim, and Waters (2009) found that outdoor play was important and valuable for children to learn about democratic values due to the fact that children engage in social interactions while playing outdoors.

In contrast to Finnish teachers, Turkish teachers stated outdoor play was crucial for effective learning as children had natural motivation to be in outdoors. This finding about children's natural motivation to be in outdoors is similar to the findings of the study conducted by Erdoğan, Haktanır, Köksal Akyol, & Çakır İlhan (2003). The researchers found that Turkish children enjoy being in outdoor environments, such as; garden, and public playground. However, even if both Turkish and Finnish teachers mentioned outdoor play is important for learning by doing, the relation between learning and outdoor play were not extended. For instance, Turkish teachers stated that outdoor play prepared children for indoor learning activities as they run and release energy. Similarly, Finnish teachers reported that children concentrated better for learning based activities after played outdoors as releasing their energy and getting fresh air. In other words, outdoor environment was not considered as one of the main learning environments like indoors rather, it was thought as place through which children are prepared for learning activities carried out indoors. A similar result was obtained by Maynard and Waters (2007) related to teachers' views about outdoor environment. Maynard & Waters (2007) found that teachers thought about the outdoors primarily in relation to its potential for fun, fresh air and freedom and as providing children with an opportunity to act as children. They also suggested that the teachers missed many of

the opportunities afforded by the outdoor environment to enhance children's learning. In the current study, teachers' beliefs on this issue translated into their practices with children during outdoor play. Observation of teachers' practices revealed that they frequently applied free play activities during outdoor play sessions rather than using outdoor environment for planned activities. However, Turkish teachers were sometimes observed while applying planned outdoor play activities related with nature under the guidance of Eco School and "*Minik TEMA*" projects. Yet, during those activities, outdoor environment was not associated with the target subject or issue; rather it was just used as a space like indoor.

All participant teachers and parents defined an ideal outdoor environment for children as a place which includes nature and natural element, an open space to move freely, and various materials and equipment to enrich children's play. These findings were consistent with those in the literature (Fjørtoft, 2000, 2001; Herrington & Studman, 1998; Kytä , 2004; Lucas, 2009; Ünal, 2009). Kytä (2004); a child-friendly environment is a place where children should have the opportunity to move around freely and access all the parts ('affordances') of their environment. Kytä (2004) claimed that without these, they will not be able to create play and activity that foster well-being, health, and development. Similarly, Lucas (2009) pointed out the significance of providing a great diversity of design features and green (nature) elements in outdoor environment of school in order to support children's physical active play. Fjørtoft (2000) found that functional play such as gross-motor activities and basic skills (e.g. running, jumping, throwing, climbing, crawling, rolling, swinging and sliding) were predominant when children played in nature compared with traditional pre-school play areas. Finnish teachers in this study believed that their current outdoor environment was similar to the ideal outdoor environment. However, the Turkish teachers stated many inadequacies of their current outdoor environments referring lack of variety of materials and loose parts, open space and inappropriate organizations of outdoor playground. This view of Turkish teachers is consistent with the findings of Turkish researchers (Olgan & Kahriman-Öztürk, 2011). Olgan and Kahriman-Öztürk found that current status of the playground environment and equipment in public and private schools covered in that study were not capable to enrich children's play. The difference between two countries might be based on disparities in early childhood policies. According to OECD (2006), in several OECD countries, including France and several English-speaking ones,

national policy on early childhood education is based on “readiness for school”. This is why, indoor buildings are stated as major learning environments (OECD, 2006). This situation might be valid for Turkey. On the contrary, Nordic countries such as Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway equally pay attention to the provision of outdoor and indoor learning experiences by allocating financial budget to outdoors and referring to outdoor play at the policy and practice levels of early years education (Marttila, 2013; OECD, 2006).

In the current study, one of the main differences between beliefs of Turkish and Finnish teachers was related to barriers to outdoor play. Finnish teachers stated that there was no barrier for them to dedicate more time to outdoor play, whilst Turkish teachers believed that they had many barriers to outdoor play such as parental concern, inclement weather, teacher’s inactivity, lack of practical info about outdoor play, lack of additional stuff and appropriate playground equipment. This appears to be consistent with findings of other studies (Kos & Jerman, 2013; Maynard & Waters, 2007; Renick, 2009) which indicated that teachers had several barriers to apply outdoor play activities more. Like in the current study, the researchers found that coupled with cold and bad weather conditions parental concern about children being outside could be a barrier for outdoor play (Kos & Jerman, 2013; Maynard & Waters, 2007; Renick, 2009). In addition, like the scholar of the current study, Renick (2009), also found that teachers’ inactivity and lack of appropriate playground and materials could be barriers to outdoor play. Surprisingly, cold weather and parents concern about cold weathers were not seen as a barrier by Finnish teachers, who experience bad weather conditions during almost half the years. Scandinavian culture might be a reason for this case. For instance, an old but still common saying in Scandinavia is that “*There is no such thing as bad weather, only wrong clothes*”. In other words, Finnish teachers, as coming from Scandinavian culture, might probably have believed that cold weather was just an issue which can be overcome by appropriate clothing. This case is consistent related with literature which suggested beliefs are constructed by culture. For instance, Vartuli (2005) pointed out that a person’s belief systems are formed as a child through their upbringing, culture, and life experiences.

Different from previous studies, this study also found that allocated time for preparation was considered as a barrier for outdoor play. Turkish teachers stated that they were reluctant to go outside during winter for the reason that it took much time

to prepare children with appropriate clothing. On the contrary, in Finland, children need more help to dress their appropriate clothes in winter as they had various coats, boots and shoes for different weather conditions, yet allocated time for preparation was not considered as a barrier. The difference between Turkish and Finnish teachers in this issue might be resulted from appropriate teacher-child ratio. As previously indicated in literature chapter, in Finland, the ratio of adults to the number of children is one trained adult for every four children under the age of 3, and one trained adult for every seven children over the age of 3 (Karila & Kinos, 2012).

### **5.3.2 Turkish and Finnish early childhood teachers' self-reported and actual outdoor play practices**

In this study, overall self-reported practices of teachers in Turkey and Finland matched with overall actual practices of teachers. However, certain discrepancies between Turkish teachers' self-reported roles and actual roles during outdoor play were observed. First, Finnish teachers in this study believed that their primary role was supervision of children during outdoor play. This findings also confirmed by previous studies (Chakravarthi, 2009; Davies, 1997; Rennick, 2009) which were conducted to explore early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices of outdoor play. For instance, Davies (1997) found that teachers believed that they needed to set the play for children, monitor them and direct them by showing appropriate behaviour and safety. To add, Chakravarthi (2009) and Rennick (2009) found that teachers believed their role was to supervise children, help children find a direction in play and set up materials during outdoor. Observation of Finnish teachers in the current study revealed that they took the role of onlooker during free outdoor play sessions and redirected children when they engaged in inappropriate or unsafe behaviours.

As for Turkish teachers' self-reported and actual roles during outdoor play, they stated that their roles in outdoor were mainly guidance and secondly co-player. On the contrary, they were frequently observed as uninvolved during free play. In addition, if the activity was planned, they took the role of director. Interestingly, the studies conducted to investigate teachers' beliefs related to outdoor play and outdoor play practices in different cultures and times found almost the same findings related to roles of teachers. In all studies including current one, few teachers were rarely observed while facilitating, extending play or participating with children as a co-player (Chakravarthi, 2009; Davies, 1997; Rennick, 2009). However, related

literature suggests that teachers' active and facilitative involvement during or planning process of outdoor are required to enrich children's play and to prevent repetitive behaviours during play (Garrick, 2009; Johnson, Christie, & Wardle, 2005, Perry, 2001; Olsen, Thompsen, & Hudson, 2011). For instance, Johnson, Christie, & Wardle (2005, p.273) noted that "adults often switch to facilitative roles when children have difficulty getting play started on their own or when an ongoing play episode is beginning to falter." Similarly, Olsen, Thompsen and Hudson (2011) suggested that supervision is more than watching children's play, rather it requires to, create an environment that empowers children to independently pursue creative play, enhance the quality of the play experience by interacting with children and careful observation to assure that children play in appropriate and safe ways. Vygotsky also referred to the significance of the interaction between teachers and children in play (1978 as cited in Olsen, Thompsen, & Hudson, 2011). Vygotsky's definition of the zone of proximal development is based on the idea that learning is evidently mutual (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). In other words, depending on the interaction level of between peers or between teachers and children, a zone of proximal development is generated while learning occurs.

As for the similarity between findings of the studies conducted two decades ago (Davies, 1997) and the current one, it strengthens the idea that even if early childhood education forged dramatically ahead, enough efforts were not provided to change teachers' beliefs and practices related to outdoor play. In this sense, a lack of theoretical or practical knowledge about how outdoor play is appropriately practiced to enrich children' development and learning might be the reason for Turkish teachers. Four of Turkish teachers stated they did not get any special training related to outdoor play whilst, three of them reported they got the undergraduate course related to outdoor play. However, it is difficult to reasoning Finnish teachers' roles from this perspective due to fact that five of teachers reported that they got at least one educational training related to outdoor play. Yet, the reason of Finnish teachers to prefer supervising children rather than playing with them might be result of National Curriculum Guidelines on Early childhood Education and Care in Finland (2013). In this curriculum, the role of teachers in play was explained like following;

*The extent to which play gives satisfaction to the child often depends on educators' activities. Supporting children's play requires careful observation and an ability to analyse play situations. Sensitive, committed educators recognise children's verbal and non-verbal initiatives and intentions and respond to them. Educators allow freedom to children who are engaged in play, but to be successful, children's play also often needs to be guided directly*

*or indirectly. Depending on children's age, playing skills, type of play and other situational factors, educators' role varies from participation to outside observation. Indirect guidance aims to enrich play with ideas or tools, for instance (p. 20).*

As the explanation indicated, observation of teachers and children's freedom were more emphasized rather than active involvement of teachers.

### **5.2.3 Beliefs of Turkish and Finnish parents related to outdoor play and ideal outdoor environment**

The findings revealed that both Turkish and Finnish parents in this study believed that outdoor play was important for children's development, yet they derived their views from distinct and shared perspectives. This study found that Turkish parents considered that outdoor play was important for children's socialization, whilst Finnish parents stated that outdoor play was important in terms of children's physical and mental health and particularly for gross motor skills. In addition, Finnish parents believed outdoor environment provide opportunity for freedom of movement. However, Turkish parents were not extended their expressions about importance of outdoor play. Yet, Finnish parents provided detailed explanation by referring their personal experiences and observations. In addition, while talking about their beliefs; Finnish parents stated such kind of expressions, "Here in Scandinavia it is very essential" and "Here it is a sign of being healthy" which emphasize the relation between Scandinavian culture and outdoor life. While talking about importance of outdoor play, they frequently referred the importance of outdoor play not only for children but also adults. This case might be due to the fact that they believed outdoor activities are the way of their lives. These findings consistent with the research (Karppinen, 2012; Marttila, 2013), which indicates the relation between Finnish education and outdoor life in Finnish culture. For instance, Karppinen (2012) presented an overview of outdoor education in Finland by referring Finnish culture;

*Every culture has its own words and meanings to express health, well-being and relationship with nature. This applies to Finns, too. I deal with the meaning for the word "Era," which is a traditional concept of life in wilderness in Finland. However today Era has been exchanged for the modern word referring to outdoor education—'Seikkailukasvatus.(p.1).*

The suggestions of Karppinen (2012) highlighted the idea that outdoor education is not recent concept for Finnish; even it is a part of their culture. Karppinen (2012) pointed out that in terms of wilderness, Finland is a European Superpower with 77% forest cover and 188,000 lakes. According to Karppinen (2012), Finland's geographical conditions influence Finnish mentality, thinking, and

practice. Similarly, Marttila, (2013) suggested Finnish legislation provides for free public access to nature and Finnish willingly utilise this opportunity in their free time. Additionally, another indicator which shows the relation between Finnish culture and outdoor life is Soumen Latu a Finnish organisation for the promotion of outdoor activities for children and the adults (<http://www.suomenlatu.fi/>, 2015). Those findings might be the reasons why Finnish parents were in efforts to refer their culture while explaining importance of outdoor play. As previously mentioned, Vartuli (2005) pointed out that a person's belief systems are formed as a child through their upbringing, culture, and life experiences.

Findings of current also indicated that Finnish parents explained that they support the outdoor play practices during the years in the kindergarten where their children attend. Finnish parents reported that they are happy about teachers to apply outdoor play activities twice a day during the years in all weather conditions. On the contrary, this study also found that Turkish parents viewed that outdoor play should be practiced in kindergarten when the weather is good for the reason that they were concerned with their children's health due to cold weathers. This finding appears to be consistent with related literature (see e.g., Brussoni et al., 2012; Clement, 2004; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997) which demonstrated that over-protective parenting is on a rise and that is why, children's chances and opportunities for outdoor play are affected by changes in social and environmental contexts. However, those studies investigated parent's views of outdoor play in their surroundings and neighbourhood. Different from previous ones, this study focused parents' beliefs of outdoor play in the kindergarten setting. Yet, similar concerns such as safety and health were revealed.

#### **5.4 Educational Implications**

The findings of this study contributed to the field of early childhood education by investigating Turkish and Finnish teachers' and parents' beliefs related to ideal outdoor environment and outdoor play and teachers' actual outdoor play practices. Based on the findings of this study and previous studies, several conclusions can be drawn.

One major conclusion drawn by this study is that teachers are crucial to make outdoor environment a space which meets children's need and interests. That is why; they should recognize the significance of outdoor and outdoor environment not only



for children's development but also learning. As illustrated in this study, both Finnish and Turkish used outdoor environment as place for free play rather than using as an extension of the indoor environment. In order to promote outdoor play and learning experiences for children, professionals and administrators arranged additional educational training related to such issues; the importance of outdoor play for children's learning and development, the facilitative roles of teachers in outdoor environment, the planning and implementation process of effective outdoor play. In addition, as indicated this study, both Turkish and Finnish teachers applied some educational projects such as Eco School, "*Minik TEMA*" and "*MetsaMörri*" activities which are all related to environment education. It was observed that those kinds of projects affect teachers' outdoor play practices in a positive way. In order to support teachers' motivation to be outdoors, such kind of projects which require to apply play and learning based activities in outdoor playground or natural surroundings should be created and teachers should be involved in these kind of projects.

Another important conclusion offered by the study is that communication and collaboration between parents and teachers are required in order to conduct outdoor play activities regularly during all seasons. To carry this out, parental concern/worry was eliminated through seminars for parents or individual meetings. First, teachers should believe in the importance of outdoor play, and they should have adequate theoretical and practical info about provision of outdoor play. Another way to eliminate parental concern about cold weather might be eliminated by appropriate clothing of children and appropriate facilities of kindergarten. At that point, positive experiences of Scandinavian countries might be motivation for Turkish teachers to prioritize outdoor play and learning. To add, the facilities of kindergartens in Finland and other Scandinavian countries might be an appropriate model to improve outdoor play facilities of kindergartens in Turkey. For instance, appropriate outdoor clothing, specific outdoor play materials and storages, and dry machines for wet clothes are the examples of appropriate facilities of Finnish kindergartens. Additionally, appropriate teacher-child ratio might be effective to eliminate parents' concerns. Appropriate ratio can make possible for Turkish teachers to overcome suggested barriers such as allocated time for preparation, teachers' inactivity, and safety concern about children.

Another conclusion is related to outdoor environment. Variety of materials and equipment, the arrangement of playground and safety of outdoor environment

are the factors that affect children's play and practice of teachers. Like in Finland, the teachers who had facility of different and specific materials in each seasons prevents children to engage repetitive play behaviors. Loose parts, which children can manipulate, enhance children's creativity. In addition, an open space of outdoor environment allows children to move freely and allow teachers to apply several plays with rules. That is why; current outdoor environments of kindergartens should be rearranged and improved by relevant persons and institutions.

Kindergartens have great potential in provision of outdoor play; because those are the places where children spend most of their time. For instance, in Turkey and Finland, children who attend early childhood institutions spent approximately 5 to 10 hours of their time in those institutions per day (MONE, 2012, Finnish National Board of Education, 2003). Obviously, integration outdoor play practices into national early childhood program provide a great advantage to involve outdoor play activities in daily schedules of kindergartens.

Moreover, appropriate outdoor play practices do not depend on just perspectives of teachers and/or parents. University staff is also indirectly responsible for the provision of outdoor play practices. Early childhood teacher training programs should be reviewed in terms of emphasize on outdoor play and outdoor learning in the courses. Particularly, the courses related to play should include specific theoretical and practical information and experience related to outdoor play and facilitative roles of teachers during outdoor play. In that sense, practicum course might cover specific requirements regarding outdoor play.

Finally, as a researcher, there are some educational implications I want to present. As Merriam (2009) stressed, a researcher is the primary instrument for data collection in a qualitative study. Within the context of the current study, I contacted with participant teachers and parents during the data collection period. In this process, I had chance to talk to parents and teachers and to observe teachers other practices. Firstly, after completing interviews with Turkish parents, I talked with parents in relation with their concerns about cold weathers and safety. I tried to eliminate their concerns referring related studies and appropriate practices of Scandinavian peoples. At the end of this conversation, most of parents stated that they had never thought the way I suggested them. This situation strengthened my belief about that their over protective parenting style might be eliminated by the scientific suggestions based on related literature. On the contrary, I observed that

Turkish teachers were not in effort to change parents' concerns that they believed as a barrier to outdoor play. When I asked have you ever tried to explain to parents its importance of outdoor play for children's development and learning, they all responded by telling that they explained it in meeting with parents. Yet, they stated they had no additional efforts to change their minds. My experiences in this issue were confirmed by administrator of kindergarten, who believes outdoor play practices should be a part of their daily schedule. She frequently stated teachers' practical knowledge about outdoor play should be improved. That is why; I thought that firstly the teachers should be master in issue of outdoor play in order to convince parents. In that sense, as a researcher in this field, I suggested that teachers' theoretical and practical info about outdoor play should be improved through which in-service and pre-service teacher training programs.

### **5.5 Recommendations for Further Studies**

There are certain suggestions based on the findings of this study. These recommendations are represented in this section.

This study was conducted as multiple case study to offer different perspectives on the same issue. When the study was completed, it was found that there was cultural differences between two cases, in addition to some similarities. That is why; it is recommended that the replication of this study should be carried out by involving different cultures to see factors that effects of teachers' and parents' beliefs related to outdoor play and teachers' outdoor play practices.

The study involved various data collection methods such as interviews and observations. Thus, more data could be obtained by videotapes, document analysis of teachers' plans, and journals to achieve a broader and more detailed perspective on the issue. In addition, data collection process in each case was limited in almost one month in the same season due to conduct study in two different cultures. That is why, teachers' outdoor play practices were not observed in different seasons. Further studies could be conducted by extending data collection periods to the different seasons of the years.

Almost all parents and teachers in the current study were female. That is why, particular for Turkish parents, overprotective parental concerns might have come into prominence. Further studies could be conducted by involving male parents and teachers as many as females.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Interview Protocol For Teachers

1. Does your daily schedule include outdoor play time?
  - a. If yes, how much time does your class typically spend outdoors in a day/week when the weather is nice? What about during the other seasons?
  - b. In your view, is the current amount of time spent outdoors sufficient? If not, which barriers do you observe regarding your intention of dedicating more time for outdoor play?
2. Could you describe what happens in a typical day during outdoor play?
3. What do the children normally do when they are outdoors?
4. Do you take materials from the classroom outdoors? What kind of materials? (e.g. Books, Art materials, Blocks, Dramatic play, Others...)
5. Ideally, how would you describe a teacher's role during outside time? What is your role on the playground when children are outside? (Play leader, observer, play friend...etc.)
6. What is the purpose of children's outdoor play?
7. In your view, which environment (outdoor or indoor) provides more learning Experiences for children? Why?
8. On a scale from 1-5, how would you rate the following factors of the outdoor environment of your kindergarten (day care center)? Please state the reasons. (1 means minimal existence of the following factors, 5 means optimal existence of the following factors).
  - Physical appropriateness of the outdoor environment of preschool (E.g: Size, shape and environmental conditions )
  - Materials and Equipment in outdoor environment (Developmental appropriateness, Distribution and settlement in the area)

- Sufficiency of the outdoor environment to address different types of play and to plan activities
- Safety of outdoor environment

9. How would you describe an ideal outdoor environment for young children in a kindegarten? / What would your ideal outdoor environment look like?

<b>PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM for TEACHERS</b>
1. Age.....
2. Educational Background <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. High School</li> <li>b. Vocational school</li> <li>c. Upper Secondary Education</li> <li>d. Undergraduate programme</li> <li>e. Graduate Programme</li> <li>f. Doctoral Programme</li> <li>g. Other.....</li> </ul>
3. How long have you been a preschool teacher? (Teaching years).....
4. How many children are there in your group?
5. Age group that you teach.....
6. During or after your undergraduate teacher education;, which of the following training have you received related to teaching play? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. I have not received any training</li> <li>b. In-service training</li> <li>c. Seminar</li> <li>d. Workshop</li> <li>e. Undergraduate courses</li> <li>f. Other.....</li> </ul>
7. In your undergraduate program or after you graduated, which of the following training have you received related to outdoor play and the use of outdoor environment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. I have not received any training</li> <li>b. In-service training</li> <li>c. Seminar</li> <li>d. Workshop</li> <li>e. Undergraduate courses</li> <li>f. Other.....</li> </ul>

## **Appendix B: Interview Protocol For Teachers**

1. Why don't we start by telling me a little about you?  
Prompts: Where were you born?  
How old are you?  
Education background?  
How many children do you have?
2. In your view, what is the purpose or importance of outdoor play for your child's development and learning?
3. What do you think/how do you feel about playing outdoors when your child is in kindergarten?
  - What about during the other seasons?
4. How would you describe an ideal outdoor environment for young children in a kindergarten? / What would your ideal outdoor environment look like?
5. Is the outdoor environment of the kindergarten your child attends an ideal outdoor environment?
  - If not, which different from existing features would you like to have?

Appendix C: Observation Form

<p>Target Teacher :</p> <p>Observers:</p> <p>Weather:</p> <p>Name of preschools:</p>	<p>Number of teacher:</p> <p>Number of children:</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>Time :</p>
<p>1. In which activities (spontaneous or planned) are teachers and students (individual and group) engaged?</p>	<p><u>Comments</u></p>
<p>2. What equipment is used?</p>	<p><u>Comments</u></p>

<p>3. What are loose parts? Loose parts: any material that children can manipulate</p>	<p><u>Comments</u></p>
<p>4. What roles (indirect coordination or direct intervention) do teachers attain (Perry, 2001)?</p>	<p><u>Comments</u></p>



5. What facilitative roles (Johnson et al., 2005,p.271)do teachers pursue ?

**Facilitative Roles**

<b><u>Amount of involvement</u></b>	<b><u>Roles</u></b>
Minimal Involvement Facilitative Roles	Uninvolved Onlooker Stage Manager Co-player Play Leader
Maximum Involvement	Director Redirector

**Comments**

6. ( Field Notes :Teachers' interaction, communication)

<u>Field Notes</u>	<u>Comments</u>

## **Appendix D: Ethical Permissions**

### **ODTÜ ETİK KURULU**

#### **İnsan Araştırmaları**

#### **Öğretmenler için Gönüllü Katılım Formu**

Ben, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Okul öncesi Eğitimi Öğretmenliği Ana Bilim Dalı'nda Yüksek Lisans öğrencisiyim. Tez çalışmamda, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ve ailelerin dışarda oyuna yönelik inanışlarını ve öğretmenlerin dış mekân uygulamalarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktayım. Bu doğrultuda, tez çalışmamda, katılımcı olarak yer almanızı rica ediyorum.

Çalışmaya katılma konusunda gönüllü iseniz;

1. Sizden, ortalama 30-40 dakika sürebilecek yüz yüze görüşmeye katılımınız beklenmektedir. Görüşme soruları, açık uçlu olup, rahatça kendinizi ifade edebileceğiniz niteliktedir. Görüşmelerde, herhangi bir veri kaybının önüne geçmek amacıyla, ses kaydı alınacaktır.
2. Gözlemler ise, dışarda yapılan oyun etkinlikleriniz süresince gerçekleştirilecektir.

Katılımınızın tamamen gönüllük esasına dayanmaktadır. Katılımcıları için her hangi bir risk teşkil etmeyen bu çalışmadan, süreçte istediğiniz zaman ayrılabilirsiniz. İsminiz, gizlilik ilkesi gereği çalışmada herhangi bir yerde geçmeyecek, kayıtlar araştırmacı tarafından gizlilikle muhafaza edilecektir. Çalışmanın programı, sizin de (katılımcı) iş birliğiniz ile eğitimi öğretimi aksatmayacak şekilde düzenlenecektir.

Her hangi bir sorunuz var mı?

## Veliler İin Gönüllü Katılım Formu

Ben, Orta Doęu Teknik Üniversitesi, Okul öncesi Eęitimi Öğretmenlięi Ana Bilim Dalı'nda Yüksek Lisans öğrencisiyim ve aynı alanda araştırma görevlisiyim. Tez çalışmamda, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ve ailelerin dışarda oyuna yönelik inanışlarını ve öğretmenlerin dış mekân uygulamalarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktayım. Bu doğrultuda, tez çalışmamda, katılımcı olarak yer almanızı rica ediyorum.

Çalışmaya katılma konusunda gönüllü iseniz;

Sizden, ortalama 20-30 dakika sürebilecek yüz yüze görüşmeye katılımınız beklenmektedir. Görüşme soruları, açık uçlu olup, rahatça kendinizi ifade edebileceğiniz niteliktedir. Görüşmelerde, herhangi bir veri kaybının önüne geçmek amacıyla, ses kaydı alınacaktır.

Katılımınızın tamamen gönüllük esasına dayanmaktadır. Katılımcıları için her hangi bir risk teşkil etmeyen bu çalışmadan, süreçte istediğiniz zaman ayrılabilirsiniz. İsminiz, gizlilik ilkesi gereęi çalışmada herhangi bir yerde geçmeyecek, kayıtlar araştırmacı tarafından gizlilikle muhafaza edilecektir. Görüşmenin zamanı, sizin programınıza uygun olacak bir şekilde belirlenecektir.

Her hangi bir sorunuz varsa aşağıda iletişim bilgilerim yer almaktadır.

Fatma YALÇIN

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Tel: 0507-917-03-57

## Katılım Sonrası Bilgi Formu

Bu çalışma daha önce de belirtildiği gibi ODTÜ Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Bölümü öğretim üyelerinden Doç. Dr. Feyza TANTEKİN ERDEN'in danışmanlığında tarafımdan yürütülen yüksek lisans tez çalışmasıdır. Bu araştırmanın amacı, Türk ve Fin okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ve ailelerin, dışarda oyuna yönelik inançlarının ve öğretmenlerin uygulamalarının incelenmesidir.

Yapılan araştırmalar, dışarda oyunun çocuğun sağlıklı gelişimi ve öğrenmesi için önemini ortaya koymuştur. Çocukların, erken çocukluk eğitim kurumlarında geçirdiği zamanın giderek artması sebebiyle, çocuklara okulda sağlanabilecek dışarda oyun etkinlikleri de giderek önem kazanmıştır. Ancak, erken çocukluk eğitim kurumlarında, dışarda oyundan daha çok içerde oyun ve etkinliklere yer verilmektedir. Bu noktada, eğitim öğretimde kilit rol oynayan öğretmen ve aile görüşleri ve inanışları önem kazanmaktadır, çünkü yapılan araştırmalarla, bireylerin inançlarının davranış ve uygulamalarına şekil vermede önemli bir etken olduğu ortaya koyulmuştur. Bu sebeple, bu çalışmada öğretmen ve ailelerin dışarda oyuna yönelik inanışlarını ve bu inanışların öğretmen davranışlarına nasıl yansıdığını ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, okul öncesi öğretmenleri ve çocukları okula öncesi eğitim kurumlarına devam eden ailelerle yapılacak olan görüşmelerin, dışarda oyuna yönelik bakış açılarını ve inançlarını ortaya koyması beklenmektedir. Ayrıca, öğretmenleri kendi doğal eğitim öğretim ortamında gözlemlemenin, dış mekânda geçirilen süre, uygulanan oyunun niteliği ve öğretmenin bu oyunlardaki rolü gibi konularda bilgiler ortaya koyması beklenmektedir.

Bu çalışmadan alınacak verilerin Nisan 2014 ortasında elde edilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Elde edilen bilgiler sadece bilimsel araştırma ve yazılarda kullanılacaktır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarını öğrenmek ya da bu araştırma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için aşağıdaki isme başvurabilirsiniz. Bu araştırmaya katıldığınız için çok teşekkür ederiz.

Arş. Gör. Fatma YALÇIN (Ofis: EFA-29; Tel: 0312 210 7538; [fay@metu.edu.tr](mailto:fay@metu.edu.tr))

## Appendix E: Turkish Summary

### GİRİŞ

Erken çocukluk eğitimine yön veren eğitim kuramcılarının çalışmaları incelendiğinde, çocuk ve doğa etkileşiminin yeni bir kavram olmadığı görülür. Froebel, Mc Millan, Steiner ve Isaacs gibi doğadan ilham alan eğitimciler okul bahçesi ve doğayı öğrenme için ideal bir ortam, doğal malzemeleri de ideal öğretim materyalleri olarak görmüşlerdir (Bilton; 2010; Garrick, 2009; Tovey, 2007). Çocuk bahçesi gibi mecazi bir anlama sahip olan *Kindergarten*'in babası olarak görülen Froebel ise bu kuramcılarının başında gelmektedir (Bilton, 2010; Borge, Nordhagen ve Lie, 2003; Garrick, 2009; Tovey, 2007). Okul yerine çocuk bahçesi (*Kindergarten*) ifadesini kullanması, Froebel'in doğa ve çocuk etkileşimine verdiği önemin en önemli göstergelerinden biridir (Bilton, 2010; Tovey, 2007).

Froebel'in eğitimsel uygulamalarının merkezinde bahçe yer almaktadır. Eğitim programının, çocuğun içsel motivasyonundan kaynaklanan oyun üzerine yapılandırılması gerektiğine inanan Froebel, bahçeyi çocukların oyun oynayıp egzersiz yaptığı bir alan olarak kullanmıştır (Garrick, 2009). Ayrıca çocuğun doğayla uyum ve etkileşimini desteklemek amacıyla her çocuğa kendi bitkilerini yetiştirip gelişimini gözlemleyebileceği küçük bir bahçe alanı vermiştir. Bunların yanı sıra, çocukların ve öğretmenlerin doğayı keşfedebileceği alanlara sık sık yürüyüşler düzenlenmesini teşvik etmiştir (Garrick, 2009; Tovey, 2007).

Froebel'den ilham alan Margaret McMillan, 1914 yılında Londra'nın doğusunda Deptford'da ilk açık hava kreşini (*open-air nursery school*) açmıştır. Temel amacı çocuğa erişilebilir bir açık alan ve temiz hava sağlamak olan bu kreşin bahçesi, çocuğun kendi kendine keşfedip öğrenmesini, özgürce oynamasını sağlayan doğal bir alan şeklinde tasarlanmıştır. İç mekânı sadece kötü hava koşullarında kullanılan bu kreşin bahçesi, çimen, taş ve toprak gibi farklı yüzeylerden oluşturulmuştur. Ayrıca bahçede yeşillik ve sebzelerin ekildiği bir alan, doğal

çiçekler, tırmanma donanımları, kum havuzu ve bir tepe yer almıştır (Bilton, 2010; Garrick, 2009; Tovey, 2007).

McMillan'dan oldukça farklı sosyal koşullarda çalışmış olan Susan Isaacs, 1924'te Cambridge'de sosyo-ekonomik düzeyi yüksek, eğitilmiş ailelerin çocuklarının öğrenim gördüğü bir okul açmıştır (Garrick, 2009; Knight, 2009; Tovey, 2007). Eğitilmiş bir okul öncesi öğretmeni olan Isaacs'ın oluşturduğu öğrenme ortamında bahçe çok önemli bir yer tutmaktaydı. Bu bahçede, kaydırak, tırmanma donanımı, merdivenler, meyve ağaçları, ekiminin çocuklar tarafından yapıldığı çiçek ve sebze bahçesinin yanı sıra tavuk, domuz ve hatta yılan gibi hayvanlar da bulunmaktaydı. Bahçenin çocukların merak ve araştırma duygusunu tetiklemesi gerektiğine inanan Isaacs, onların bu merakın peşinden gidip, risk almayı öğrenebildikleri özgür ortamlarda gelişebileceklerini öne sürmüştür (Garrick, 2009; Tovey, 2007).

Froebel ya da McMillan gibi doğal materyallerin eğitici materyaller olarak kullanılabilirliğine inanmasa da, Montessori, bahçenin içeriden dışarıya doğrudan erişilebilir (*open access*) olması gerektiğini öne süren ilk kişidir. Montessori, bahçenin çocuk için erişime açık, gün içerisinde istediği zaman çıkıp girebileceği, her çocuk için küçük dikim alanları olan, oyunun yanı sıra küçük hasırlarını ve materyallerini yanlarına alarak materyalleri üzerinde çalışabilecekleri bir alan olması gerektiğini ileri sürmüştür. Montessori, her ne kadar kendi eğitim anlayışı çerçevesinde yaratıcılık ve hayal gücüyle doğrudan ilişkilendirmese de, oluşturduğu yaklaşımında dışarda oyun ve öğrenmeye yer vermiştir (Tovey, 2007).

Doğanın ve bahçenin eğitimsel uygulamalardaki yeri ve şekli süreç içinde değişse de çocukların dışarda olma isteği ve ihtiyacı değişmemiştir (Bilton, 2010). Ancak, yapılan çalışmalar, 19. yüzyılın başlarında çocukların normal yaşamlarında dışarda oyun oynayarak geçirdikleri zamanın, 19. yüzyılın sonlarına göre daha fazla olduğunu ortaya koymuştur (Clement, 2004; Knight, 2009; Rivkin, 1998; Thigpen, 2007). Çocukların dışarda geçirdiği zamanın giderek azalması, doğa ile etkileşiminin çok sınırlı hale gelmesi ve dolayısıyla çocukların günün çoğunu binaların içinde geçirmesine ilişkin çeşitli nedenler öne sürülmektedir. Yapılan çalışmalar doğrultusunda ileri sürülen nedenlerin başında ise evde teknoloji kullanımının artması, şehirleşme ve bu şehirleşmeye bağlı olarak ailelerin güvenlik kaygıları

gelmektedir (Clement, 2004; O'brien ve Murrey, 2007; Rivkin, 1997, 1998, 2000; Thigpen, 2007; Valentine ve McKendrick, 1997). Bu azalmaya baęlı olarak, erken çocukluk eğitim kurumlarının, çocuklara erişilebilir ve donanımlı bir dış mekân ve bu mekân da çocukların oyun ve öğrenmeyle geçirecekleri bir süre sağlanmasındaki rolü daha da artmıştır (Renick, 2009). Ancak, dışarda geçirilen zamanın süresini, sıklığını ve kalitesini belirleyen en önemli faktörlerden birisinin öğretmen ve öğretmenin bu süreçteki rolü olduğu ileri sürülmektedir (Chakravarthi, 2009; Davies, 1997; Hagen & Storli, 2010; Rivkin, 1998; Sandberg & Niklasson, 2010). Öte yandan, erken çocukluk eğitiminde genel kabullerden biriside aile ve öğretmen işbirliğinin çocuğun bütünsel gelişimi ve kalıcı öğrenmesi için bir ön şart olduğudur (OECD, 2012). Bu çerçevede, aile öğretmen işbirliği ve ortak kanaatinin çocuğun gelişimine katkıda bulunan bir dış mekân oyun zamanı içinde gerekli olduğu ileri sürülebilir. Fakat, öğretmenlerin dış mekan oyunlarına yönelik görüşlerini ve uygulamalarını ortaya koymayı amaçlayan çalışmalarda, öğretmenlerin bir çoęu, ailelerin dış mekan oyunlarına yönelik olumsuz tutum ve görüşlerinin, okuldaki dış mekan oyunlarına engel teşkil eden en önemli sebeplerden biri olduğunu ifade etmiştir (Kos & Jerman, 2013; Renick, 2009). Ancak, Kos ve Jerman (2013) tarafından Slovenya'da yapılan çalışmanın katılımcıları arasında ailelerde yer almaktadır ve bu çalışma öğretmenlerin iddia ettiğinin aksine, ailelerin dışarda oyun ve öğrenmeye karşı pozitif bir tutum içerisinde olduklarını bulmuştur. Aile ve öğretmen görüşlerine yönelik bu çalışmalardaki farklı bulgular, aile ve öğretmen görüşleri üzerinde kültürün bir etkisi olabilir mi sorusunu gündeme getirmektedir. Nitekim OECD (2006) tarafından hazırlanan ülkelerin erken çocukluk eğitimine yönelik tematik inceleme raporuna göre, dış mekân oyunlarının erken çocukluk eğitim kurumlarınca uygulamaya taşınması farklılık göstermektedir. Bu farklılığın nedeni olarak ise, ülkelerin erken çocukluk eğitim politika ve gelenekleri olarak görülmektedir. Bu eğitim politika ve geleneklerine baęlı olarak, özellikle İskandinav ülkelerinde dış mekâna ve dış mekân oyun uygulamalarına, en az iç mekân kadar önem verildiği vurgulanmaktadır. Ayrıca, dış mekân oyunlarına yönelik pek çok çalışmanın da İskandinav ülkelerinde yürütülüyor olması, dış mekân oyunlarına verilen önemin bir başka göstergesidir. Hatta Kuzey Avrupa ülkelerinde, dış mekân oyunları okul bahçesi ile sınırlandırılmamış, ağaçlık alanlar ve ormanlarda dış mekân oyunları için kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. Bu uygulamaların yılın her mevsiminde her türlü hava koşulunda yapıldığı okullarda ise Orman Okul Yaklaşımı olarak bilinen



yeni bir pedagojik yaklaşım uygulanmaktadır (Amus, 2013; Borge, Nordhagen & Lie, 2003; Knight, 2009; Linde, 2010). Kuzey Avrupa ülkelerinin bu gibi uygulamaları, Japonya, Rusya, İngiltere, Galler ve İskoçya için ilham kaynağı olsa da (Linde, 2010; Robertson, 2008), henüz bu gibi uygulamalar evrensel olmaktan uzaktır (Garrick, 2009).

Türkiye'nin bu konudaki pozisyonu ve uygulamalarına gelince, her ne kadar dış mekân oyunları ve dışarda öğrenme konuları erken çocukluk eğitimi araştırmacıları için ilgi odağı olsa da, bu konu Türk erken çocukluk eğitimi alanında çalışan araştırmacıları ve eğitimcileri için oldukça yeni bir konudur. Bu nedenle, dış mekân oyunlarının, pek çok Avrupa, özellikle Kuzey Avrupa, ülkeleriyle kıyaslandığında, erken çocukluk eğitim politika ve uygulamalarında geliştirilmeye ihtiyaç duyulan bir konu olduğu ileri sürülebilir. Bu husustaki ilgili alan yazını da bu görüşü destekler niteliktedir. Örneğin, Öztürk (2009) yaptığı çalışmada dış mekân eğitiminin Türk erken çocukluk eğitimindeki yeri ve önemini değerlendirmiştir ve devlete bağlı anaokullarının dış mekânlarının bu eğitimi destekleyecek ve çocukların oyunlarını geliştirecek nitelikte olmadığını iddia etmiştir. Öztürk (2009)'ün bu iddiası, aynı hususta çalışan farklı araştırmacıların bulgularıyla tutarlılık gösterir niteliktedir (bkz örn.; Çelik, 2012; Olgan & Kahriman-Öztürk; 2011). Dış mekân oyunları açısından ulusal okul öncesi eğitimi programı incelendiğinde ise, iç mekân ve öğrenme merkezlerine yönelik oldukça detaylı bir bilgi yer alırken, dış mekâna özel bir tanımlama ve vurgu olmadığı görülür. Ancak, bu program konu ve tema temelli bir program değildir dolayısıyla öğretmenler her hangi bir konunun içerde ya da dışarıda öğretilmesi ile sınırlandırılmamıştır. Hatta bu program öğretmenlerin hazırladığı etkinlikleri mümkün olduğu sürece açık alanlarda yapmasını tavsiye etmiştir (MONE, 2013). Benzer bir şekilde, Finlandiya'da ise serbest program modeli uygulanmakta, öğretmenler kendi programlarını öğrencilerin ilgi ve ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda hazırlamaktadır (National Board of Education, 2003). Bu noktada öğretmenlerin dış mekân oyunlarını planlarına dâhil etmede ve etkinlikleri dış mekanda gerçekleştirmede karar mekanizmaları oldukları ileri sürülebilir. Bu nedenle bu karar verme sürecine etki edebilecek etmenlerin ortaya koyulması önem arz etmektedir.

## **Çalışmanın Amacı**

Bu çoklu durum çalışmasının iki amacı bulunmaktadır. Bunlardan birincisi Türk ve Fin okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ve ebeveynlerinin dış mekân oyunu ve ideal dış mekân ortamlarına ilişkin inançlarını incelemesi iken, diğeri Türk ve Fin okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarında bulunan dış mekânlarda gerçekleştirdikleri etkinlikleri ortaya koymaktır.

## **Çalışmanın Önemi**

Erken çocukluk döneminde oyunun çocukların bütünsel gelişimine öğrenmesine katkısı yapılan birçok farklı çalışmayla ortaya koyulmuştur. Ancak bu çalışmaların pek çoğu iç mekân oyunlarına odaklanmıştır. Bu sebeple, bu çalışma ilgili alan yazınına katkıda bulunması açısından önem arz etmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, öğretmenlerin dış mekân oyunlarına yönelik inanışlarına ve dış mekân uygulamalarına odaklanan birkaç çalışma bulunmaktadır (bknz örn. Davies, 1997; Rennick, 2009; Chakravarthi, 2009). Ancak, bu çalışma önceki çalışmalardan farklı olarak sadece öğretmenlerin dış mekân oyunlarına yönelik inanışlarına değil aynı zamanda ailelerin de bu konudaki inanışlarına odaklanmıştır. Bu odaklanmanın iki sebebi vardır. Birincisi, önceki çalışmalarda ailelerin, öğretmenler tarafından özellikle kışın dış mekân oyununa engel teşkil ettiklerinin ifade edilmesidir. Bu nedenle bu çalışma ailelerin dış mekân oyununa yönelik inanışlarını kendi perspektiflerinden ortaya koymayı amaçlamıştır. İkinci ise, aynı konu üzerinde iki farklı kaynağa başvurarak okuyucu ve sonraki çalışmalar için daha geniş ve daha geçerli bir çerçeve sunmaktır. Ayrıca, bu çalışma iki farklı kültürden katılımcıları (Türk ve Fin) çalışmaya dâhil ederek, kültürün katılımcıların inanışları üzerinde bir etkisi olup olmadığına odaklanmıştır. Bu nedenle elde ettiği bulgular sadece ulusal çerçevede değil, aynı zamanda uluslararası çerçevede önem arz etmektedir. Bu çalışmayı önemli kılan son ancak bir o kadar da önemli sebep şudur; erken çocukluk döneminde kaliteli bir eğitim sağlamak öğretmen, çocuk ve aile arasındaki iletişim ve işbirliğine bağlı olduğu farklı çalışmalarda ifade edilmiştir (Bryant, Burchinal, Lau, & Sparling, 1994; Ghazvini, & Readdick, 1994; OECD, 2012). Bu işbirliğinin çocukların ilgi ihtayçlarına hitap eden uygun dış mekân oyunlarının erken çocukluk eğitim kurumlarında sağlanması açısından da geçerli olduğu ileri sürülebilir. Bu nedenle aile ve öğretmenlerin bu hususa ilişkin görüşlerini ve öğretmenlerin dış

mekân oyun uygulamalarını ortaya koymak, ihtiyaç duyulan noktalarda iyileştirme sağlamak açısından önemlidir.

### **Önemli Terimlerin Tanımları**

*Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi:* Erken çocukluk eğitimi sıfır –sekiz yaş aralığındaki çocuklara hitap eden gelişimsel olarak uygun programları kapsayan bir terimdir (Essa, 2003).

*Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi Öğretmeni:* Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi öğretmeni, erken çocukluk eğitimi kurumlarında çalışabilmek amacıyla onaylanmış bir sertifikası veya diploması bulunan eğitimcidir (Copple, Bredekamp, & NAEYC, 2009).

*Oyun:* Oyun, içsel bir motivasyondan kaynaklanan ve eğlence amacıyla yapılan etkinlikleri içeren bir süreçtir (Frost, Wortham & Reifel, 2008).

*Dış mekân Oyunu:* Dış mekanda gerçekleşen ve yapılandırılmış ve yapılandırılmamış oyunlardan oluşan oyundur (Parsons, 2011).

*Dış mekân:* Bu çalışmada, dış mekân kavramı anaokullarının genellikle oyun alanı ve ekim alanı gibi bölümlerden oluşan bahçelerini ifade etmek amacıyla kullanılmıştır.

*İnaç:* Kişinin dünyayla ilişkili doğru olarak kabul ettiği ve psikolojik olarak güçlü bir şekilde bağlı olduğu anlayış ve önermeleri ifade eder. İnançlar sahip olunan kişi tarafından doğru kabul edilir, ancak bilimsel gerçeklere dayanmayabilir (Richardson, 2003).

## **YÖNTEM**

### **Araştırma Soruları**

Bu çoklu durum çalışması, Türk ve Fin okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ve ebeveynlerinin dış mekân oyunu ve ideal dış mekân ortamlarına ilişkin inançlarını incelemek ve Türk ve Fin okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarında bulunan dış mekânlarda gerçekleştirdikleri etkinlikleri ortaya koymak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, bu araştırmaya yön veren dört farklı araştırma sorusu aşağıdaki gibidir;

1. Türk okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ve ailelerinin ideal bir dış mekan ve bir anaokulundaki dış mekan oyun uygulamalarına yönelik inançları nelerdir?
2. Türk okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin çalıştıkları anaokulundaki dış mekân oyun uygulamaları nelerdir?
3. Fin okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin ve ailelerinin ideal bir dış mekan ve bir anaokulundaki dış mekan oyun uygulamalarına yönelik inançları nelerdir?
4. Fin okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin çalıştıkları anaokulundaki dış mekan oyun uygulamaları nelerdir?

### **Araştırma Yöntemi**

Nitel araştırma yöntemleri çerçevesinde yürütülen bu çalışma çoklu durum çalışmasıdır. Stake (1995)'e göre, tek durum çalışması yürüten bir araştırmacı güncel bir olguya odaklanır ve bu olguyu kendi gerçek yaşam çerçevesinde çalışmak için bir sınırlandırılmış bir ortam seçer. Öte yandan, çoklu durum çalışması yürüten bir araştırmacı ise aynı şekilde tek bir olguya odaklanır ancak bu olguyu farklı ortamlarda çalışmak için farklı ortamlar seçer. Bu çerçevede, bu çalışmanın yöntemine çoklu durum çalışmasının uygun olduğu düşünülmüştür. Araştırmacı, aynı olguyu (dış mekân oyunları), farklı yaşam ortamlarında (Türkiye ve Finlandiya'dan iki farklı bağımsız anaokulu) araştırmıştır. Yin (2009)'a göre, çoklu durum çalışması tekrar mantığını dayanmaktadır. Diğer bir deyişle, araştırmacı veri toplama ve analiz sürecini her bir durum için tekrarlar. Bu doğrultuda yapılan bu çalışmada, gözlem ve görüşme sürecini her iki durum için ayrı ayrı tekrarlamış ve her bir durum kendi iç dinamikleri ve gerçek yaşamı çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir.

### **Okul Ortamları ve Katılımcılar**

Miles ve Huberman'nın (1994) ifade ettiği gibi, nitel bir çalışma yürüten bir araştırmacı, araştırmanın yürütüldüğü ortamın gerçek yaşam koşullarını okuyucuya aktarmak amacıyla detaylı, betimleyici bilgiler sunması gerekmektedir. Bu çerçevede, bu çalışma her iki araştırma ortamını okuyucuya aktarmak amacıyla zengin ve detaylı tanımlama stratejisinden faydalanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın verilerinin toplandığı ortamlardan biri Finlandiya, Helsinki'de bulunan ve 2002 yılında kurulan bağımsız bir anaokuludur. Bu okul, 12-72 aylık çocuklara Finlandiya Erken Çocukluk Eğitim ve Bakım Ulusal Programı (2003) çerçevesinde eğitim vermektedir. Ayrıca bu okulda, *Metsamörri* etkinlikleri uygulanmaktadır. Metsamörri ( ormanda

yaşayan hayali bir karakter) Finlandiya'nın çevre eğitimi kapsamında yürüttüğü etkinliklerden oluşan ve çocuklara çevreyi sevip korumayı öğretmeyi amaçlayan bir programdır. Tek katlı bir binadan oluşan bu okulun ön ve arka bahçeden oluşan bir dış mekânı vardır. Ön bahçe sıklıkla oyun alanı olarak kullanılırken, arka bahçe genellikle bahar aylarında bitki ekilmek amacıyla kullanılmaktadır. Okulun her sınıfa doğrudan dışarıya erişimi sağlayan dört farklı kapısı ve sadece dış mekân oyun materyallerinin depolandığı dört farklı materyal deposu bulunmaktadır.

Bu çalışmanın verilerinin toplandığı diğer ortam ise, Türkiye, Ankara'da bulunan bu okul 2006 yılında kurulmuştur ve 36-72 aylık çocuklara Ulusal Erken Çocukluk Eğitim Programı (MEB, 2013) çerçevesinde hizmet vermektedir. Ayrıca bu okulda çevre eğitimi vermek amacıyla Eko-okul ve Minik TEMA projeleri uygulanmaktadır. İki katlı bir binadan oluşan okulun dış mekânı, oyun parkı, ekim alanı ve hayvanlar için barınağın bulunduğu bölümlerden oluşmaktadır.

Çalışmanın katılımcılarını, yukarıda bahsi geçen okullarda çalışan okul öncesi eğitimi öğretmenleri ve bu okullarda çocukları eğitim alan velilerden gönüllü olanlar oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcıların öğretmenlerin sayısı, yedisi Türk, yedisi Fin olmak üzere toplam 14'tür. Katılımcı ebeveynlerin sayısı ise yine aynı şekilde yedisi Türk, yedisi Fin olmak üzere 14'tür. Fin katılımcılar, İngilizce konuşmakta kendini rahat hissedilen gönüllü ebeveyn ve öğretmenlerden oluşmuştur.

### **Veri Toplama Araçları ve Süreci**

Bu çalışmanın verilerinin toplanması için çeşitli veri toplama araçlarından faydalanılmıştır. Bunlardan birincisi, öğretmenlerin dış mekân oyunlarına yönelik inançlarını anlamak ve kendileri tarafından beyan edilmiş dış mekân oyun uygulamalarını ortaya koymak amacıyla hazırlanan ve dokuz sorudan oluşan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formudur. Bu görüşme formu kullanılarak, her bir katılımcı öğretmen ile kendileri ile ortak bir zaman belirlenerek ortalama 30-40 dakika süren bir görüşme gerçekleştirilmiştir. İkinci veri toplama aracı ise, ailelerin bir anaokulunda yürütülen dış mekân oyun etkinliklerine yönelik inançlarını ortaya koymak amacıyla yedi sorudan oluşan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formudur. Öğretmenler aracılığıyla, gönüllü ailelerle iletişime geçilmiş ve toplamda 20-30 dakika aralığında süren görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmelerin yanı sıra, bu çalışmanın verilerinin bir kısmı gözlem formu kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Gözlem

formu üç kısımdan oluşmaktadır. İlk kısımda gözlem yapılan okulun ismi, alandaki öğretmen sayısı ve hava sıcaklığı gibi betimleyici bilgiler yer alırken, ikinci kısımda kullanılan materyaller, öğretmenin rolü gibi rehber sorular yer almaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm ise çocuklar ve öğretmen arasındaki iletişim ve etkileşimin ve araştırmacının yorumlarını kayd edildiği bölümdür. Her bir öğretmenin üç farklı dış mekân oyun etkinliği gözlemlendi. Gözlemler her bir okulda üç haftalık zaman dilimine yayıldı. Üç hafta süresince, gözlemlerin gerçekleştiği günlerde araştırmacı tüm günü okulda geçirdi. Gözlem ve görüşmeler her bir okulda ortalama bir aylık süre boyunca toplandı ve çalışmanın tüm verisi toplamda iki aylık süreç boyunca toplandı.

### **Veri Analiz Süreci**

Bu çalışmada toplanan veriler çoklu durum çalışmasının doğası gereği iki aşamalı olarak analiz edilmiştir. İlk aşamada her bir durum kendi gerçek yaşamı çerçevesinde, kendi dinamikleri göz önünde bulundurularak analiz edildi. Bu aşamada toplanan veriler Creswell'in (2009) veri analiz aşamalarına göre analiz edilmiştir. İlk olarak görüşme verileri çözümlenmiş ve tüm veri organize edilmiştir. Organize edilmiş veriler, iki farklı kodlayıcı tarafından incelenmiş ve öne çıkan kavram ve söylemler belirlenmiştir. Öne çıkan kavram ve söylemler karşılaştırılmış ve belirli kategoriler üzerinde görüş birliğine varılmıştır. Bu süreç her iki durum içinde tekrarlanmıştır. Analizin ikinci aşamasında çapraz durum analizi yapılmıştır. Çapraz durum analizinde her iki durum için ortak ve ayrışan kategoriler belirlenmiş ve durumlar arası benzerlikler ve farklılıklar ortaya koyulmuştur.

### **BULGULAR VE TARTIŞMA**

Bu çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, Türk ve Fin öğretmenler ve ebeveynlerin dış mekan oyunlarının çocukların gelişimi ve öğrenmesi için önemli olduğuna inandığını, ancak bu önemi farklı perspektiflerden açıkladıklarını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Örneğin, hem Türk hem Fin öğretmenler, dış mekanın çocuklar özgürce hareket etme imkanı sağladığını ve bu sebeple çocukların enerjilerini atmada önemli bir imkan olduğunu ifade ederken, Türk öğretmenlerden farklı olarak Fin öğretmenler dış mekan oyunlarının çocukların büyük motor becerilerine ve sosyalleşmesine katkı sağladığını ifade etmiştir. Elde edilen bu bulgular ilgili yapılan farklı çalışmalarla tutarlılık göstermektedir (bkz örn. Aasen, Grindheim, & Waters, 2009, Fjørtoft, 2000; Ünal, 2009).

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, Türk ve Fin öğretmenlerin dış mekân oyunlarının çocukların kalıcı öğrenmelerine katkıda bulunduğuna inandıklarını bulmuştur. Ancak, öğretmenler öğrenme ve dış mekân oyunları arasındaki ilişkiyi detaylandıramamışlardır. Dış mekân oyunları öğrenme için bir araç olmaktan öte öğrenmeye hazırlayan bir süreç olarak görülmektedir. Örneğin, Türk öğretmenler çocukların dışarda enerjilerini attıkları için içerdeki etkinliklere daha iyi katıldıklarını ifade ederken, benzer bir şekilde Fin öğretmenler dışarda oyun süresince alınan temiz havanın konsantrasyon süresini arttırdığını ifade etmişlerdir. Buna benzer bulgular, Maynard ve Waters (2007) tarafından yürütülen çalışmada da elde edilmiştir. Maynard ve Waters (2007) öğretmenlerin dışarda öğrenme fırsatlarının birçoğunu, dış mekânı sadece oyun ve eğlence amaçlı gördükleri için kaçırdıklarını ileri sürmüştür. Bu çalışmada, öğretmenlerin bu husustaki inanışlarının uygulamalarına da yansıdığı bulunmuştur. Nitekim hem Fin, hem Türk öğretmenler sıklıkla serbest oyun etkinlikleri uygularken gözlemlenmiştir.

Çalışmada yer alan bütün katılımcılar ideal dış mekan oyun alanını doğa ile içe, doğal materyaller içeren, hareket özgürlüğü içeren bir açık alana sahip olan ve çocukların oyunlarını geliştirebilecek donanım ve materyaller içeren bir yer olarak tanımlamışlardır. Bu bulgular, ideal bir dış mekan oyun alanının bileşenlerini anlatan ilgili literatür ile paralellik göstermektedir (Fjørtoft, 2000, 2001; Herrington & Studman, 1998; Kytä, 2004; Lucas, 2009; Ünal, 2009). Ancak öğretmenlerden kendi okul bahçelerini belirli faktörler açısından değerlendirmeleri istendiğinde, Fin öğretmenler sahip oldukları bahçenin ideal bir dış mekâna yakın olduğunu ifade ederken, Türk öğretmenler bu hususta pek çok eksiklikten bahsetmektedir. Türk öğretmenlerin bu görüşü, yapılan farklı çalışmalarla örtüşmektedir (bknz örn, Olgan & Kahriman-Öztürk). Öğretmenler arasındaki bu görüş farklılığı iki ülke arasındaki erken çocukluk eğitim politikalarından kaynaklanıyor olabilir. Çünkü, OECD'nin (2006) raporuna göre Kuzey Avrupa ülkeleri hem iç mekan hem dış mekana eşit ölçüde önem verip, her iki öğrenme ortamını geliştirmek için uygun bütçeyi ayırmaktadır.

Bu çalışmada, öğretmenlerin dış mekân oyunlarına ilişkin inançlarındaki en temel fark dış mekân oyunlarına engel teşkil eden durumlarla alakalıdır. Fin öğretmenler, dış mekân oyunlarını planlarında sıklıkla yer vermelerine engel teşkil eden herhangi bir durum olmadığına inanırken, Türk öğretmenler özellikle kışın dış

mekân oyunlarına yer vermelerine olumsuz aile görüşlerinin, soğuk hava koşullarının, yetersiz yardımcı personelin engel teşkil ettiğini ifade etmiştir. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin tembelliğinin, dış mekân oyunlarına yönelik teorik ve pratik bilgi eksikliğinin ve gelişimsel olarak uygun olmayan dış mekân oyun donanım ve materyallerinin kendilerine engel teşkil ettiğini ileri sürmüşlerdir. Bu bulgular, benzer çalışmaların bulgularıyla tutarlılık gösterir niteliktedir (Kos & Jerman, 2013; Maynard & Waters, 2007; Renick, 2009). Önceki yapılan çalışmalardan farklı olarak, bu çalışma Türk öğretmenler için uygun kıyafet giydirmek için geçirilen zamanın da bir engel teşkil ettiğini bulmuştur. Fin öğretmenlerin bu husus bir engel olarak görmemelerinin bir sebebi ise uygun öğretmen-öğrenci oranlarının her yaşta korunmasından ve gruplarda birden fazla öğretmen çalışmasından kaynaklanabilir. Ayrıca, İskandinav kültüründe soğuk havanın uygun kıyafet ile baş edilebilecek bir husus olarak görülmesi de Türk ve Fin öğretmenler arasındaki görüş farklılığının kaynağı olabilir.

Benzer bir şekilde Türk ve Fin aileler arasında kışın dış mekân oyunlarına yönelik görüşlerinde farklılaşma söz konusu olduğu bulunmuştur. Türk ebeveynler, çocuklarının kışın dışarda oynadıklarında sıklıkla hasta olabileceklerine inanırken, Fin ebeveynler çocuklarını gönderdikleri anaokulunda yılın her mevsiminde her türlü hava koşulunda dışarda oynamalarından memnun olduklarını ve soğuk havanın herhangi bir endişeye yol açmadığını ifade etmişlerdir. Bu farklılığın sebeplerinden birisi Asya kültüründen gelen ebeveynler daha koruyucu bir ebeveynlik stiline sahip olmaları olabilirken, ikincisi ise Fin kültüründe dışarda oyunun gerek çocuklar, gerek yetişkinler için sağlıklı yaşamın bir parçası olarak görülmesi olabilir.



## Appendix F: Tez Fotokopisi İzin Formu

### TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

#### ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enformatik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### YAZARIN

Soyadı :  
Adı :  
Bölümü :

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) :

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans  Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: