THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENNING THE VOICES OF CHILDREN FROM THEIR IMMEDIATE OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS OF THEIR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS*

OKUL ÖNCESİ EĞİTİM KURUMLARININ DIŞ MEKANLARININ ÇOCUKLARI DİNLEYEREK OLUŞTURULMASININ ÖNEMİ

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Abstract:

In previous years, there was a common perception among researchers to include children as objects rather than subjects of the research. This perception was basically based on children's verbal expressions of themselves, adults excessive control over children, adults desire to feel the power, the consent process to participate children into research, and lack of creative, innovative, and non-verbal communication methods. Fortunately, this perception has replaced with a new method which give children more opportunities to express themselves. Several innovative data gathering methods were added to the traditional ones or adaptation of some traditional ones including observation and interview has occurred. These innovative methods provide researchers to collect data with children rather than from children. Mosaic approach is one of the creative and innovative approaches. This approach includes observation, interview, photography, magic carpet, touring, drawing, and mapping as methods to make children actively participate into research. This review highlights the importance and benefits of children's participation to research through participatory research methods. In particular, the researcher emphasized the necessity for conducting participatory research investigating children's immediate outdoor environment in early childhood centers.

Keywords: Participatory Research Methods, Mosaic Approach, Early Childhood Education.

Öz:

Geçmiş yıllarda, araştırmacılar arasındaki ortak algı, çocukları araştırmanın öznesi olarak kabul etmek yerine, nesnesi olarak çalışmaya dahil etmekti. Bu algı çoğu zaman çocukların kendilerini ifade etme konusundaki yetersizlikleri, yetişkinlerin çocuklar üzerindeki aşırı kontrolü, yetişkinlerin gücü kendilerinde hissetme arzuları, çocukları araştırmalara dahil etmek için izin sürecinin zahmetli olması, veya çocuklara uygun yenilikçi, yaratıcı ve konuşmaya dayalı olmayan bir iletişim metodunun bulunmamasından kaynaklanıyordu. Neyse ki, geçmişteki bu algı günümüzde yerini çocukların kendilerini en iyi şekilde ifade edebilecek yetkinlikte olduğu algısına bırakmıştır. Geçmişten günümüze doğru ilerledikçe, çocuklarla yapılan çalışmalarda kullanılan gözlem ve görüşme gibi geleneksel veri toplama metotlarına, yenilikçi metotlar da eklenmiştir. Bu metotlar araştırmacılara çocuklardan veri toplamak yerine, çocukların da araştırma sürecine katılımını sağlama olanağı sunmuştur. Mozaik yaklaşım, bu yaratıcı ve yenilikçi metotlardan biridir. Bu yaklaşım gözlem, görüşme, kamera kullanımı, sihirli halı, tur/gezi, çizim, haritalama gibi çocukların aktif katılımını sağlayan metotları içermektedir. Bu çalışmada, katılımcı araştırma metotlarının çocuklarla yapılan çalışmalardaki önemi ve yararları vurgulanmaktadır. Özellikle çocukların zamanlarının büyük kısmını geçirdiği okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarındaki açık oyun alanlarının katılımcı araştırma metotları ile incelenmesinin eksikliği ve gerekliliği öne çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Katılımcı Araştırma Yöntemleri, Mozaik Yaklaşımı, Okul Öncesi Eğitim.

INTRODUCTION

In previous years, since there were many obstacles for children to actively participate in the research process, children were not considered as an important part of the research (Mayall, 2002). One of the reasons why children were not accepted as an important part of the research might be related with unreliable data coming from them based on their incapability to express themselves verbally (Hill, 2006). Many other obstacles might be adults' desire to keep their powerful position (Hill, 2006) in conjunction with their excessive control over children (Moss, 2002), and their underestimation of children's potential (Hill, 2006).

From another perspective, Berrick, Frash, and Fox (2000) reflected their ideas about the reasons why children did not participate into the previous research actively as difficulty of getting consent from parents to make their children participate into a research. Furthermore, Bruce (1996) mentioned about the adults' way of communication with young children as another problem. In parallel to his view, Purves and Selleck (1999) indicated that adults might have difficulties to find a new way of communication with young children; in fact they might challenge to find any creative or non-verbal methods to gather some information about children's perceptions as well as their experiences. According to Barker and Weller (2003), all those mentioned obstacles created a common perception among researchers to regard children as objects for doing research on them (Baker & Weller, 2003).

Fortunately, those views about research with children has been dramatically changed over the last few years and children have begun to be seen as skillful as well as valuable (Clark, 2005). This change brought about new 'participatory' research techniques (Hill, 2005; O'Kane, 2000), including the adjustment of traditional research ones, such as observation or interviews to elicit the ideas of children (Punch, 2002a). Several researchers regarded using those participatory technics as the beginning for gathering data *with* children instead of *from* children (Coad & Lewis, 2004; Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller, 2005; Mayall, 2000; O'Kane, 2000). Malaguzzi (1998), reflected the underlying idea of increasing the use of those participatory techniques by indicating that children's own experiences could be best inferred by their voice rather than any adults'; so the main issue for researchers, was to be careful and make an efforts for hearing those voices of children.

With the idea of hearing children's voices as well as the increase of studies related to children's participation have brought about different use of terms and comprehensions (Morrow, 2000; Clark, Kjorholt, & Moss, 2005). However, there has been an agreement among the researchers in terms of using some common words. "Listening" was the foremost word among those terms and it regarded as a process including hearing, interpreting, as well as decision making or meaning-making (Clark, 2005). Moreover, listening has not just preoccupied with the spoken world. It is an essential part of involving into children's daily experiences and meaning-making process with them (Clark, 2005). Those definitions of listening show us that it is an active as well as dynamic process bringing children and

adults together to make decisions through discussion. In addition, it offers children many non-verbal ways of communication to express themselves (Clark, 2005).

The reasons why the researchers have begun to concentrate on 'listening' underlie the idea that both listening and participating are interconnected words; in fact, 'listening' is a prior stage of participation (Clark, 2005). Many researchers' definitions of participation could be accepted as evidence for the close relationship between those two words. Miller (1997), for instance, defined participation as an active process that children and adults share the power equally. Further, Hill, Davis, Prout, and Tisdall (2004) referred participation again as a process giving many opportunities for children to participate into decision making in terms of the things impacting on their lives. The similarity of those two words' definitions might be thought as an index why they are used interchangeably.

After understanding the relationship between listening and participation, it could be continued with the positive outcomes of children's participation into the research. Bruce (2005) stated that participation is crucial since it offers children to make choices as well as reflecting their ideas. In addition, according to Roberts (2002), children's sense of self could be promoted through participation. Coad and Evans (2008) highlighted the importance of active role of children during the research including data gathering as well as data analysis. Similarly, Clark (2007) asserted that participatory research techniques are appropriate for young children since children always have opportunities for actively engage into the process, so their learning would get its share of positively. From extended perspective, Miller (1997) indicated that today's children who learn to involve in their early ages could more likely to become democratic citizens of the community in their future life. Maybin and Woodhead (2003) supported that view and underlined that when children democratically participate into the decisions concerning them as well as having respect for others' views or opinions beginning from very early ages, they could create great sensitivity of the community in their future life.

It is clear from aforementioned information that listening children or participating children into the research has been welcomed by educationalists because of its several positive consequences. However, there were different perspectives among the researchers in terms of using these participatory techniques. Punch (2002a) separated those different perspectives of researchers into three: while the first group of the researchers accepted children as the same with adults and used the same methods for both, the second group of them accepted children precisely different from adults and used participant observation method to investigate or understand their perceptions. The third group of the researchers accepted children as very similar to adults, but with different proficiencies; therefore they have created burgeoning body of creative and innovative methods to study with children.

In the following part, the researcher explained one of the participatory research approaches, Mosaic approach, which is basically used with preschool children. In fact, the focus is what 'Mosaic approach is as one of the methods that could be promoted by the researchers in third group which is mentioned above.

1. THE MOSAIC APPROACH: ADOPTING PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH METHODS

The Mosaic approach, which has been launched by Clark and Moss (2001), is one of the innovative and creative methods for listening to young children. The name of it comes from multiple pieces of data coming through the use of a variety of data gathering tools to manifest the full picture at the end. In other words, each data gathering tool helps to constitute one piece of the full mosaic (Clark & Moss, 2001).

Analyzing the Mosaic approach more closely provides us to see it has two stages. In the first stage multiple data gathering tools are used to understand children's perspectives, and those set of data are interpreted or discussed with children, their parents, and practitioners within the next stage (Clark, 2001). In other words, all the data gathered from children with their active participation into the process could be enriched with the data obtained by parents as well as practitioners to create discussion atmosphere between children and adults. Therefore, it is clear that in addition to children's active participation into the data gathering process, adults' role on listening to young children cannot be ignored in the framework of Mosaic approach. Clark (2001) pointed out that listening to young children cannot reach its aim without parents' and practitioners' invaluable contributions to the process. In essence, the adults including both parents as well as practitioners should be also active, but their initial role during the process of listening to young children is just giving effort to comprehend or to interpret what children say (Clark, 2001).

The Mosaic approach provides children with many opportunities to have an active role on meaning-making by investigating meanings not only with researchers but also with their peers (Clark, 2010). Clark and Statham (2005) listed different ways of listening to young children under the framework of Mosaic approach as observation, drawing, using cameras to take photographs, making books, touring, mapping, magic carpet, and interviewing with adults. According to Clark (2010), all these methods might be accepted as visual or kinesthetic data gathering tools which are age appropriate for young children.

Clark (2010) also highlighted that the Mosaic approach is flexible; in fact, it welcomes many other data gathering methods appropriate for children considering their interests as well as the intent of the research. In parallel with Clark's (2010) idea, O'Kane (2000) stated that since each child has different abilities, proficiencies, and preferences, gathering the data through various and flexible methods would be appropriate to tackle with individual differences. Therefore, using different tools enhances researchers to discover either children's strengths or deficiencies based on their individual differences (Clark, 2007).

2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH

The idea of adopting new methods for increasing children's participation into the research based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In fact, children's rights are accepted as valid in an international arena as an equal with human rights (Clark, 2007). Before expressing the ideas about that first principle, it could be seen what United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (1989) included:

"The governments of all countries should assure that a child who is capable of forming his or her own views should have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting that child, and that the views of that child should be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" *(Article 12)*.

"The child has the right to the freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice" *(Article 13)*.

Analyzing those quotations in detail beginning from the first one, it could be said that children should have the right to actively express themselves when anyone wants to learn anything about them (Clark, 2001). The idea of children's active involvement into research as their right lead to accepting children as social actors of their own lives (Kellet & Ding, 2004; Mautner, 1997). In other words, since young children have a great potential to tell us about their daily experiences, they could be accepted as the experts of their lives (Langsted, 1994). Malaguzzi (1998) supported those views by emphasizing that the merely way to learn anything related to children's lives or their routines could be listening to their voices. According to Tolfree and Woodhead (1999), this principle provided us to realize that adults cannot be as successful as children to reflect their ideas from the viewpoint of children. Those views could be considered in the context of 'sociology of childhood' or 'new social studies of childhood which the researchers have been exploring children's perspectives in terms of various aspects of their lives (James & Prout, 1997; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Mayall, 2002).

A close look into the second quotation, on the other hand, provides us to meet with the pedagogical framework developed by Malaguzzi in the region of Reggio Emilia, Italy. According to Malaguzzi, a child is strong, active, as well as capable of reflecting himself/ herself by means of 'hundred languages of children' (Edwards, Gandini, & Foreman, 1998).

To sum up, it could be understood from those two quotations that children have right to reflect their views about the issues that directly concern them through using any way that they are free to select. In addition, these views at the end bring us to see children as skillful co-workers or co-researchers as well as meaning-makers together with the adults (Clark, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, it could be inferred from above discussion that learning could be accepted as collaborative work instead of being isolated; in fact, not only children but also adults actively participate into the meaning making process (Bruner, 1985; Clark & Statham, 2005).

3. PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH METHODS: A CLOSER LOOK TO THE TOOLS USING IN THE FRAMEWORK OF MOSAIC APPROACH

3.1. Observation

Observation has been used in the fields of developmental psychology (Hill, 1997) and early childhood education (Clark, 2005) as one of the research tools to obtain data from young children in previous research with young children. According to Dunn (2005), observation

is so appropriate for young children since children are not so competent to recognize that somebody observes them in their young ages. Moreover, Paley (1981; 1997) indicated that observation is a beneficial starting point to make a research with young children since it provides researchers to understand children's competencies, interests, and needs. Therefore, as an initial point or as a first piece of the mosaic, researchers use one of the traditional data gathering method namely, observation in the scope of Mosaic approach (Clark, 2001).

3.2. Interview

Interview is another usual data gathering method for this approach and it is used for gathering more informal data from children through individual interview or group conversations. Child-conferencing which is a structured interview procedure is an adopted way of traditional interview method under the framework of the Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001).

3.3. Photography

Photography is used as one of the participatory research tools providing opportunities for young children to express themselves visually rather than verbally (Dockett & Simpson, 2003). This participatory method could be used in different ways in the framework of the Mosaic approach. For instance, children can prepare books either individually or collaboratively by using the photographs they took. Using photography method also gives opportunities to a child to take photographs during touring of their environment. Then, that child might use those photographs for making maps (Clark & Moss, 2005).

The photographs taken by children could also be used during interviews with children. Using photographs would help researchers to start the interview and continue the process easily. When children see the photographs taken by themselves they start talking to the researcher and reflect their ideas (Clark, 2001). According to Newman, Woodcock, and Dunham (2006), since photography is not a classic way of conversation, it enhances researchers to obtain more information from the participants

3.4. Touring

According to Clark (2001) another method used in the Mosaic approach is touring. In this method, children are guides for adults to discover the environment around. In fact, children introduce their familiar environment to an unfamiliar adult. During the process, both children and adults could take photographs of whatever they want. Also, the conversation between adults and children is recorded through a tape recorder. This method was originally used by Hart (1997) in his study with non-literate adults to understand their local knowledge.

3.5. Mapping

Mapping could be used as a research method right after the process of touring. In this method, children use the documents gained during touring. Also, they could add their individual drawings in conjunction with the comments written by adults on them (Clark &

Moss, 2005). This method enhances visible documentation of children and provides to begin conversation among children, researchers and other adults (Clark, 2001).

3.6. Magic Carpet

As a further tool for ongoing conversation with children "the magic carpet" might be used. In this method, photographs taken either by children or researcher could be presented in a slide-show to children in small groups by using lap top or to the whole class by using projector (Clark, 2001).

3.7. Drawings

Drawing is used with the narratives and interpretations to understand children's views and ideas (Clark, 2005a, 2005b; Dockett & Perry, 2005; Punch, 2002a; Veale, 2005). In fact, children's drawings with the attached narratives that they express what they draw were interpreted by the researchers to understand their views and ideas.

To sum up, it is understood by aforementioned information that both traditional data gathering methods such as observation or interview and participatory research methods including, photography, touring, drawing, and mapping could be unified under the root of Mosaic approach.

4. CHILDREN'S OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS IN THEIR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

The value of children's outdoor play has been understood, in particular, its contribution to children's development and overall well-being (Bilton, 2002; Frost, 2006; Rivkin, 1998; Weinstein & David, 1987; Ouvry, 2003). However, there were some barriers against the increasing value of outdoor play. These barriers were determined as urbanization, pollution, traffic problems, technology, and parents' excessive control over their children (Kernan, 2007). In today's world, many children spend most of their daytime in early childhood centers. Therefore, children's places for play are highly dependent on the opportunities of their early childhood centers (Kapmann, 2004). According to Goodenough (2003), these situation moved children from informal outdoor environments to more formal ones, like school playgrounds.

According to Malone and Tranter (2003) school playgrounds in early childhood centers are one of the limited outdoor places where children can interact with each other as well as nature. Specifically, school playgrounds are very important places for children since they offer variety of opportunities for them to engage in (Ghaziani, 2008). Moreover, Titman (1994) regarded school playgrounds as important places which reflect the philosophy of schools; therefore children's attitudes as well as behaviors might be affected by the attributes of such environments (Evans, 1996; Johnson, 2000). Several studies show that children's learning, attitudes and behaviors are positively affected by well-designed and sophisticated school playgrounds (Young, 1990; Moore & Wong, 1997).

Several researchers indicated that since school playgrounds are outdoor spaces where children freely and spontaneously act, they should be unstructured or manipulable environments offering children with variety of facilities including natural and imaginative ones (Fjortoft & Sageie, 2000; White & Stoecklin, 1998). In addition, those places should be attractive enough to draw children's attention as well as offer many play opportunities for them to have fun, learn, and develop (Evans & Pellegrini, 1997; Lambert, 1999; Malone & Tranter, 2003). Some researchers indicated the negative impacts of unattractive school playgrounds, which offer very few play opportunities for children, on children's learning and way of revealing their potentials (Earthman, 1997; Maxwell, 2000). On the other hand, others highlighted the positive effects of stimulating and safe school playgrounds where rich materials are included (Lackney, 1998). According to Ghaziani (2008), an attractive well-designed school environment has many impacts on children's learning as well as their well-being (Ghaziani, 2008).

However, as important places for children, school grounds are not mentioned as so attractive and qualified to draw children's attention and to meet their needs (Ghaziani, 2008). In the literature, several researchers explained the reasons why those kinds of environments are not so attractive for children. According to Rasmussen (2004), adults decide the design of the school grounds instead of children who are the real users of such environment. In fact, school grounds are designed only by adults, including school administrators, architects, or teachers while children, the real users of such environments, are not given any opportunities to indicate their ideas or views about them (Ghaziani, 2008).

5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

One of the idea that could be accepted as one of the underpinning of this research is related to the philosophy of Reggio Emilia approach which, accept both indoor and outdoor environment as "third teacher" for children's learning (Gandini, 1998). Also, in accordance with the scope of this research, Reggio Emilia approach accepts a child as a "rich child" who is both strong and skillful (Rinaldi, 2001). As a result, one of the reasons that make this research significant is associated with the connecting the existing situation, lack of children's participation into the design of their school playgrounds, with one of the common educational approaches in early childhood education field.

Another reason that makes this study significant could be associated with the results of the research conducted by Francis and Lorenzo (2002). These researchers indicated that children's efficient use of outdoor environments can increase if they participate into the design process of such environments. Therefore, it will be meaningful to make children participate into the design of their own school playgrounds in order to increase the efficient use of those places by children.

Another reason motivating the researcher to prepare this review is hidden in the following quotes from Rasmussen' study (2004): "We are not allowed to be there" and "The small children are not allowed to go over there".

Those two quotations from the voices of children affected the researcher to prepare such a review since they showed that school playgrounds are places created by adults for children. In fact, instead of children, adults decide the design of school playgrounds and separate whole environment into different areas for children. Therefore, it will be valuable to prepare the current review to understand the importance of giving opportunities for children to design their own playgrounds as a whole place by offering each child to be an active user of all areas of the environment.

However, although there is a rich literature about well-designed outdoor environments for children (Ghaziani, 2008; Young, 1990; Moore & Wong, 1997), there is a scarcity of research investigating young children's perceptions of their playgrounds through the use of participatory research techniques (Blatchford, Creeser, & Mooney, 1990; Clark, 2005; Clark, 2007; Clark, McQuail & Moss, 2003; Pearce & Bailey, 2011). What is more, participating children into the design of their environment might have multifaceted educational as well as methodological implications.

Specifically, all three groups of participants of the participatory research, including children, parents, and researchers, would get their share positively at the end of the study. For instance, since children's many skills such as taking photographs, interpreting, or communicating would be promoted during the research process, their self-confidence as well as self-identity would increase (Bartlett, 1999; Lansdown, 1995). In addition, children have opportunities to look back their collected documents; they could make further comments about their experiences or ideas. Children could also comprehend that they could have a role as co-researchers and experts of their own lives or experiences even at very young ages (Burke, 2005).

In addition, including the second and third groups of the participants namely, parents and practitioners into the research process would provide them with many opportunities to understand their children's preferences in outdoor environment centers (Clark, 2001; 2005) Specifically, using variety of data gathering methods considering the framework of Mosaic approach would be different and innovative way for adults to understand their children's perspectives in terms of their preferences and experiences in outdoor environment (Clark, 2005) as well as the quality of education in their school (Malone and Tranter, 2003).

On the other hand, arranging school playgrounds with children's participation may encourage practitioners to use those outdoor spaces as a part of the curriculum of the center (Malone & Tranter, 2003). From a more general viewpoint, knowing children's perspectives as well as the way of their use of outdoor environment of the centers might be an opportunity for the authors of the institution in terms of future planning or re-designing of the outdoor environment. Furthermore, investigating children's outdoor environments through using the participatory research tools might have many opportunities for children to voice themselves to a wider community (Clark, Moss, & Kjørholt, 2005).

Additionally, as a methodological implication, the visual tools for gathering data might help children to make sense of their experiences in a detailed way (Burke, 2005). Moreover,

those visual techniques could be the mirror of children's limited opportunities in their everyday play environments (Burke, 2005).

All information given above related to the significance as well as multiple implications of the current research motivate the researcher to prepare this review and to emphasize the importance of making children actively involve into the design of their outdoor play environment.

6. RELATED LITERATURE

Brooker (2002) indicated that since there is a belief that children are not so competent to understand adults' perceptions, it would be more meaningful to find some ways to understand their perspectives about their own lives through listening their voices. Specifically, children's participation in the decision-making processes of creating a new playground or making some alterations in their existing playgrounds are the innovative topics to be investigated (Dierkx, 2003).

Considering the above ideas, there are many studies emphasizing children's competence to innovatively reflect their perception on their early childhood centers which is familiar place for them (Clark & Moss, 2001; Clark, Moss, & Kjorholt, 2005; Cousins, 1999; Miller, 1997). In particular, children's participation in designing and planning of their preschools or playgrounds have been investigated in an international level by the practitioners both in UK (Clark, 2004; Clark, 2005) and in Iceland (Einarsdottir, 2005a; Einarsdottir, 2005b; Einarsdottir, 2007).

Taking a closer look to the related literature, it would be meaningful to begin with the studies that the Mosaic approach is purely used. The first study 'Listening to young children' using Mosaic approach was conducted by Clark and Moss (2001). The participants of that research were children under five years old. The purpose of the researchers was to understand children's views about a set of services provided for them at their preschool center. The researchers realized that allocating visual, verbal and kinesthetic data gathering tools is important since it provides a sensitive way to understand children's perspectives from their viewpoints (Clark & Moss, 2001). Another study namely, "Spaces to Play" was conducted by Clark and Moss (2005) to gain insight of young children regarding the redesign of their outdoor play environments. They also concentrated on checking the appropriateness of some new methods to gather data from children as young as three and four year old under the framework of Mosaic approach as well as how young children's perspectives can be used as a starting point to change their play environment. "Living Spaces" is another research conducted by Clark (2008; 2010). In this study researcher aimed to discover new spaces for children's early childhood centers based on their own experiences.

Those three projects mentioned above basically included the different tools of the Mosaic approach such as drawing, child-conferencing, photography, touring, observation, and interview. For instance, some researchers focused on children's behaviors in playgrounds using observation techniques (Baines & Blatchford, 2009; Marron, 2008; Thomson, 2007). Some others focused on using photography as a research method with children. Specifically, the several researchers asked young children to take photographs important for them in their

early childhood settings and made conversations about those photographs (Burke, 2005; Clark, 2005a; Clark & Moss, 2001; Dockett & Perry, 2005; Einarsdottir, 2005a; Rasmussen, 1999; Rasmussen & Smidt, 2002). For instance, Dockett and Perry (2005) separated children in small groups of two or three children and asked them to take photographs of their school. After each group took the photographs, a classroom book with some narratives reflecting children's comments was created. Moreover, Burke (2005) conducted a study with children aged between 7-11 years to understand their own play area preferences through using photography method. The result of her study clearly showed that visual data gathering methods would be successful to understand children's perspectives. Results also showed that children are the experts of their own lives to make changes in it as an enjoyable way (Burke, 2005). Greenfield (2004) also regarded photography as wonderful way to understand children's perspectives about their playground design. She indicated that children are capable of proposing some alterations and additions to their playgrounds. Also, she stated that photography, as a valuable way for listening to children, leads to informal conversation with children. In another project, 'Children's Institutionalized Childhood and Everyday Life' Rasmussen and Smidt (2002) asked 5-12 year-old children to take photographs of places important for them through using disposable cameras. Eighty eight children coming from thirteen different areas of Denmark are given a week for taking photographs, then they talked about what happens in these pictures with the researcher. Different form photography method, several researchers concentrated on another method which is art-based, drawing. For instance, Haney, Russeo, and Bebell (2004) used drawing method to understand children's views of their school and their classroom settings. Oskarsdottir (2006) also used drawing as a method to obtain children's insights about their understanding of the body. Several other researchers used drawing to understand the impacts of one year of school experience on children (Dockett & Perry, 2004; Einarsdottir, 2005b). For example, Dierkx's (2003) study suggest that children could achieve to supply the planning process of a new school environment by involving in the process actively with their visual products such as drawings or plans.

Many researchers used interview as a research tool with young children (Formosinho & Araujo, 2004; Formosinho & Lino, 2001). As another participatory tool child-conferencing was preferred by many researchers to elicit children's perspectives. To demonstrate, 'Neighbourhood Structure, Urban Quality and Children's Everyday Life' is a project investigated by Agervig, Jensen, and Jorgensen (2001) to understand children's perspectives about their everyday lives in different four areas. Sixty children participated in this research. As a research tool, the researchers used child-conferencing, in other words walking interviews to gather children's perceptions. During the walking interview, the researcher asks questions to children and children mentions about their experiences while touring an environment such as school building, school ground, or playground. As a result, children mostly concentrated on places, buildings, play, as well as their daily experiences.

Investigating the literature related to children's outdoor environments in Turkey convince us to understand the scarcity of the related literature and the contradictory situation

of the research about particular topic. The reason about the contradiction is because studies investigated children's outdoor environments are mostly conducted in the field of landscape architecture. In fact, most of the research about children's outdoor environments are basically investigated by landscape architectures by concentrating on quality issues such as safety of a playground, the equipment that playgrounds have (Açık, Gülbayrak, & Turacı-Çelik, 2004; Akkulah, 2008; Özgüç, 1998; Yılmaz & Bulut, 2002; Yılmaz & Bulut, 2007) and designing and planning principles (Özdemir & Çorakçı, 2011; Yılmaz & Bulut, 2002). The common characteristics of most of all those research is that the researches ignored children's participation during the data collecting process. In fact, among all researches mentioned above, the only one that the researchers used participatory research techniques was Özdemir and Çorakçı's (2011) study. However, they only conducted the study with students in primary school and high school students. Although the researchers said that they used participatory research method with students and practitioners, they just used observation and interview methods with both groups.

Related research also indicated the existing status of school playgrounds, particularly investigating the physical characteristics of the environment. For instance, Başar (2000) explored thirty six primary schools' outdoor facilities and found that the outdoor environments of the schools are not sufficiently contribute to children's learning because of inappropriate arrangements as well as insufficient green-areas. Moreover, Gül and Küçük (2001) investigated the existing status of open green environments in Isparta including school playgrounds and public playgrounds. The results of the research reflected that those outdoor environments actively used by children are covered with inappropriate materials for children such as concrete and asphalt grounds. The results also showed that those outdoor areas of children were not appropriately arranged to support children's physical and cognitive development.

On the other hand, the limited study exploring children's playgrounds could be easily realized just after the scanning the topic in the early childhood education literature in Turkey. Those few studies in the literature mainly focused on either exploring children's behaviors or the qualities of playgrounds of their early childhood centers (Cevher-Kalburan, 2014; Çok, Artar, & Demir, 2004; Bağlı, 1996; Olgan & Kahriman-Öztürk, 2011). In addition to the lack of research in this issue in early childhood field, those existing research was conducted by the researchers regardless of children's participation.

DISCUSSION

The Mosaic approach introduced and discussed in this paper showed that adults have responsibilities to listen children's ideas and should take their interests and decisions into account to make changes in their lives (Einarsdottir, 2012). Similarly, Clark (2007) also emphasized the significant roles of adults to take children's views and decisions about their own lives into account. In fact, she emphasized that children will never manage the adults' ways of seeing the world, but adult can achieve to understand the world from the eyes of

children through the use of participatory research methods (Clark, 2007). Moreover, this review also showed that it is possible for adults including educators and parents to find effective ways to engage and communicate with young children (Clark & Statham, 2005).

Although children's contributions can be varied, this paper basically focused on the importance of listening children's voices in the planning of their immediate environments in their early childhood centers. With regard to the related literature, while the value of children's participation into the design of their immediate outdoor environments has been understood by the researchers, the existing status of investigating children's outdoor environments, in particular school grounds in Turkey, did not sufficiently quest what could be done for improving existing outdoor environments of children through their active participation (Başar, 2000; Gül & Küçük, 2001; Kelkit & Özel, 2003; Özdemir ve Yılmaz, 2008; Özdemir & Çorakcı, 2011).

According to several researchers (i.e., Arlemalm-Hagser, 2012; Chancellor & Cevher-Kalburan, 2014), it is important for children to understand they can take part in decision making processes that affect their own lives as well as be actors who can change something in the society they live in. Therefore, future research can be focus on the factors affecting children's participation into the research. In particular, the researchers might determine the barriers against children's active participation into the design process of their immediate school grounds as well as how to deal with these barriers in order to increase the contribution of such environments to children's learning and development. Moreover, future research that will include children's participation into the plan or design of their immediate outdoor environment in Turkish context would enrich the related literature.

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