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**PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL
LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN TURKEY IN THE CONTEXT OF FREE
AND PLANNED PLAY**

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DEDICATION

To my late beloved father, Kadir Karaoglu, who always encouraged me to study and learn.

I faced the most sorrowful challenge in my life during my PhD as my beloved father passed away on 28 April 2015. But, his loving support allowed me to undertake my PhD, and his memory has continued to inspire me to the completion of this thesis.

I wish you were here to see my accomplishments, and I hope you would be proud.
Love you forever.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the pre-school teachers' beliefs in Turkey about social emotional learning and development (SELD) in children's freely chosen and planned play activities by using video recordings and interviews with the teachers. Beginning with psychological and pedagogical perspectives, this research considers the pedagogical theories, which are underpinned by psychological aspects of play. This multiple case study explored the understandings of four teachers from two different schools in different cities in Turkey (Ankara and Osmaniye). The data was collected twice in one academic year through videotapes and interviews, once at the beginning of term and once at the end of term, to understand how social and emotional development (SED) in the curriculum is implemented in practice. Thematic analysis has been used to analyse data sets. The findings indicate that there were three main challenges and these were categorised as challenges of understanding, challenges of playful pedagogy and challenges of planning and curriculum, and finally challenges of assessment and teachers' roles. All of these main issues were highlighted and discussed in relation to the relevant literature. The teachers in this study used playful pedagogical approaches with children to understand and support their SELD during school activities. However, the SED area in the Turkish preschool curriculum shows some gaps and inconsistencies, which were a challenge for the teachers because the targets are unclear and not helpful for practice. It was found that the teachers created their own ways to develop children's SELD in their play, whilst agreeing that the Turkish curriculum goals of SED are problematic in practice.

In regard to the challenges and teachers' recommendations that this study suggests, there must be extra supportive documents or in-service education about SELD for early years practitioners. In addition, the curriculum must be improved to include more SED areas and targets, not only for practice but also for teachers' understandings.

To my beloved father, Kadir Karaoglu...

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Rationale of Research

This study investigates the relationship between play and social-emotional learning and development (SELD) in the Turkish early childhood education (ECE) system. Specifically, the concept of the association between social-emotional aspects of development and learning will be explored through free and structured play. Play has many benefits for children and it is an important tool for children's learning in the ECE. Play provides children with an environment where they can make sense of and explore their social, emotional and personal worlds. Play is seen as contributing to all developmental areas of children and is such a natural activity for children that it helps their learning (Wood and Bennett, 2000).

Social and emotional development (SED) is a significant element in ECE. SED is necessary for children to overcome emotional and behavioural problems, to increase social competence and to make children effective learners in order to increase their academic achievements (Humphrey, 2013). Supporting SED in the early years is necessary in order for the children to become more socialised, learn to manage their feelings and emotions, make independent decisions, communicate with others, and for academic success. Early years settings are an optimal place to provide for SED, and therefore, teachers have a responsibility to provide intentional teaching and learning opportunities. Hence, in my research, I intend to examine teachers' understandings of not only social emotional development but also social emotional learning (SEL) in play contexts in different early years settings, and how the teachers provide children with occasions to support social emotional learning and development through play. The study also takes into account the specific socio-cultural and policy context in Turkey.

Before explaining the main purposes of the proposed research, it is essential to promote the cultural background in which this study takes place. Therefore, I will briefly explain the Turkish ECE to provide some context and background for this study.

1.2. The Turkish Education System and ECE

All stages of education are operated by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey. According to Turkish national education regulations, from 1930 to 2012, children start primary school at age 7 (Celik and Gundogdu, 2007) and continue to secondary and high school. Pre-school, preceding primary school, was not compulsory before 2012, when the Ministry of National Education legislated that pre-school education would be compulsory. However, the government reformulated the compulsory educational policy to a 4+4+4 system (4 years for primary school, 4 years for secondary school and 4 years for high school) in 2013, and therefore pre-school education has reverted to being non-compulsory. According to the new system, children start their primary school at 6 years of age, but there are no preparatory classes such as pre-school or nursery classes. If parents want to send their children to pre-school, there are options for ECE. ECE in Turkey is operated by the Ministry of National Education and is provided by individualised organisations such as education and care pre-schools, nursery classes for children's education and care, crèches, day nurseries, and colleges. These institutions operate on a full-time or part-time basis. Parents must pay to register their child for pre-school and the prices depend on the school's status, as some of the institutions are fully private, while others are semi-private.

Turkish early years professionals are still working on ways to improve the curriculum in order for children to benefit more from their ECE. Additionally, to become a pre-school teacher in Turkey, it is necessary to graduate from a related undergraduate programme such as Pre-school Teaching. The programme takes four years and includes modules of child development, child psychology, child-care, mother and child health, pedagogy and practice sessions. There are also teaching practice sessions, which are important to the implication of curriculum in the early years settings.

The first pre-school education curriculum document in Turkey was published in 1994, and it has been revised and improved in 2002, 2006 and 2013. The Turkish preschool education programme sets the standards for learning, development and care of children aged 3 - 5 years. The programme covers five areas of development in the following domains: cognitive, physical, communication and language, social and emotional, and self-care. Educators have set targets that children must meet in each of these five

domains at the end of preschool education. For example, in the social and emotional development area, children must be able to express themselves and should be able to display this through having the ability to say their own name and age, and describe their physical and emotional characteristics. The ECE system is based on acquisitions and indicators in the curriculum. Teachers must provide an environment for children to achieve these curriculum goals (MEB, 2006). However, they struggle to understand what appropriate activities and what kind of environment they should provide in order for the children to reach these goals, as they have to concentrate on curriculum implementation (Kandir et al., 2002). In the latest curriculum update in 2013, the policy makers advised that the 'Project Approach' must be put into the curriculum; that is, combined activities for all developmental areas, as opposed to separate activities for each (MEB, 2013). Before this update, teachers were arranging and planning separate activities for different developmental areas, which proved to be very time-consuming with a great deal of time wasted between activities so that children became distracted while waiting for the teacher to prepare the next activity. The activities provided during the transitions were not appropriate. There is not only a gap in the area of SED, but also other developmental areas in the curriculum and practice. However, the research focuses specifically on SED, from the perspectives of teachers, incorporating both learning and development (SELD).

1.3. Aim of the Study and Research Questions

The primary target of this study is to investigate how Turkish pre-school teachers understand SELD in the context of children's free and structured play. [The Turkish preschools work for 3-5 years old children, however in this research I worked with 5 years old children.](#) The current research will be underpinned by contemporary pedagogical theories to explore teachers' thoughts and practices regarding curriculum implementation, and aims to be a starting point for understanding teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards SELD in Turkey. The main framework of the purpose of the study will be explained in-depth in the literature review section. This qualitative, multiple case study research examines teachers' beliefs and perceptions in order to obtain a comprehensible perspective on the current curriculum implementation and teachers' practice on SELD in the context of play. The findings of this research may be used to

communicate with stakeholders and perhaps aid to improve SELD as an integral part of ECE in Turkey.

In line with the background and assumptions, the study aimed to address the following questions:

1. How do pre-school teachers in Turkey understand SELD in the context of play?
2. How do teachers plan for play in their settings, to incorporate SELD experiences?
3. How do teachers interpret SELD through their assessment practices?

1.4. Structure of the Thesis

This research consists of seven chapters. This first chapter, the Introduction, provides a brief overview of the Turkish Education System and ECE, and the Turkish Pre-school curriculum. In this way, it introduces a general understanding of the cultural context of this study and research questions. Also, this chapter gives an overview of the rationale of this study and to introduce the thesis.

Secondly, the Literature Review Chapter draws attention to the gaps in the relevant literature, psychological and pedagogical frameworks of SELD and play, the place of playful pedagogy in early years for promoting SELD, the issues and importance of SELD in global ECE contexts and in Turkey, and educators' issues and roles in SELD. The social emotional and personal developmental area in the Turkish curriculum will be expanded. In addition, the importance of teachers' beliefs and thinking about SELD in the early years setting will be considered with regards to their practice. The assumptions and purposes of the research questions are given at the end of the Literature Review Chapter.

The third chapter, Methodology, presents a short overview of my position as a researcher, the ontological and epistemological stance of the study, the research design, sampling procedure, data collection process and methods for data gathering, the data organisation and analysis process, and ethical considerations. It also considers how I developed the methods and how I tried to overcome the issues that I faced during the data collection process. Also, there is a rationale for splitting the findings between following two chapters.

The fourth and fifth chapters present the findings of this research. The fourth chapter, Findings Part 1, begins with reminding the reader of the process of data collection and analysis of Data Set 1 and 2, which consists of the data gathered from the teachers in Osmaniye. The fifth chapter, Findings Part 2, continues with results of Data Set 1 and 2, from the teachers in Ankara. All the teachers' interview schedules are explained in-depth and presented clearly with relevant tables and figures.

The sixth chapter is the Discussion chapter. I discussed the significance of the data with the relevant context of literature. This chapter brings together the main results from the Findings chapters and research questions. I divided them into three consideration points; challenges of understanding, challenges of planning, curriculum and playful pedagogy, and challenges of assessment and teachers' roles in SELD in the context of play. Those three perspectives are answers to the research questions and they are discussed in accordance with the relevant literature.

The last chapter is the Conclusion. It provides a summary of this research, showing a chart of core themes and the theory of research. It also addresses the limitations in this study, provides suggestions for further studies, and finally concludes with a reflection of this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The research explores the understandings of Turkish pre-school teachers about social emotional development and learning (SELD) in the context of play, both freely chosen and adult initiated play. The focus of the literature review is to provide a context for the research and to highlight gaps in the literature that this research addresses. To fulfil and to examine the concerns, this chapter presents the theoretical background of SELD and the importance of play in the early years. The role of play in promoting of SELD will be structured by psychological and pedagogical perspectives.

Negotiations about the concepts of SED and SEL were addressed by consolidating both terms within this literature review. It is broadly accepted that ‘development’ relates to biological and maturation processes in the early years, while ‘learning’ relates to outcomes from the external environment (Rose and Gilbert, 2018). There is a broad consensus that SED begins in the early years as children connect to people around them. Studies in the 1980s that have investigated children’s emotional development in different social contexts reveal that new-born and young children can express their emotions when they are happy, angry, sad, disgusted and surprised though their facial expressions, tone of their voice or through mimicking the adults around them (Ekman, 1973; Ganchow et al., 1983; Izard et al., 1980; Haviland and Lelwica, 1987). SED provides children with a sense of themselves, learning in different ways, developing empathy for others, managing strong emotions, regulating their own behaviours, establishing and sustaining relationships, resolving conflicts, gaining confidence and reaching goals (Mid-State Central Early Childhood Direction Centre, 2009). In addition, the relationship with siblings and peers provides children particular chances for “...learning self and other, and one that has considerable potential for affecting children’s well-being...” (Boer and Dunn, 1992; p. xiii). These emotions and competences are valuable for children to learn how to interact with people and with their social environment. The developmental stage of these abilities starts in the early childhood and proceeds throughout adolescence, affected by friendships and social context, including any interactions as well as planned programmes (Jones and Bouffard,

2012). At this point, I need to consider a short explanation of social emotional learning (SEL) for the purpose of this study.

On the other hand, SEL is the process through which children and adults obtain experience, understanding, behaviours and abilities to operate and become aware of their emotions, to target and reach and achieve positive goals, display attention for others, build and keep friendly relationships, make reliable judgements effectively (Joronen et al, 2011). In other words, children and adults might develop their abilities, manners and values essential to acquire social and emotional competence in the SEL process (Elias et al, 1997). A generally accepted description has been made by the Collaborative for Academic (CASEL): SEL is a process whereby children and adults gain and successfully “manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” Programmes for SEL are founded on the theory that the most effective learning is gained in “supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging and meaningful” (www.casel.org, 2014). Doubtless, SEL is not only for student’s general well-being but also it enables teachers to improve their emotional health. One of the benefits of SEL programmes is that they provide an organised and all-inclusive approach whereby basic social and emotional skills are encouraged and promoted for all, not only targeted for “at risk” groups. This improves the whole “emotional, social and academic climate” of the setting (Hoffman, 2009; p. 535). At this point, teachers can provide SEL as they will be able to provide their students with a positive classroom environment. In the process of promoting SEL, teachers have the ability to lessen the frustrations children feel, supporting them in meeting their needs in “positive, healthy ways” (p. 535). In this way, the teachers can also ensure that time spent in the classroom becomes more efficient, decreases behavioural issues, strengthens the character of children, and promotes academic ability (Lewskowicz, 2007). In order to support children’s academic skills, SELD has also been supported by some educational policies that determine appropriate goals or outcomes for young children.

The role of SELD is also reflected in national policy frameworks for early childhood education. For instance, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the government department liable for education in England, stated that promoting SED in

the early years helps “children to relate well to other children and adults, make friends and get on with others, feel secure and valued, explore and learn confidently and ultimately to feel good about themselves” (2008; p. 5). Learning social-emotional skills in the early years can significantly impact children’s self-understanding and their relationships with others. These two terms, SEL and SED are interwoven throughout the literature and therefore the abbreviation SELD will be used in this research to refer to both terms and how they are used in different situations. The importance of SELD is widely recognised, specifically its contribution to different aspects of children’s characteristics, abilities and their wider development. It is necessary for children to overcome emotional and behavioural problems, to increase social competence and, to help them become effective learners, which will then increase their future academic achievements (Humphrey, 2013). Dowling (2010) highlighted the need for attention in these areas in order to respect and nurture children’s positive personal and social traits, and motivation for learning during the early years of life. An environment that presents chances for “pro-social involvement and reinforces skilful participation” can enable children to acquire motivation as a social-emotional skill (Hawkins et al., 2004; p. 137). Being able to understand others’ feelings and difficulties begins with children becoming aware of their own feelings or emotions when interacting with others (Ebbeck and Waniganayake, 2010). However, the important points to emphasise here are that it is necessary to provide the context for these abilities to develop in early social and emotional education, and to support children to develop attitudes, behaviours and cognitions conducive to their well-being and competence in all areas of learning and development because of the close relationship among those areas (Elias et al, 1997). An effective way to promote children’s SELD in ECE settings is through play. The following section investigates how children gain benefits from play, both socially and emotionally.

Play has great value for establishing children’s SELD which is also required for school readiness. Canning (2007) analysed the processes children engage in when they are immersed in play experiences and advises practitioners working within the early childhood sector that play has an impactful role that helps to consolidate children’s SED. When children get involved in a play with peers, they develop their social skills such as making friendships, cooperation, and communication, cope with conflicts or

turn taking. According to psychological theorists (Vygotsky, 1978; Mead, 1934; Bateson, 1955) play is a fundamental process for gaining socialisation skills because it gives opportunities to children to learn about rules and standards during various interaction opportunities with their peers. These skills can be learnt from the educational context, and children can transfer them to their daily life (Frydenberg et al, 2012). The skills must be useful in the social life outside of school, otherwise, as Hawkins and colleagues discussed (2004), a child's involvement in any situation is insufficient to promote their attachment to others around them - individuals or groups. Instead, the child should also be provided with adequate skills that reward and encourage them to continue being social. Therefore, it is valuable to support children's social-emotional competencies in schools. In this way, educators can use a variety of different ways to support children's social-emotional education "such as classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, a supportive school climate, and involvement in community service" (Elias et al, 1997; p. 2). As I have shown briefly, psychologists and educational theorists have contributed to knowledge about SELD and its place in the curriculum. Therefore, to provide a strong foundation for this study, I have structured the main focus of literature on the psychological and pedagogical perspectives.

Psychological theories provide a lens to see aspects of children's SELD skills, enquire into how children build on these skills and transfer them into their lives. Psychological theories are helpful to understand children's SELD and evaluate the connection between play and SELD, particularly within educational environments such as pre-school. Although I have explained the purpose of using psychological theories, I also need to explain why I used pedagogical theories in my study, given the importance of pre-school settings for supporting children's development and learning.

Pedagogical theories inform this research by examining the social emotional aspects of children's learning in the ECE settings, specifically what children do with their peers, and how adults influence or structure the learning environment to create learning opportunities for SELD. Pedagogical theories therefore link with curriculum content or goals and the practices within the setting, which in turn reflect any national policy frameworks. It is important to underline that the main influence on ECE tends to be child development theories in terms of how these blend with pedagogical theories.

Taken together, these theories influence how adults understand children's learning and development, and what are appropriate activities and experiences in the setting. I will therefore be examining play and pedagogy in the promotion of SELD, because play is such an integral aspect of provision in many countries, as well as in Turkey. At this point, it is important to mention that play is not straightforward. There are the tensions about how play can be used to facilitate learning and development in early years contexts, as will be discussed later in this section.

In considering these theories, this research emphasises the pedagogical perspective, especially, the educational implementation of SELD. I will also provide the theoretical basis for teachers' practices in SELD and their understandings of pedagogy. The review then draws attention to teachers' knowledge and roles, how they come to understand SELD from the relevant literature in the pedagogical context, and the issues in the Turkish ECE System. The advantages and disadvantages of this system will be addressed and their implications for teaching practices will be discussed. The relevant national policies about SEL will then be discussed to show how the government supports SELD in ECE.

It is important for this study to show a sample of Turkish teachers' understandings about SELD in order to contribute to developing the SEL area in the Turkish curriculum but also improve a SEL programme for ECE in the Turkish education system. Hence, the understanding of the literature and the contexts will be provided, which fulfils another aim of this chapter. I divided my literature review into two parts to make a clear structure for two key themes. The first part is 'A. Play and SELD' which puts emphasis on psychological and pedagogical perspectives, and also contains a section on playful pedagogy in the context of the theories and contemporary studies discussed. The second part is 'B. SELD and Policy' which provides in-depth knowledge about how SELD can be supported by the policy frameworks in different countries and Turkey, and their implications for educators.

A. Play and SELD

Even though there is a potential for young children to experience emotional growth through play, a description of play is not easy, and separation between play and

different kinds of activities - which includes exploration, work-based or learning-targeted activities - is unclear (Hughes, 2010). SED is not only left to chance (for example, through child-initiated play), but is actively promoted as SEL, and actively supported through intentional teaching. However, a child's experience of learning and understanding her/his emotions or socialisation needs to be facilitated by an adult, as well as through peer interactions. For instance, in the Montessori perspective, multi-age grouping enables young children's sense of society to develop as older peers support their learning and as they watch them learn. This allows children to find their personal learning space. Montessori states that the role of education is to create in children a deep interest in outward activities where he would "give all his potential" (Montessori, 2007; p. 11). Montessori improved her technique for "'human tendencies' to do, act, explore and create" (2007; p.11). It is noticed that learning those propensities reveals concentration, imagination and independence in their work "while making their own decisions about what work they should do and learning how to control their own actions" (Nutbrown, et al., 2008; p. 50). Even though Montessori did not prioritise free play, her classroom design encouraged children to engage in imaginative role play (Wood, 2013).

On the other hand, Hughes states there are five characteristics of play. The first one is that play must be naturally motivated, and as he stated importantly that "it is an end in itself, done for the satisfaction of doing it" (Hughes, 2010, p. 4). The second one is that play must be chosen by children, otherwise children can tend to consider it as work, even though teachers might describe it as planned play. In accordance with this, the third characteristic is that play must be enjoyable, which prevents children from becoming stressed. The fourth characteristic is that play is "nonliteral" in that children can play with nonliteral behaviour, particularly in role play and imaginary play (p. 5). The last characteristic of play is being active in play. Children must be engaged in play physically, emotionally and psychologically.

Hughes (2010) also discussed the tensions of play and work in ECE. When work is entertaining, it still has an external motivation such as reaching goals, collecting rewards, raising levels of performance or achievement or being successful during the activity period. Hughes (2010) also questions that educators and psychologists are

agreed “that spontaneous, goal-free play facilitates children’s development, but what is the value of work? Is play a valuable activity for children’s development while work is not?” (p. 6). It could be suggested that when practitioners support children’s spontaneous play indirectly, learning is happening. It cannot be denied that play is related to work because teachers may adopt playful orientations to adult-led activities. Equally children may engage deeply in their play, showing levels of engagement and concentration that are more typically associated with work. Bredekamp’s study (1987, p. 3) proposes suitable developmental implementation that children should be allowed to play without any intervention, “that they are more likely to feel successful when they engage in a task that they have defined for themselves,” and there should not be adult influence such as “adult-established concepts of competition, achievement and failure” (cited in Hughes, 2010; p. 6). On the other hand, Smith (2010) discussed that children who are emotionally upset or have any traumatic problems may display their emotions through their play. They might express the cause of upset such as parents’ inappropriate behaviours, illness or death. Thus, it is claimed that play has social, educational and therapeutic benefits, and evidence to support these claims is grounded in a range of theoretical perspectives in psychology. Therefore, in this section, play and SELD will be discussed under the psychological, pedagogical theories and playful pedagogy approaches.

B. 2.2. Play and Children’s SELD from Psychological Perspectives

Although play has been supported by a range of psychological theories, it should be considered that “no one theory is adequate to explain any aspect of child development” (Hughes, 2010, p. 21). Theories are tenuous, but provide useful for frameworks within which the concepts of child development, play and behaviour can be better understood.

The theorist of surplus energy model, Herbert Spencer (1873) expressed that play allows children to release their energy. He discussed that human beings have a set amount of energy to use. If this energy is not used for necessary purposes, it must be released in some other way, and children are inclined to discharge their surplus energy through play. Parents and educators frequently observe that children seem more relaxed after energetic activities. But, adults also observed the exact opposite situation that children also feel more energetic after their vigorous play as Spencer’s theory was

fragile in this sense (Hughes, 2010). However, Patrick (1916) argues that children play to renew their energies. When children are exhausted or relaxed, play assists them to avoid boredom while their natural energy is recharging. To move forward from this point, it is essential to interrogate theories about children's SED and play. Freud (1974) theorised that play has a valuable role in emotional development because it can reduce children's anxiety. Children exhibit anxieties in their play, and play can be a way for them to work through stresses by means of role-play. For example, a child 'punishing' a doll may be using role reversal as a way to allay fears of being punished themselves.

Hughes (2010) discussed in light of psychoanalytic theorists that children's emotions such as "anger, unreasonable fear, sexual curiosity, and the wish to be messy or destructive, are frowned on by adult society" (p. 25). Due to adults' disapproval of these feelings, children may learn to fear expressing their emotions, and therefore anxiety starts in children's behaviours. As a consequence of these disapproval feelings of disapproval, children who have social and emotional problems may find communication with adults and peers difficult, experience depression, anxiety, behavioural regression or use physical aggression to express their needs (Merrell and Gueldner, 2010; Gunter et al, 2012). An intriguing point here is that it is important to observe and understand children's behaviour in ECE and school settings. Hence, the expectations from children and feelings of disapproval can have a negative effect on children and this could be an important reason for children's social and emotional tension, such as anxiety or social withdrawal in early childhood education settings. As a result, it is argued here that SELD is as important a focus for the ECE curriculum as areas such as Literacy and Numeracy. This study will reveal how early years teachers use play in this context to support children's SELD. To understand this point, first it must be clear that play creates spaces and opportunities for children to show their both their positive and negative behaviours, attitudes and emotions, and to exhibit their inner and external worlds without any pressure. In accordance with this, Hughes (2010) advocates that play enables children to experience undesirable feelings without repercussions of adults' condemnation.

On the other hand, Erik Erikson (1963) also observed from a psychoanalytic perspective that play has a function for ego-building. This theory notes that play not only supports

children's physical and social skills, but also enhances children's self-esteem. Erikson (1963) classified play in three categories; auto-cosmic, microsphere and macrosphere play. Children explore their own bodies, their sensory and motor skills through play during the first year-old period in auto-cosmic play. In the microsphere category, children acquire skills through objects including toys in play to enhance their egos. The macrosphere category is more complex, because it includes previous levels of play and supports children's egos through social interaction in play and children can be accomplished in their social world. He highlighted that macrosphere play is helpful for giving children better understanding of social roles and their culture. It is easy to see the reflection of these domains in children's play in the early years. Corsaro and Schwarz (1991) theorise that it is important to acknowledge that if children become socialised by taking part in play or dialogue, this is helpful for building their fundamental social skills. But the question remains of how these processes and outcomes can be seen in play? Pramling Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson, (2008) indicated that conflicts in play might show what abilities children have to deal with disagreements. Although this answer is interesting, a further consideration is offered by Kington et al (2013) who found in their research that children's verbal communications became active in regard how to play with peers, especially when they face interpersonal troubles such as deciding a leader or taking turns. They also figured out that learning interaction and cooperation skills within different sizes of peer groups is an essential ability as a part of the macrosphere category of play.

Learning is not solely a process of internalisation of skills, knowledge and understanding: external activities such as observation and participation in social interaction and cultural practices create children's learning opportunities (Rogoff, 2003). Even though research showed that regular socialisation opportunities with peers and developing social skills can be revealed in play experiences in early years settings (Kirk and Jay, 2018), it must be considered that intellectual skills have an impact on social emotional learning skills. In accordance with this argument, Ramani and Brownell (2013) discussed that setting up a shared goal during collaboration with peers needed not only well-developed social skills but also cognitive skills. Children firstly interact with each other and they find mutual goals in their play. However, if they do not mutually agree upon the goals, then children have to negotiate these disagreements

(Pellegrini, 2009). During the negotiations, children must have a mutual conception of the task, final answer, and the process of reaching the goal (Tomasello, 2009). If children cannot meet a mutual understanding of the goals or they cannot solve the problem, they may need to re-establish and re-negotiate the process. Ramani and Brownell (2013) stated that

“this process of creating and maintaining a joint goal requires advanced communication skills, understanding of each other’s intentions and beliefs about the task and the partnership, and the ability to adapt to the dynamics of the problem-solving situation” (p. 95).

As can be seen from this perspective Ramani and Brownell made a connection between social capabilities and intellectual skills, and play appears to provide varied contexts in which these processes can occur.

At this point, it is crucial to understand how cognitive theorists emphasised that learning in relation with play facilitates intellectual development. Sutton-Smith (1967) and Bruner (1972) considered that play creates a zone where children can learn problem-solving skills. However, this is useful when children face difficulties in their lives, and could be transferred into imaginative play. In this context, according to Piaget’s theory of cognition, (1962) adaptation is a prime function of all live organisms and there are two simultaneous processes of adaptation. The first one is assimilation, which is having new material from the real world and harmonising it to the actual cognitive structure. The second process is accommodation, where the new material and existing cognitive structure can be adjusted from person’s perspective. Piaget (1962) made more explicit the balance of the two, saying that “always and everywhere adaptation is only accomplished when it results in a stable system, that is to say, when there is equilibrium between accommodation and assimilation” (p. 7). This theory maintained that while play is not the same as learning, it can definitely support development. As Hughes (2010) commented in-depth that Piaget’s play perspective is “...incorporation of new intellectual material into already existing cognitive structures without a corresponding alteration of the structures themselves” (p. 28). However, Wood (2013) explained that even though play is not the same as learning, it provides children with a learning process or orientation. I will explore in the following section about the development of play how psychological theories affect children’s SELD.

2.2.1 Development of Play

Learning requires intellectual skills and in light of Piaget's (1962) theory of intellectual development, children of age 5 already have skills for logical thinking as the previous stage of concrete operations. That means their thinking abilities are improving; they are more rational than when they were younger, as well as less selfish. At this stage, children are "...relaxed, friendly... [willing] to share, take turns, and cooperate" (Hughes, 2010, p. 99). This point is fundamental for how children develop socially and how they can show their improved abilities in their play. Therefore, I will discuss Parten's (1932) stages of social play to express her perspective of progression in play. She categorised social play as "*unoccupied play, solitary play, onlooker play, parallel play, associative play, and cooperative play*" (p. 136). Unoccupied play is when children are observing play, but not active. Solitary play is when children play by themselves. Onlooker play is similar to unoccupied play in that a child watches others' play, but also communicates with others about play, such as asking questions or suggesting some tips, but the child does not play actively. With parallel play children look like they are playing together in the same playground, but they are playing separately even they know they are in a social environment. Parten (1932) stated that "sand play and constructive work with clay, paper, beads, and paints are characteristically parallel play activities" (p. 147). It is a step forward for associative play when children start to share, to take turns, to join in group activities, and to communicate with the group. In cooperative play, which is considered the highest level, children play in collaboration with their peers, considering play rules decided upon by the children themselves.

However, Parten put less value on young children's skills in their cooperative play as she only observed children's behaviour in the nursery setting in groups of 2-15 students and many of these children did not know each other well enough to cooperate (Hughes, 2010). So, Piaget (1962)'s play categorisation is an option for Parten's play categorisation because it allows professionals to grasp children's developmental play stages in three groups: "*practice game, symbolic game and game with rules*" (P.110). But in 1990, Smilansky challenged Piaget's categorisation and added a fourth category "*constructive play*" because of its frequency in the early years (cited in Wood, 2013, p. 23). While practice games involve children's explorations of their physical activities

from birth to 2 years old, symbolic and constructive play involve make believe play, (Wood, 2013). On the other hand, games with rules become more common in children 6 or 7 years and upwards. But Piaget (1962) underlines that "... the rules replace the symbol and integrate practice as soon as certain social relationships are formed, and the question is to discover these relationships" (p. 142). It can be concluded that symbolic play allows children to transfer their knowledge and skills into their practice, and so play is helpful for children to better understand reality, even in imaginative contexts.

Even though play allows children to engage in socialisation and to understand interpreting these social steps (Perez-Felkner, 2013), it does not always provide positive contexts for children's interaction, and there are different dimensions to play. While it is expected that children learn to observe other children's intentions and control of emotions in shared space with others, in less accomplished cooperation some children pretend to be passive, alone and not interact with others in their play (Hakkarinen et al., 2013). For the sake of simplicity, play does not only support children's social interaction, but can be a mirror to read children's socialisation. Therefore, this study uses play as a context to understand how teachers can read and contribute to children's SELD in their play.

As can be seen from these theories play creates contexts for children's SELD competences such as supporting their socialisation, cooperation or collaboration. Psychological theories that define ages and stages of play have been contested, contemporary research has moved away from ages and stages as a way of understanding children's development. Unfortunately, Turkish ECE curriculum and practice lag behind contemporary psychological theories. Even though there seems to be a staged approach about the learning goals, the programme has not been supported by any theoretical approach (this will be expanded in section 2.6.1.A local perspective). Although teachers try to consider children's development and their educational needs especially using play in their practice, the curriculum's weakness and confusion may cause teachers pay less attention to play in practice. This study, therefore, will present a view of how teachers' integrate play into their curriculum and practice in Turkish ECE settings.

Chesworth (2016) showed that contemporary writers reveal the complexity of children's life worlds and the importance of play for making their own choices, and demonstrating agency. This shows that free play in particular is not always easy for teachers to accommodate in early childhood settings, and that structured play or play that is planned by adults is easier to accommodate. At this point, my aim is to show that what children do together with peers, and with teachers is important for their SELD, and that play is important for children making choices, demonstrating agency. So, it can be argued that theory and research had moved on from 'ages and stages' approach. But if the teachers are not providing much play (or not much time for play) then children are arguably not gaining the benefits for their SELD. Also, if teachers are not providing sufficient opportunities in their curriculum planning for SELD then the children may not be learning the repertoires of skills and knowledge that they need. However, in order to easily understand children's repertoires of SELD competences from psychological perspectives, in the following sub-section, I will also elaborate that child development theories explain what is happening for the child in terms of internal processes and how these are influenced by environmental factors. The following section looks at play pedagogy and how this can support learning in light of psychological theories.

2.2.2 Competences of SELD

Elias et al (1997) characterised social-emotional competency as understanding, controlling, and explaining emotions in a way that provides the accomplished operation of living functions such as learning, building friendships, dealing with challenges and "adapting to the complex demands of growth and development" (p. 2). These SED skills are used in children's social life and they begin to figure out how to act in social environments using skills such as cooperation, participation and obeying the society's rules (Mid-State Central Early Childhood Direction Centre, 2009). Denham (2006) emphasised that social and emotional competence, which includes expression of feeling, social rules such as to share thoughts, to respect and to interact with others, to handle stress, can be reached via play in early childhood. Also, Payton et al. (2008) stated that social-emotional competence enables children to soothe themselves when they feel angry, start friendships with others and respectfully solve problems, make moral and safe decisions, and contribute in constructive ways to the society around them. As discussed in the previous section, play as a mode of interaction, provides a basis for

improving children's SELD competences and emotions. Goleman (1996), explains that "when students are anxious, angry or depressed", they do not learn well because these emotions affect their concentration, resulting in an overload of the 'working memory'- the ability to hold in mind all information relevant to the task at hand" (Goleman, 1996, p. 78). Also Barret's (1998) research on social skills in children's play discussed that well-designed play helps to reduce children's anxiety. In the early years, these skills can be reached by play and affirmative outcomes can be achieved; children can become more competent socially and emotionally.

These outcomes can be achieved within their social environment and therefore, friendships are necessary for children. Friendship has a significant role in the early years because it is the first attachment after family relationships (Shantz, 1983). At this point, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of internalization is important because he explains the interpersonal and intrapersonal processes that can be developed in the social environment. Vygotsky (1978) explained the three steps of internalization. The first one is that external activity helps to redesign and reform internal activity. Secondly, external relationships transform into interpersonal processes. Lastly, developing interpersonal process is an outcome of a long developmental growth. In accordance with last step Vygotsky (1978) also added that "the process being transformed continues to exist and to change as an external form of activity for a long time before definitively turning inward" (p. 57). Therefore, the theory of internalization is influenced by the social environment which is effective for friendships as an important competence of SED. At this point Brown et al. (1983) point out that social environments offer chances for children to acquire problem-solving skills by observing and interacting with adults who are expert in this area. Also, children desire to express their opinions, expressions and emotions with body language and verbalisation through connecting with others (Trevarthen, 2011). So, play is helpful to create the social situation for development of children's sharing and displaying their emotions and communicating with friends in early years settings. Mindful thought starts to have an impact on subsequent action (Broadhead, 2009). During friendships, children may use nonverbal play routines as their way of becoming social through their play. These interactions also have a considerable positive influence on emotional development, helping children to learn how to manage stress and improve self-control. Therefore, in order to build a social and

emotional scaffolding for children, interactions are important in early childhood (Frydenberg et al, 2012).

Damon (1977) studied children's understanding about friendship and classified friendship in three levels. The first level, children who are 3 to 7 years old generally think that friends are to play with, to share toys, to have fun together. This level is superficial and concrete. The second level, from middle to late years children focus on helping each other or responding to their need. The important concept of this stage is that it is reciprocal and that they trust their friendship and they like their friendship characteristics. After age 11 children described friendship as understanding and supporting each other emotionally, helping their psychological problems, avoiding creating problems for their relationship (Damon, 1977). It can be seen in Damon's theory that friendship supports children's emotional development, communication skills, and problem-solving skills. So, developing and maintaining friendships is an important skill for children's SED and requires an adequate social environment. Friendly relationships can create well-connected group interaction (Shantz, 1983). At this point, children's understanding of friendship obviously is helpful to cope with social issues (Damon, 1977, p. 283). In accordance with this, play provides many different ways for communication within social environments that are, to varying degrees, created by children. Several theorists have provided evidence that friendships and sibling relationships are important sources of companionship, and the most frequent source of playful companionship comes from being friends (Buhrmester, 1992). Fostering peer relationships is a part of social and emotional understanding and communicative intelligence (Faulkner and Miell, 1993). For this reason, children's SED areas can develop through play when they interact with their peers. Children's play activities have a role in sharing early experiences of socialisation and friendships which will allow them to develop awareness of the social world directly, supportively and accessibly (Cook-Gumperz, 1991).

However, friendships sometimes bring conflicts into the socialisation process. These conflicts also can be a part of SELD competence in early years. Shantz (1983) commented that social conflict is a part of everyday life as children argue with their peer and parents alike. As a result, children need to interact with people around them to

express their concerns and interests (Fisher, 2013). During these communications, conflicts may arise due to many reasons. It is important to investigate how children understand conflict and try to resolve it. At this point, Spivack and Shure (1978, 1974) advocated that adults and children need some abilities to think through social conflicts and some approaches to solve them (cited in Shantz, 1983). Accordingly, these approaches incorporate different methods of problem solving, knowing the possible reaction of another to resolution, and planning different ways to achieve a solution. In order to give children chance to develop their ability of conflict resolution, children must be in social contexts such as educational settings. When children face trouble in their play, they are thinking about how to solve problems, to communicate, to take risks, to try out new ideas, to deal with troubles (Grieshaber and McArdle, 2010), in situations that may involve fun and playfulness, and therefore, may carry less risk to individuals.

Corsaro and Rizzo (1988) examined these themes, “focusing on discussion and friendship within the socialisation process in the peer culture of an Italian nursery school” (p. 1). They concluded that one of the examples of children’s discussion in the observation stated that, “... the children through their skilled participation in this discussion are addressing central concerns in the peer culture and learning more and developing friendship” (p. 889). As Corsaro and Rizzo stated, conflicts of peer relations help children to learn their social roles. In the same way, Green (1933) conducted a study about play and quarrelling in preschool children in an attempt to assess the influences of such behaviour on the development of friendly relationships or acquisition of socialised pattern on action. As Green states, an altercation is part of social interaction and when children quarrel and make up in their play, it is an ideal opportunity to train and teach them to manage their hurt and disappointment, and “to be good sports” (p. 251).

Observing conflict among children does not necessarily mean that they are being aggressive or harmful towards each other. Chen et al. (2001) suggested that this misunderstanding might lead to seeing conflict as negative, and therefore must be stopped. However, these may be natural incidents “for children to develop socially, morally and cognitively” (p. 540). This means that conflict may not always negative, as

it could also contribute to a child's development. However, Andrews' (2017) study shows that aggressive behaviours can be seen as negative reactions to conflicts.

“...two four-year-old children might want to use the same drawing activity. When each child tries to pursue this goal, they become frustrated with one another. When a child experiences such a conflict, he may respond with an aggressive behaviour like hitting the other child or he may respond by negotiating, walking away, or finding help. The child's response, therefore, reflects his inventory of problem-solving strategies and emotional development. The larger the child's inventory of approaches to conflict, the more likely he will choose an appropriate reaction.” (Andrews, 2017; p. 6).

Children have drive and energy in their activities to reach their goals and expected outcomes individually and collaboratively (Rogers, 2010). However, as can be seen from work of Andrews (2017), conflict is also evident in children's SELD. Conflict transforms into the complex social factor in children's environment as it is a way of supporting socialisation.

Play and SELD has been discussed in this section from the psychological perspective. I examined how SELD can be supported through play in early years and how children's SELD develops in social contexts. It can be seen from the psychological theories that play creates a valuable environment for children's socialisation processes which brings together children's communication, collaboration, cooperation, friendship, problem solving, self-control skills. These skills are interwoven in each other and support themselves, such as conflicts improve children's problem-solving skills, and they learn to manage their emotions in discussions. So, the outcomes of SELD, attitudes, and concepts provide children with the foundation for life-long learning (Grieshaber and Mcardle, 2010). Therefore, social environments such as families, schools and the surrounding social culture all provide the quality learning atmosphere for children's development (Rose and Gilbert, 2018). In accordance with this, the following section will discuss learning outcomes of SELD through play from the pedagogical lens to understand supporting children in educational settings.

2.3 Play and Children's SELD from the Pedagogical Perspectives

Pedagogy, according to Online Etymology Dictionary, the word originally comes from Greek, "*paidagogia*"; agogia 'to lead' and pados 'child' so it can be said '*to lead a child*' (https://www.etymonline.com/word/pedagogue?ref=etymonline_crossreference, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedagogy>, 2018). As can be seen from the etymological background, it is the field that links teaching theory and practice, and how these terms affect children's learning. Pedagogy includes, for example, enlightening teachers' practice, evaluation of children's learning, teaching methods in consideration with learning theories. It is also helpful to understand how children's interests, backgrounds and social environment can be integrated into educational settings (Shulman, 1987). Pedagogy also provides ways for teachers to interact with pupils and set the education environment to support children's development (Shulman, 1987). However, pedagogy in the early years has been discussed by many theorists, for example, Froebel, Pestalozzi, Montessori and Isaacs. These pioneers highlighted play as a fundamental element to children's developmental processes and learning progress. This is because play allows children access to learning experiences such as exploring their environment, expressing their emotions, socialising, becoming aware of themselves (Child Australia, 2017). They emphasised that the significance of fruitful educational settings, intended learning provision and activities support children's learning. However, this thesis considers SEL aspects in early years settings through play pedagogy.

Vygotsky's theories about the zone of proximal development (ZPD) have been particularly influential in understanding the importance of play in development and learning, and in pedagogical approaches. The benefits of socialisation can be realised through play in ECE. Vygotsky proposes that play has benefits for children's development in their ZPD. Vygotsky defined the ZPD as

“the difference between ‘actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving’ and ‘the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

The ZPD concept shows that development does not only rely on internal motivation, but could be supported by suitable social activities. Hughes (2010) commented that children's ZPD can be observed by adults, and adults can provide learning opportunities

to add to children's existing knowledge and drive children's development. In regard to this perspective, Levykh (2008) contributed that "...under certain conditions the learning process can and should lead the process of the child's natural development." (p. 89). At this point, Kozulin (1998) emphasised that planned learning activities make a structure for clear pedagogical guidance. Levykh (2008) argued

"that the assistance that the child receives with solving a problem, first, enables educators to look into the near future of the child's mental development and uncover his or her true potential for development, and, second, speeds up the process of the child's development of higher psychological functions" (p. 90).

To sum up, learning within the ZPD allows teachers to observe children's developmental process, evaluate their potential for development and prepare suitable activities to support their learning in educational settings. It is clear from Vygotsky's theory that if anyone wants to observe children's development, there should be observation in more than one social setting, especially when children are playing.

Children benefit from the social interactions provided by planned and freely chosen activities. They need an atmosphere in which they can express their feelings freely (Nutbrown et al., 2008). Children need to be able share their ideas and verbalise their thoughts so that they can understand interactions around them, and get feedback from their environment (Fisher, 2013). In this way, children contribute to their own and each other's development through play. It could be seen from the psychological and pedagogical framework there is a broad agreement that play promotes learning, with ongoing debates about the mix or balance of child-initiated and adult-led play. This study seeks to understand how the pedagogical approaches that teachers use in their classrooms to support children's SELD. However, there are questions about how SELD can be integrated into the early years settings through play and adult-planned activities. Therefore, it is important to understand the SEL's foundation elements.

Several points of SEL have been elaborated by Humphrey (2013). Firstly, SEL is a process that has implications for how schools organise their learning environments and curriculum frameworks. The second point, SEL is not only for children but also for the adults as members of the school. Thirdly, SEL brings essential skills for life

effectiveness and therefore it is a universal and fundamental process. The fourth point, SEL involves gaining social-emotional skills that are “intrapersonal within the individual - such as being able to manage one’s emotions” and interpersonal “between the individual and others - such as establishing positive relationships” (Humphrey, 2013, p. 3). Moreover, a quality process of SED is important for young children in all aspects of their lives. This is because social-emotional skills have a considerable impact on “positive human development, effective social groups and societies and effective education” (Weare, 2007; p. 239). The aims of social-emotional education are to help children to improve their attitudes, behaviours, and cognition; to sustain their well-being and develop capabilities in social-emotional, academic and physical domains because of the close relationship among these disciplines (Elias et. al., 1997). Grounded in the psychological perspective as discussed previous section (see section 2.2), it may be asserted that social emotional wellbeing is a core element for effective learning. So, SEL as a learning process can be observed while children are playing with their friends.

On one hand, the educational ethos is a considerable element in SED for young children. As Humphrey stated in his taxonomy, SEL is “... designed to provide focused input for students at risk of (or already experiencing) social, emotional and behavioural difficulties” (2013: 5). SEL is important for all children, not only those who have special education needs, and has been integrated as part of early childhood education. Many researchers pointed out the tight connection between SELD and academic performance (Konold and Pianta, 2005; Raver, 2002; Ladd, Birch, and Buhs, 1999; Ladd, Kochenderfer, and Coleman, 1997). Children who have positive SELD competences were found to be successful in their academic learning rather than children who are impulsive, anxious and argumentative (Raver, 2002). Also Hirsh-Pasek et al (2008) contributed that children who have social skills, self-regulation, and communication skills are more ready for school and are more accomplished academically. Therefore, supporting children’s SELD is also supporting their academic achievements simultaneously. From this point, it is clear that psychological and pedagogical perspectives overlap to support children’s SELD in early years settings.

It is noteworthy that I wanted to explore play and SELD in the early years from the psychological and pedagogical perspectives first, before giving critical consideration to how playful pedagogy can be implemented in early years to support children's SELD.

2.4. Playful Pedagogy in Early Years Settings

In the previous sections (see section 2.2 and section 2.4), psychological and pedagogical theories showed that play has variety of implications for children's development and learning. Play as pedagogy is particularly important and it has been rigorously discussed in terms of teachers' implementations and theories (Wood and Bennett, 1997). Having discussed the social benefits of play which are helpful to understand the ways in which children develop social skills and emotions such as social interaction, social awareness and so on, I will also explore what teachers actually do with children to sustain playful pedagogy.

As outlined in the previous sections, even though play has a crucial role in children's feelings, expressing themselves, and socialising, with regard to education context, play is not always a productive activity (Wood, 2013). As Rogers (2010) has argued society's pressing needs, such as academic skills or curriculum goals, dominate the significance of play in the early years. Turkish early years practitioners are reluctant to use pedagogical approaches to support planning for play because it is commonly accepted in teachers' practice that play can be rough-and-tumble, messy, and unstructured. This is the main reason why the Turkish ECE curriculum does not strongly reflect a play-based curriculum. In Turkey, teachers are reluctant to use play as a learning activity because, it is difficult to manage, and it mostly does not include academic knowledge or direct instruction in considering the learning goals of curriculum. The practitioners have concerns to fulfil academic requirements for children's school readiness because pre-school is seen as the previous stage of primary school and children needs to be prepared for that transition. I experienced the same situation during my working period in early years settings, which led me to investigate more about how play can be used in ECE settings, specifically to support children's SELD with playful pedagogy. On the other hand, Wood (2010) discussed the challenges of free play in early years settings in relation to pedagogy, because it can involve "chaos, loss of adult control, and indeterminate outcomes" (p. 15). This raises the

tension that exists between free and structured play and raises questions about play and pedagogy. It is argued that the false division between play and education must be challenged as children learn their best via play (Hirsh-Pasek et al, 2008). At this point, it is necessary to examine play from pedagogical perspectives and theories.

Speaking from pedagogical perspectives, discussions on the meaning of pedagogy with play in early years education, divides into two sharply contrasting perspectives (Fisher et al, 2010; Hyvonen, 2011; Pramling-Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson, 2008). Teaching is associated with methods and techniques of direct instruction, including the transfer of knowledge based on learning goals in the curriculum (OFSTED, 2015). The consequences of this approach have been identified as “anathema” to early years education from the perspective of the pioneers (Walsh et al, 2017: p. 2). Learning and teaching via play have a tenuous place in pedagogy (Wood, 2009) where many debates focus on what approaches to learning and teaching in ECE are appropriate. Siraj-Blatchford (1999) stated early years educators lacked a clearly articulated discourse of pedagogy which they seemed to associate with direct teaching. Stephen (2010) repeated that practitioners displayed their unwillingness to engage with pedagogical debates which might seem to challenge the characteristic traditional early years focus on holistic development and care. Indeed, a review by OFSTED (2015) about teaching and play in early childhood indicated the reluctance of early childhood practitioners to use the term ‘teaching’ as expressed by a practitioner in their survey:

“I do not teach because teaching is about the transmission of knowledge, and while children learn new things when I am with them, it is not because I am providing them with the facts to remember but because I am affording them with the experiences that allow them to learn for themselves” (OFSTED, 2015, p. 10).

However, Walsh et al (2017) discussed that such inhibitions to engage in debates about pedagogy in early childhood and undertaking traditional implementation of early childhood provision have an effect on the optimal learning experiences for young children in practice. Even though according to Walsh et al (2010a) “an over-emphasis on formal instruction and behavioural approaches to teaching and learning have been empirically dismissed as inappropriate for young children’s learning and development”

(cited in Walsh et al., 2017: 2), there is an increasing amount of evidence to suggest that the practice of play where children gain experience is controversial and problematical (Hunter and Walsh, 2014; Wood, 2014a; Stephen, 2012; Walsh et al, 2010a). However, beside these arguments, further emphasis needs to be given to the place of SELD in playful pedagogy as it has been suggested that learning should merge with play where children enjoy activities while they are learning knowledge and the skills that help them become competent and efficient (Hirsh-Pasek and et al., 2008). As Zigler (2007) discussed all learning domains are combined in educational settings “...but the brain mediates SED, emotions and cognitions are constantly interwoven in the lives of children” (p.10). From this point, it is clear that cognitive and social-emotional knowledge can be supported within effective environments and with supportive adults. This opinion also presupposes that play encourages learning, not only children’s academic skills, but also their SELD competences. This point overlaps with the suggestion of Whitebread et al (2012) that play benefits “helping the child to maintain their attention, keep their goals for the activity in mind, monitor their progress, make strategic choices regarding ways to proceed, and generally regulate themselves through the task” (p. 20). Therefore, it is argued that the benefits of play are inextricably supportive for children’s SELD.

Play allows children to become social with their peers nonliterally. In considering this, understanding the social rules is necessary for taking part in social interactions. Because, when children are aware of listening to other friends or awaiting their speaking turn in a conversation, these are signs of successful social abilities. These social skills can be observed easily in the children’s play, especially social play. Therefore, early years educators value social play especially to support children’s SELD. However, researchers argued that practitioners are unconfident about their roles in play, and they have worries about directing and observing, rather than engaging and expanding children’s play-based learning (Hunter and Walsh, 2014; Fung and Cheng, 2012; McInnes et al., 2011). Bodrova (2008) and Hunter and Walsh (2014) draw a picture about play in early childhood practice “as superficial in style, lacking depth and challenge” (cited in Walsh et al, 2017: p. 2). In New Zealand’s ECE context, Hedges (2007) pointed out that the domination of free play and child-centred concepts is problematic. In her research teachers struggled to identify and explain children’s

interests in order to extend their learning, and did not provide children with an optimal learning environment (Hedges, 2007). Similarly, it has been argued in the Australian ECE context that teachers' non-interventional approach was consistent with play-based learning which is 'laissez-faire' where less emphasis is placed on teachers' engagement and involvement (Grieshaber, 2008). As a result, in recent years, there has been an increasing amount of studies on early years teachers' pedagogical roles where they intentionally encouraged and supported children's learning, including concepts, understanding and abilities (Hedges, 2014; Pramling-Samuelsson and Pramling, 2014; Fler, 2015; Walsh et al, 2017). Hakkarainen et al in 2013 in their research –with 110 children from birth to five-year-old and more than 200 pre-service teachers– compared successful and unsuccessful cases of adult-children interactions in children's play. They found successful interactions labelled as “productive” (p. 223). They emphasised “adult participation in children's playful experiences is an essential part of a teacher's job” (p. 223). According the research, the pedagogical roles of teachers in play help to “move children's level of performance forward” as expert adult interventions support to “incorporate children's ideas and themes into one creative endeavour” (p. 223).

In consideration of these critical arguments about teachers' roles, Russo (2012) identified the challenge of finding a balance between teaching academic goals and creating a learning environment which encourages children to explore and to discover without any pressure of strict rules of assessment. In light of these tensions, there seems to be important evidence that allowing children to follow their interests in their play is consistent with teachers developing their pedagogical roles to support and extend play (Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva, 2004; Brooker, 2010). From this perspective, sociodramatic play provides particularly valuable contexts for children's SELD. Hughes (2010) underlined that sociodramatic play supports children's cooperation skills with their peers, participation in social activities, and development of friendships. He made two observations about its benefits for children. The first one is that sociodramatic play needs “group cooperation” (p. 253) which allows children to develop skills of being social in their groups. The second one is that children experience different roles and have opportunities to comment from their perspectives, which support the ability to move past their self-centred processes and understand other people's roles in society. In accordance with Hughes' model of sociodramatic play, teachers have a proactive role to

create an environment for promoting children's SELD in early years. This is consistent with the work of Vygotsky (1978) who argued that "interactions between children and the more capable others are the engine that moves cognitive development forward" and "learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are only able to operate when the child is interacting with people in his environment" (p.90). Hence, interaction and participation with child's social environment support active learning and development in educational contexts. The social environment brings together practitioners and children in developmentally productive ways.

Building upon Vygotsky's thought (1978), there is evidence that observation and imitation inform children's interactions, as they develop friendship skills (Dunn, 2004). While Hutt et al (1989, p. 12) stated "*exploration* and *play*" are children's learning vehicles, Berlyne (1960) originally employed these terms as *epistemic* and *ludic* play. The significance between them is that children explore environments and materials, which is epistemic play. Children learn by being "... aware of what they are making or doing, and their activities lead to higher levels of competence and control" (Wood, 2013). Also, children ask 'what is this material for?' in the epistemic play model. In ludic play, children find their question 'what can be created with this material?' Wood (2013) stated that ludic play can encourage learning implicitly and serves a variety of purposes "such as enhanced creativity, self-efficacy and mastery orientations to learning" (p. 26). In accordance with this point Brooker (2005) described the key characteristics that link pedagogy and play in the classroom environment: "space, for children to be active; time, for children to learn at their own pace; freedom to choose activities and sustain them, and interesting and imaginative resources for play" (p. 119). Thus recent evidence concurs that learning through play can be supported and achieved by teacher interactions and their interventions in creating playful environments.

However, there remain debates about the pedagogical roles of adults in play in specific cultural contexts. Turkish ECE policy and curriculum lack robust theory and research to emphasise the importance of supporting children's SELD not only in learning activities but also in their play. There is also an absence of guidance for teachers' roles to promote children's learning environments and teaching them through play. Confusion about play pedagogy in Turkey remains because there is little evidence on play and

teachers' role in the Turkish literature. Teachers intervene when children have conflicts in their play (Varol, 2012). Aras (2016) in her phenomenological study found that teachers keep their daily routines and provide children's free-play environments. Evidence from Tugrul et al (2014) indicates that teachers in Turkey put into words their ideas about play, but they do not take responsibility for involving themselves in children's play. Kocyigit et al (2015) illuminated that children have no expectations from their teachers to be involved in their play. Even though there is substantial evidence from both local and global literature on play and pedagogy, there remain debates about the exact position of teachers in early years contexts to promoting learning through play. In consideration of the global literature, this research aimed to contribute to these debates from the perspective of teachers in Turkish pre-schools.

In attempting to open up conceptual boundaries, in light of sociocultural theories, Hedges and Cullen (2012) suggested participatory learning theories (PLTs) as a way of aligning play, learning and teaching. They argue that PLTs put significant value on everyday knowledge via socialisation to support children's development. In their perspective, everyday knowledge occurs when children interact with their social environment from distal to proximal zone such as from wider family to local communities. Because these interrelationships allow "children's participation in every day experiences outside the early childhood centre and highlight the necessity for teachers to understand and respect these in order to provide for children's learning" (Hedges and Cullen, 2012: p. 928). Hence, an important pedagogical role for educators is that they arbitrate children's everyday knowledge that they obtain from their social context in related educational environment in order to extend learning. Hedges and Cullen (2012) gave an example of socio-dramatic play in which "children imitate and represent in sociodramatic play the actions of more knowledgeable others in a range of activities, such as meal preparation and participating in cultural festivals, often repeatedly, and after a significant period of time has elapsed." (p. 931). Moreover, PLTs admit that, occasionally, observing and listening to others are learning strategies for children that support interaction and collaboration, and reflect children's actual interests to support their learning (Hedges and Cullen, 2012). Hence, it is the important duty of teachers to recognise and build on "children's prior experiences and understanding to promote meaningful learning" (Walsh et al, 2017: p. 4). As a consequence, the main

focus of PLTs is the inter-relations between learning and teaching (Hedges and Cullen, 2012). Walsh et al (2017) commented on Hedges and Cullen's study that "reflective of a focus on participatory learning and teaching, outcomes are perceived to be as important as the process of learning but are considered on a more holistic basis, where learning dispositions, funds of knowledge and working theories are offered as alternatives to subject knowledge and skills" (p. 4).

In response to Hedges and Cullen (2012), Walsh et al (2017) highlighted the distinctions between practitioners' thoughts and teaching practices in accordance with a play-based curriculum and examined more clearly how teaching might look from the perspective of PLTs. They identified three different categories to explicitly understand teachers' role: "non-participatory, over-participatory and appropriately participatory" (p. 5). These categories explicitly showed the teachers' practices about playful pedagogy. While non-participatory teachers tend to be passive and believe children learn naturally with fewer interventions, over-participatory teachers said it is hard to put knowledge into play and to use play as a teaching medium. However, appropriately participatory teachers create a balance between learning and teaching in playful activities and this perspective supports parental collaboration to support learning, an argument which also was underlined by Hedges and Cullen (2012). Only appropriately participatory teachers focused on both learning process and learning outcomes. The study by Walsh et al (2017) showed the value of play pedagogy as it supports children's learning dispositions, knowledge acquisition and skill development. Similarly, Pyle et al. (2017) argued for "a need to move away from a binary stance regarding play and towards an integration of perspectives and practices, with different types of play perceived as complementary rather than incompatible" (p. 311). Therefore, it would be helpful to understand different play types and how playful pedagogical approach can be used across this range.

In this study, structured and free play will be investigated in order to understand how children display and use SELD in their play in early years settings, and also how the teachers understand and interpret children's SELD skills. As Grieshaber and McArdle (2010) described, free play is mostly child-initiated, and creates chances to build

relationships in varied and, more equitable ways. There is another definition for free play by the DCSF (2009) that

“Play is freely chosen by the child, and is under the control of a child. The child decides how to play, how long to sustain the play, what the play is about, and who to play with. There are many forms of play, but it is usually highly creative, open-ended and imaginative. It requires active engagement of the players, and can be deeply satisfying” (p. 10).

The functions of free play draw attention to the ways in which children can learn and develop through child-initiated activity, including decision making, expressing thoughts, controlling materials, self and others (Wood, 2014). Also, Fisher (2013) grouped free play in two categories “adult-initiated” and “child-initiated”. “Adult-initiated activities” are involved with “potential learning”; the teacher designs activities within specific goals, selects tasks, and the children are expected to learn the outcomes on their own, in different ways. “Child-initiated activities” are connected with “spontaneous learning”; the teacher may have prepared some resources or set up the environment in some way, but children have the autonomy to choose how to interact with the activity (Fisher, 2013; p. 83). Also, as Fisher (2013) stated, child-initiated activities enable children to make choices about what they are going to do, the materials they will use and the process and outcomes of the experience. However, at this point, Wood (2014) concluded that in using spontaneous pedagogical approaches teachers need to be aware of children’s repertoire, how and when to interact with children, because some children may benefit more than others. In summary, learning through play can be supported by adults, especially in early years settings, but with contrasting views about the nature and extent of teachers’ involvement.

However, it is not clear how practitioners guide children’s “free” choice of activities, or how a practitioner can turn children’s participation into a “potentially instructive” activity to meet a curriculum target (Brooker, 2011; p. 153). The balance between freely-chosen and structured activities is important in early years settings to achieve SELD goals. In a study of teachers’ thinking and classroom practice, Wood and Bennett (1997) discussed that teachers were frequently uncertain about their roles in play,

especially making decisions about when children’s play needs teacher intervention or involvement, and when to let children play alone. In this line, it is suggested that practitioners should ensure that they respond appropriately to the children’s need for independence and be practical about their role of needing to spend individual time with particular children or groups (Fisher, 2013; Walsh et al., 2017). These debates show that there is a gap in understanding teachers’ implementation of play- based pedagogies, and how they support children’s learning. From my own experience, in Turkish early years settings, freely chosen play activities, both child-initiated and adult-initiated, are suitable for all times of the day and convenient for teachers as they tend not to manage the process actively, but let children get on with their play. However, sometimes specially structured play activities do not take into account children’s SELD. It is therefore challenging to design a play programme suited to the Turkish early years curriculum’s goals, which is a limitation and issue faced in this research.

Psychological and pedagogical perspectives have interwoven to provide a basis for describing, explaining and criticising the relationship between SELD and play. Playful pedagogy is a supportive element for children’s SELD. Research by Walsh et al (2010a) about “play-based and developmentally appropriate curriculum” implementation has highlighted that children have well-established SELD competences and skills in a play-based classroom (p. 53). Also, Hirsh-Pasek et al (2008) pointed out “academic and social outcomes that emerge from these programs indicate that children profit from playful learning approaches” (p. 31). However, in Turkey play has less importance in early years settings. To take this discussion forward, the next section examines how SELD can be supported through policy, what teachers think, and the global and local focus on SELD in early childhood policies. Also, I present SELD studies in Turkish research literature.

B. SELD and POLICY

In relation to Goleman’s statement as discussed in the sub-section of psychological framework, with the increasing focus on SEL within the curricula in primary and pre-schools in many countries such as United States, Australia, England, and Sweden there are emphasises on educating children on how to express their emotions in positive ways and to develop their social capabilities. In line with this target, Gillies (2011)

highlighted that the importance of children's psychological well-being has become more recognised in educational policies, and "schools' roles have been extended to include both the active monitoring of pupils' well-being and the explicit teaching of emotional social skills" (p. 186).

For many children, academic success in their early years seems to be established on a strong base of children's SED skills (Ladd et al., 1997; O'Neil et al., 1997). In consideration of this evidence, SED provides children with a firm foundation, not only for their academic success, but also positive dispositions and perspectives on life. Hence, it is substantial to support SED in the early years through the curriculum. Zigler and Bishop-Josef (2006) highlighted that supporting these skills is an essential element of early development and learning, and early years education curricula need to focus on more than cognitive skills. Much more emphasis on children's SED in early childhood settings is necessary. This is due to the fact that many academic skills, such as reading and mathematics, are cumulative, and tend to receive more attention from early childhood onwards. However, when children have an inadequate provision for the development of a firm foundation of SED skills in preschool, they face risks, such as achievement gaps that will persist throughout their academic life (Entwistle and Alexander, 1993). In order to identify the relationship between SED skills and academic outcomes, it is essential to establish an understanding of individual social and emotional factors that influence children's development across multiple related contexts (Rivers et al., 2013).

There are established claims about the relationship between these skills and academic outcomes. UK-based research into the SED competence in children (Weare and Gray, 2003), for example, concluded that SELD has many educational and social advantages such as an increased and stable social structure and better mental health. In the context of SEL in ECE, it has been argued that the investigation and understanding of the skills comprising SED is contributing to a clearer perception of how children attain these skills, and how they affect the futures of children (Rivers et al., 2013). In a paper which investigated the connections between the Every Child Matters policy "agenda and efforts being made to develop work on" SEL in England, Weare (2007) asserted that enhancing SED can give rise to better learning and achievement (p.239). She argues that

pupils who developed their self-awareness and academic self-efficacy as they see a better correlation between effort and outcome. This reinforces the cycle in which students who cope with difficulties are able to motivation, setting targets, stress management, making liable decisions about their academic work and, developing and sustaining positive relationships environment. They will also be able to overcome difficulties and will indeed have more success academically, socially and emotionally (Weare, 2007). At this point, Susan Isaacs pointed out “that children naturally experience intense feelings of fear, hate, jealousy and guilt” and she discussed that they should be provided with a suitable yet “carefully contained” atmosphere in which they can express their feelings freely and learn easily (cited in Nutbrown et al., 2008; p. 54).

Also, a systematic review by Wells et al (2003) investigated how effective the SEL programmes appeared to support mental health and 17 programmes were effectively examined. The review found that the SEL programmes considerably decreased widely known risk factors such as impulsiveness and antisocial behaviours. In accordance with this, Weare (2007) claimed that the clear purpose of developing SEL is to enable the children and adults in the school setting to increase their emotional health and wellbeing. There is explicit proof that efficient programmes can achieve this. The programmes were found to be helpful in developing the competencies of social-emotional wellbeing, “such as greater self-esteem and confidence, communication skills, cooperation, resilience, empathy, self-concept, stress management and problem solving skills” (Weare, 2007; p. 241). [As argued in the previous section, teachers can implement these effective pedagogical approaches, depending on the pre-school curriculum framework, and their own theories and beliefs.](#) Therefore, the current research aims to explore the understandings and roles of teachers, which are important because it is the teachers who provide the educational experiences and environments. It is in this environment that teachers can promote SELD, as recommended in the literature through the pedagogical approaches based on psychological perspectives.

2.5. Teachers’ Theories and Beliefs about SELD

The research by Triliva and Poulou (2006) [demonstrated teachers’ active participation in the process of SEL, and found that the teachers’ attitudes about the SEL process were important on the basis of providing a comprehensive curriculum. They concluded that](#)

teachers' practices and understandings have a considerable effect on their teaching techniques and how they react to children's success. Therefore, it can be said that teachers' attitudes are an important factor in implementing SEL in schools. In this line, this research considers this point and agrees with Fisher's work (2013) that capable and knowledgeable teachers "are always necessary to introduce children to what is new and what needs explanation; to describe and name and model; to support and facilitate and extend" (p. 34). Play creates contexts in which children improve their SED skills and teachers can support and maintain these skills in their play. This study takes into account how the participant Turkish pre-school teachers think about SELD in the context of play-based activities.

Blakemore and Frith (2005) proposed that alongside the teaching materials in classroom, the teacher's theories, practices and attitudes to learning could be of equal importance. In the SEL context in England, research has argued that

"teachers not only need opportunities to develop their own social skills and insight if they are to provide for SEAL; but they also need time and opportunities to research and reflect on the latest scientific findings on learning and emotions as well as gaining an understanding of the ethical and philosophical positions and opinions on social relationships and on education" (Woolf, 2012; p. 39).

From this point, it can be seen from the pedagogical perspective that teachers themselves need to be constantly developing in order to make children much more competent in their social emotional skills.

The implications for pedagogy are explored in a vignette from Grieshaber and McArdle (2010) which indicates how children's reflections might be used by teachers to provide an effective environment to support SED.

"Ivan arrived in the morning with a large book on Star Wars. The book was filled with glossy photographs of various space machines and he was particularly taken with 'pods'- space capsules for travel through space. He quickly teamed up with his two friends, Thomas and Robert, and they huddled over the book together. At the teacher's prompting, they began constructing a pod, using a large cardboard box. They were

busily occupied for the next 60 minutes, cutting windows, lining the interior with various dials and switches, using junk materials like lids, egg cartons, and so on. At the critique time, children all came together and shared with each other what they had been doing. When it came to Ivan's turn, he talked about the pod, and when the teacher asked if he was pleased with his efforts, he replied: 'no. Robert says it doesn't look like a pod.' The teacher was surprised, and Robert looked askance, as all eyes turned to him. The teacher tut-tutted, and said 'oh. How did that make you feel Ivan?' Ivan replied: 'it made me want to make it better' "(p. 15).

In this vignette, providing materials and encouraging children to work and play collaboratively created the conditions for their social development; at the critique time Ivan wanted to make his work-craft better. All these processes have been shaped by the teacher's effort, such as her question about emotion (How did that make you feel?) and teacher's supplying materials in the classroom. "The work for the teacher here is to provide Ivan with skills, knowledge and techniques he needs in order to achieve his objective" (Grieshaber and McArdle, 2010; p. 25). As can be seen in this vignette, conversations with the children provided the teacher with proof of children's responses to learning and experiences. In this line, Fisher (2013) outlined for practitioners that such conversations can illuminate how children started and handled a project or situation, the things they were interested in, what skills they displayed in trying to understand their world, and certain conflicts or arguments that arose.

Another case has been related by a practitioner in Kalliala's research (2006) which explores the meaning of rough and tumble and war play as a social space that shows how practitioners might get involved in children play in an early years setting:

"It was only running and fists and kind of fighting, I thought if I let it go on... these boys are new to each other so I didn't know how much they would tolerate it when the other one swipes with his fist, even though he doesn't hit. But it could have become rather rough and someone might get hurt and start a battle for real, so we changed... and the boys then said that they want some fighting game so I asked what about wrestling, so OK, if you let us wrestle we'll do that and so we made a wrestling game and boys were satisfied... perhaps we'll play Power

Rangers, too, when I know them better, and know that the game is safe” (p. 122).

In this case, the practitioner cannot ignore play which is fighting, unruly, rough, aggressive and noisy. She sets the rules to ensure children’s safety such as being allowed to play at wrestling, but not to fight, hurt or injure others. Practitioners’ interventions are appropriate only when there is an evident need, guided by children’s safety (Kalliala, 2006). During this game, children might develop their friendship skills, and have fun in their game without anyone being hurt or injured. Children’s successes and chances are dependent on the teacher’s intentional pedagogical decisions and actions taken so that the conditions are made available for children to support their development and learning (Grieshaber and McArdle, 2010).

It is expected that teachers’ intentional pedagogical framing will include planning the environment, facilitating activities and materials, providing suitable space and leaving children time to play (Grieshaber and McArdle, 2010). This is because the power of relationships is important on a daily basis in early years setting to support social interaction between children and teachers. Grieshaber and McArdle (2010) stated that their relationships guide principles on how to think, feel, behave and do, and also state what should be said and done in different social environments. Being social is a part of SED, where children gradually develop their social skills in everyday interactions between peers and adults. By the same token, Payton et al. cited (2008) the work of Benson et al. (1999) who stated that a great number of children are lacking in their social-emotional skills, think that their teachers do not care for them, and interrupt the learning experiences of their peers.

The intentional teaching of SED skills incorporates SEL as teachers work with children through their relationships, creating specific contexts for learning (child-initiated and adult-directed) and teaching specific concepts and skills. However, being socialised necessitates that children understand the rules in the early years settings which establish challenges, depending on the extent to which these rules can be negotiated, or can be formulated by the children (for example in their play). If the daily pre-school activities are defined “by teacher formulated rules, which constitute impediments to children’s

influence in their daily lives at pre-school” (Arner and Tellgren in Emilson, 2007; p. 15), then it may be assumed that children will deal with and resist some rules (Grieshaber and McArdle, 2010). In this line, Fisher (2013) stated about teachers’ roles that “planning appropriately for both adult-led and child-led learning to take place alongside each other in the learning day” (p. 59). It is essential to understand this point in order to provide a community in which children understand the boundaries for their behaviour and what sanctions might result. Schools that use well-designed SELD programmes declared that children’s academic achievement and teacher-student interaction increased, at the same time that problem factors decreased as a result of effective SELD pedagogical approach (Brackett et al., 2012). Cohen (2001) stressed that integrating SEL into the school life and daily life will be helpful for children to increase their chances to become healthy, responsible and caring learners. Effective SEL efforts incorporate work that enhances “children’s motivation to put their social skills and understanding into practice” (Cohen, 2001; p. 11).

Poulou (2016) explored the Emotional Intelligence (EI) of teachers, including their proficiency in fulfilling SED skills to their pupils, teaching impact, and teacher-student interaction, in an effort for interpretation pupils’ emotional and behavioural difficulties in Greece with ninety-eight elementary teachers. Three types of measurement instruments were used; firstly, “teachers’ measures of personal and professional skills” (p.129), which are “self-rated emotional intelligence scale (SREIS)” (p. 129) and SEL beliefs scale. Secondly, teachers’ measures of teacher-student relationships that is “student-teacher relationship scale (STRS-SF)” (p.130). Thirdly, “teachers’ measures of students’ emotional behavioural difficulties” (p.130) that is “the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ)” (p.130). As a result of the study, it has been found that “teachers’ perceptions of EI, comfort in implementing SEL skills and teaching efficacy were related to perceptions of closeness in teacher-student relationships” (p. 131). Research by Brown et al. (2004) also evidenced how teachers have a considerable effect on children’s SEL and students’ academic achievements. A SEL-based programme - The Resolving Conflict Creatively Programme (RCCP) - developed processes that made the teachers reflect on the RCCP approach to their professional development. The participant teachers in the RCCP showed that “...the amount and quality of the training and classroom coaching, and the talent and dedication of the teachers themselves who

were able to use these tools to benefit the children in their classrooms” (p. 164). Encourages children to practice and use their social development and skills. However, early childhood educators have proven to believe strongly in encouraging “children to listen to others and to themselves, to form new relationships, to control themselves, to communicate clearly, to gradually become more self-motivating, to follow and to lead” (Cohen, 2001; p. 29). At this point, the importance of a teacher’s attitude towards SEL implementation cannot be overstated. According to Greenberg et al. (2004) there is little doubt that well-designed SEL programmes can support children with most benefits, “if they are implemented in a thoughtful, caring and integrated manner” (p. 185).

However in the early years, it has been argued that play is a useful context to develop children’s SEL. Teachers must be reflective on children’s play to achieve SEL goals. In this point Fisher (2013) draws attention to assessment as an important role of teachers and she suggested two assessment types - formative and summative assessment. The formative assessment is to “give ongoing information about a child’s progress and attainment” (p. 187). SEL is an ongoing process in the academic years and for this reason it is possible to assess it. According to Hoffman (2009), “SEL is fundamentally about psychometric and pedagogical possibility: skills can be taught and the learner’s competence in their performance can be measured” (p. 538). Alternatively, teachers can choose to evaluate their practice to make themselves more skilled. On this point, Fisher (2013) suggested that reflective practice in teachers should never cease. They should continue to challenge and reflect on their personal practice to keep providing effective and appropriate opportunities for children, which are interesting and educational. From this point, it could be useful to use video recording because it provides “...a rare opportunity for them to observe closely, and without interruption, children’s responses to a range of play contexts” (Bennett et al, 1997). Even though video recording enables teachers evaluate themselves, it is not a common method for assessment in all countries. Also, it is useful in revealing teachers’ theories and beliefs, and whether these align with their practices.

This thesis seeks to understand on a deeper level how Turkish teachers think SELD can be promoted in children’s free and planned play, and how the teachers’ beliefs and theories translate into their practice. It initiates dialogues on how the teachers facilitate

planned play and promote SELD in different early years settings. Uncovering the beliefs and personal theories that teachers hold is important to help understand their practice and hopefully, add value in some way in the future. In line with this, Kennedy (2008) highlighted that:

“Research on teaching practice and how teachers think about their practice has existed for decades. One pervasive reason for our interest in teachers' thoughts is that thoughts are intertwined with practice, so if we want to better understand practice, we need to also understand the thoughts that guide practice. Thinking is not the same as acting, but teachers' thoughts interact with their actions every day in both large and small ways, influencing their ability to grow and improve their practice over time and influencing their responses to new policies, new curricula, and new ideas about practice as they arise” (p. 2).

In view of this, this research project was embarked on in the hopes that the early years professionals and teachers involved in this study will in some way engage in a more reflective practice, and develop their practice accordingly, to fully benefit the children under their care. Evaluating early years practitioners' perspectives on their pedagogy and practices in relation to SELD is important to help improve the curriculum and assessment tools from a pedagogical perspective. How teachers think is also related to their ability to conduct implemented assessment, new curriculum or other educational policies (Kennedy, 2008). Although this research discussed the material gathered from videotaping sessions, the teachers in the study also shared their thoughts and judgements on how successful their play activity plans were, whether they considered the curriculum goals, and what the children learnt from the planned activities in on-going processes. This added more valuable data to this research as it allowed for a more reflective practice on the part of teachers, and also kick-started a change in some areas of practice. As Kennedy (2008) discussed, any research that revolves around the thoughts and perspectives of teachers is

“remarkably diverse, ranging from naturalistic observations and interviews to laboratory projects in which teachers are asked to think aloud as they work, view films and describe what they saw or thought, examine artifacts of classroom lessons or student

work and to critique them, sort cards and engage with other devices” (p. 3).

An understanding of teachers’ knowledge, practice, and their professionalism provides the following metaphor of Calderhead (1987) that early childhood educators have a wealth of specific knowledge gained through their training and experience. This includes curriculum knowledge, methodology, subject matter, child psychology, and other related information about working with children in various contexts, situations and resources. In line with this, research about teachers’ practices and understanding in SELD in early years settings could also provide university tutors with information about the current practices, ongoing curriculum, and methods that would assist to pre-service teachers in their plans for SELD based activities.

There is a research that reveals an evidence about pre-service teachers’ understanding of playful art activities plan and implementations of them in early years by Savva and Erakleous (2017) in Cyprus. They used “a tool, ‘skēptikó’ (a series of questions), created by the researchers to initiate inquiry during planning and to provide evidence about participants’ ‘practice of knowing’” (p. 1), and semi- structured interviews using photos as methods. From the results of their study, they suggested the following:

“Conceptualising planning as practice of knowing in early childhood art education means to acknowledge the connections between knowing ‘how’ (what kind of practices are used), knowing ‘what’ (what kind of art concepts) and knowing ‘why’ (what is art for?). In this sense, early childhood teachers should be able to plan play-based art activities by connecting their own inquiry (sources, rationale, practices and concepts) with the school context and the needs of the children” (Savva and Erakleous, 2017; p. 16).

Therefore, it is clear that teachers need to be more aware and mindful of their thinking processes leading up to planning play activities. In order to execute effective activities, practitioners should incorporate reflective thinking, their personal perceptions, curriculum goals, and the needs of the children. On another note, Kennedy (2008) discussed two points of how practice shapes thought and how thought shapes practice. When a practitioner’s practices influence their thoughts, the focus is “on the unique nature of teaching as a profession and seeks to understand how the features of this work

influence teachers' thoughts and actions" (p. 6). On the other side, thoughts can influence a teacher's classroom practices. In this vein, "the circumstances of teaching influence the way teachers approach their work but seek to learn more about how teachers reason about their circumstances and devise practices that can accommodate those circumstances" (p. 8). As Kennedy (2008) highlighted, studies on teachers' thinking allow for a greater understanding about their thoughts and rationales behind the types of techniques that they employ. This study, thus tries to understand teachers' perspectives and their practices, and how these influence each other in two different early years settings in Turkey.

Schoenfeld (1998)'s attempt at a theory of teacher thinking occurred in the late 1990s. Kennedy (2008) interpreted that Schoenfeld's aim was to find a further definition and improve "models of teacher reasoning that articulate beliefs, goals, knowledge, images and so on that teachers can carry with them, and to account for specific interactive decisions" (p.23). Schoenfeld (1998) notes that the teacher brings to the class his or her "substantial body of knowledge" (p. 2). This means "knowledge of content, of the school environment, and of the students and his or her history with them" (p. 3). His study suggested how teaching in the context theory could be issued with students' behaviours that he believes can be modelled. He stated the following:

"If one has a good understanding of the teacher's beliefs, goals, plans, and knowledge (which includes various pedagogical and context knowledge, the teacher's classroom routines, etc.) in a particular context, then one should be able to provide coherent, detailed explanations of what the teacher does, and why. The explanation of 'why' will include a description of the (re-) prioritization of goals, beliefs; and knowledge that results in the teacher's choosing to do what he or she does, along a description of which intellectual resources (e.g. scripts or routines) the teacher will draw upon to implement that decision. The ultimate quality of the theory and models that embody it will be judged by their explanatory power, their predictive power, and their scope" (p. 4).

This part of his work provides us with a substantial grasp of understanding about the teachers' knowledge content and attribute. This is another case to support the rationale for this study, as it appears that trying to understand teachers' perceptions could reveal

many aspects of the teachers' decisions and actions in the classroom. Again, this can ensure an opportunity for the teachers to improve on their personal practices accordingly.

Furthermore, Berliner (1989) discussed his paradigm from a functionalist psychological perspective. According to him, functionalists consider cognitive behaviour as a legitimate object of research. Therefore, he placed some emphasis on designing studies about teachers' thinking that are useful from the functionalist psychological perspective. Berliner stressed (1989) that this perspective "through correlational and experimental work, reliable relations would be established between thoughts and actions..." (p. 328). In accordance with this, he proposed that "instead of looking at how thought and action are related, perhaps we might look more frequently at how action and thought are related" (p. 339). During his process-product research, he considered these questions for the teachers: "How do teachers think about allocated and engaged time? How do they decide to start or stop activities? In what ways do the clock, the schedule, and student attention influence interactive decisions about what to do and for how long?" (p. 339). These questions and issues stated above influenced the research questions and interview questions in this particular study as well. This research also tried to understand the relationship between teachers' thoughts and actions in the classroom.

Attempting to understand teachers' pedagogy and practices is important in any early years setting. There is a classroom effect that has an influence over teaching and learning outcomes. As Doyle (1979) stated understanding how practitioners provide the classroom environment is important because "...what teachers do in classrooms is seen as evidence of personal competence and/or motivation" (p. 139). Thus, it is important for teachers to have a high level of self-efficacy and stable social and emotional states when it comes to provision of an optimal environment for children's development and learning. Accordingly, this study attempted to understand the way teachers think about their personal abilities in their early years settings and how this relates to their practices. According to Kennedy (2008), all at once, teachers are having to set and sustain classroom rules and organisation, encourage unresponsive students, promote learning through providing materials and situations, communicate and discuss ideas with students, and also remind them about certain rules and regulations. So, these are some

of the roles of a teacher in the classroom, which this study also set out to investigate- what teachers think are their roles in children's SELD.

Pui-Wah Cheng (2012) explored the issues of preschool teachers' ideas and beliefs of learning via play, with the goal of understanding the practice issue and shed light on better methods to equip teachers in the early years sector. She conducted a case study research through two student-teachers from the ECE programme in Hong Kong. It was found that the teachers' ideas and beliefs were compromised when "faced with the constraints of reality" (p. 79). They were unable to align their beliefs with their practices due to professional limits. This was an interesting point to note as it showed that the teachers' perceptions might not necessarily translate into practice in reality.

Another interesting study by Davis (2006) focused on how pre-service elementary teachers understand interrelationships among aspects of teaching. This contains students, knowledge, assessment, and guidance in their teaching practice. Moreover, Marland and Osborne (1990) conceptualised "teacher interactive thinking" (p. 94) to describe teachers' theories about their practices. In a similar vein, Sherin and Van (2009) examined teachers' "learning in the context of a video club" to discuss pedagogical issues that affect teaching and learning in various ways, and potential improvements in practices through reforms (p.165). Much of the research about teachers' thinking focuses on classroom settings or teacher education contexts. However, in the early years context, there is little work about teachers' reflection and thinking on their pedagogical practices in early years settings. In light of this, this thesis hopes to fill some gaps in the literature, especially in the Turkish context, and to highlight the importance of investigating teachers' perceptions and their decisions in the classroom. Cherrington and Loveridge (2014) discussed "how teachers' engagement in collective dialogue about video-recorded episodes of their practice, facilitated reflection and created effective learning opportunities" (p. 43). The study found that a greater understanding of teachers' practices resulted in an increased reflection on the part of the teachers when designing various programmes.

It has been found that within early years contexts, "video recordings of teachers' practices have helped them perceive discontinuities between their intentions and

actions” (Wood and Bennett, 2000; p. 639). This current study also employed video recordings to create in the teachers a greater awareness of their practices in the classroom, and also attempt to reveal why gaps between teachers’ perceptions and pedagogy exist. The results of these will be discussed in findings and discussion chapters. After perusal of the current literature, it appears that this study is the first of its kind in Turkey- using video recording as a tool to investigate whether teachers face difficulties in understanding and planning SELD in children’s play within the current curriculum framework. As a result, this study can be used as a valuable resource for the early years industry in Turkey. In a similar vein, Carter and Doyle (1987) suggested that, “to understand teachers’ thinking, then, it is necessary to describe the tasks teachers face in classrooms and explicate the knowledge structures that underlie the interpretation and accomplishment of these tasks” (p. 147). This study attempted to do that through video recordings, and discussions with teachers based on that data.

Wood and Bennett’s (1997) research on teachers’ theories about play and classroom practice revealed five related “key areas: the nature and benefits of play, the teacher’s role, planning, assessment and constraints” (p. 23). The teachers’ perceptions on play were influenced by three core elements of their practice, which are: a teacher’s role, planning and assessment. The teachers in Wood and Bennett’s study (1997) discussed that their roles involve providing play, observing children, and participating in the play. The study states “play as a valuable context for learning processes such as problem-solving, concentration, exploration, discovery, perseverance, engagement, and developing positive attitudes” (p. 24). Even though the teachers emphasised that they have little time for assessment, they theorised that play was a valuable element in the context of all developmental areas for assessment. There were also plenty of restrictions, which combined with teachers’ thinking and their practice. The study also found that teachers were restricted in their practice by the curriculum, and especially by the pressure of having to provide evidence of learning through formal methods. Despite the different contexts between the two studies, there were some similarities in the findings in Wood and Bennett’s study (1997) and this one. This will be further discussed in Chapter 6, Discussion. Wood and Bennett’s research (1997) also suggested that being aware of teachers’ thinking and values based on practices is an essential part of improving a curriculum. Based on this theory, this small-scale study hopes to

contribute to some change in the current curriculum in Turkey. Wood and Bennett's study was very influential, as being one of the first articles perused for this research, it set some direction and guidelines for the research questions.

The "government-funded Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness in Early Learning (SPEEL) project" by Moyles, Adams and Musgrove (2002) in England aimed to investigate the factors of effective pedagogy of early years teachers. Alongside this project, the researchers discussed the challenges experienced by teachers in articulating their tacit and instinctive "knowledge of their own pedagogy; and the teachers' approaches about understanding their own pedagogy and the conceptual dissonance" (p. 463) discovered in their answers. The research has been conducted in 27 settings in England through interviews and videotapes stimulated reflective questions. In this study, the teachers' thoughts about the quality of their practices were reviewed and this provided a comprehensive understanding of effective early years pedagogy. Moreover, Pui-Wah Cheng (2001) investigated the understanding and implementation of play in the early years programme through a single case study with two kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong. The study revealed that there was an unclear understanding about the concept of "learning through play", and a gap between teachers' chosen theories and their practice (p. 857). The research also reflected on the complexity of learning and teaching; it underlined that the main concern of the early years sector should be to reduce the dissonance between theory and practice.

Ploof's study (2014) demonstrated that early years teachers' perceptions about the link between their beliefs and practices were not as strong and clear as in reality. The evidence from the research "did indeed suggest a lack of connection between teacher beliefs and practices in several areas, though teachers do not seem to perceive or be aware of this lack of connection" (p. 168). As discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, this lack of self-awareness and reflective practice could be an obstruction for using play as a main teaching and learning tool in an early years setting. This current research revealed that helping teachers become more aware of their practices could spark an effective change in their practices. This point will be demonstrated in the Findings Chapters, and will be discussed in the Discussion chapter.

To sum up, teachers' understanding and knowledge is important to understand their practice. This is the basis of pedagogical researches. Teachers' beliefs and their theories can be linked not only to their teaching strategies but also to the curriculum document. In this study, I investigated the teachers' understandings about their practice and thoughts about SELD in the context of play. This study will hopefully be helpful in adding to the Turkish early years literature and the Turkish early years curriculum. In this study, for the purpose of illustrating SELD in play based practices, I used video recordings as an instrument for collecting vast and rich data, and to stimulate reflective conversations with the teachers. In addition, it is also important to elaborate on the global focus of SELD in the early years settings to see the juxtaposition of local perspectives of SELD in line with policy implementation.

2.6. The Global Importance of SELD in ECE

It is crucial that SELD's benefits be used effectively in early years settings, as an aspect of high quality education. In recent ECE policy and curriculum documents in the USA, Sweden, Australia and England, the educational importance of SEL has been emphasised (Greenberg and Kusche, 1993; Kimber et al, 2013; Slee et al, 2011; EYFS, 2012).

A universal programme for supporting SEL competencies and decreasing aggression and behaviour problems, known as the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) programme has been developed and used in the USA. This programme was improved by Kusche and Greenberg and its main purpose was preventive intervention for deaf children (Greenberg and Kusche, 1993). The PATHS programme is only one of many such intervention programmes in the USA. PATHS, a typical educational programme for SEL targets "the development of social and emotional skills through the teaching of an explicit curriculum" (Humphrey, 2013: p. 52). The following four expectations "guide the PATHS prevention" (Crean and Johnson, 2013; p. 57) programme:

"1-Children's ability to understand and discuss emotions is related to both communicative development and the ability to inhibit behaviour and show self-control;

2- Children's ability to manage, understand, and discuss emotions operate under developmental constraints and is also affected by socialization practices;

3- Children's ability to understand their own and others' emotions is a central component to effective social problem solving;

4- The school environment is a fundamental ecology that can be a central focus of change." (Crean and Johnson, 2013; p. 57).

SED provides children with a sense of themselves, learning in different ways, developing empathy for others, managing strong emotions, regulating their own behaviours, establishing and sustaining relationships, resolving conflicts, gaining confidence and reaching goals (Mid-State Central Early Childhood Direction Centre, 2009). Similar SEL programmes are being initiated in Europe and all over the world, because of the immediate benefits for children and the longer-term impact on their academic outcomes.

In Sweden, school teachers carry out Social and Emotional Training (SET) as an SEL programme with junior, intermediate students and senior students in regular weekly sessions a week throughout the academic year.

"SET focuses on helping to develop the following five characteristics of the students: self-awareness, managing one's emotions, empathy, motivation, and social competence. Typically, the components merge into one another, and an exercise according to the manual may address several functions. The following themes recur in the tasks: responsible decision-making, problem-solving, coping with strong emotions, appreciating similarities and differences, clarification of values, conflict management, interpretation of pictures and narratives, doing more of what makes one feel good, resisting peer pressure and being able to say "No", knowing what one is feeling, reading people and situations, cooperation, communication skills, setting goals, and working to attain them, giving and receiving positive feedback, and stress management" (Kimber et al, 2013: p. 20).

“KidsMatter” is the Australian government’s SEL-related approach for primary schools (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2009). KidsMatter has four components. The first component, “a positive school community” focuses on developing the school atmosphere through promoting mental health, respectful relationships and belonging and inclusion. The second component is “SEL for students” which focuses on providing an effective SEL curriculum for students to practise and transfer their SELD competences. The third component, “working with parents and carers” aims at improving collaboration between schools and parents/caregivers, supports parents in relation to their children’s mental health. The final component, “helping children experiencing mental health difficulties” focuses on expanding schools’ “understanding of mental health difficulties, improving help-seeking and responding to students’ experiences of mental health difficulties” (<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au>). “Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, *beyondblue*, the Australian Psychological Society and Principals Australia, and Australian Rotary Health Research Fund” developed the KidMatters programme in collaboratively (<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au>). Therefore, this programme is in accordance “with the WHO (2011) model that outlines risk and protective factors that reside in the child, family, school, life events and social settings” (Slee et al, 2011; p. 40).

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in England outlines SED as giving young children a favourable sense of themselves and others; helping them to build favourable interaction with their social environment and develop respect for others; improve SED competences and learn how to control their feelings and emotions; to understand appropriate behaviours in the social environment and to have a self-confidence; to take and discharge responsibilities and to obey the rules where necessary (EYFS, 2012). The Social Emotional Aspect of Learning (SEAL) programme is a specific programme in England. SEAL is defined “as a comprehensive approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and wellbeing of all who learn and work in schools” (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007; p. 4).

In light of the benefits of SELD, the research showed that the children who participated in a New Jersey research titled a specific programme “Social Decision Making and Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS)” were observed to have the following traits:

- “-greater sensitivity to other’s feelings
- better understanding of the consequences of their behaviour
- increased ability to size up interpersonal situations and plan appropriate actions
- higher self-esteem
- more positive pro-social behaviour
- more positive behaviour and leadership behaviours with peers
- lower than expected anti-social, self-destructive, and socially disordered behaviour, even when followed up into high school
- improvement in their learning to learn skills in academic areas that had been infused with social decision making
- improved use of skills in self-control, social awareness, and social decision making and problem solving in situations occurring both inside and outside the classroom” (Elias, 2004; p. 117).

Having well-developed skills in SELD competence provides children with the chance to cope with quarrel and many potential problems such as anti-social behaviour and low self-esteem.

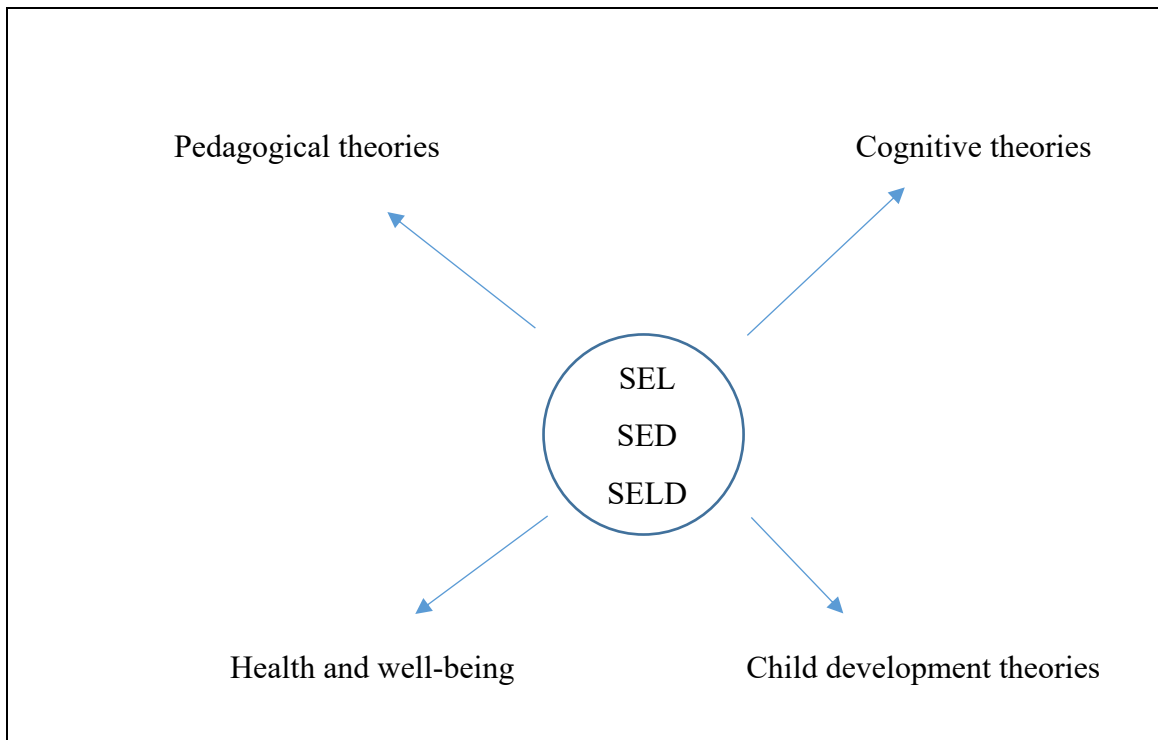


Figure 1: Instrumentals of SELD

These are the different influences on how policies have been designed for young children in the examples given here. There are some similarities and differences among the SELD provisions from these four countries; each shows SEL has a considerable place and each reflects the ultimate outcomes for their respective countries. However, the Turkish ECE system’s developmental points on the SED area are not consistent with the aforementioned countries. When comparing the social emotional skills with the EYFS’s criteria of SED, there are significant differences. It is arguable that some competencies, which are mentioned in the previous chapter, are suitable for social and emotional contexts. SED is the skill

“to understand, manage, and express the social emotional aspects of one’s life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving problems, and adapting to complex demands of growth and development” (Elias et al., 1997: p. 2).

In spite of Elias and colleagues’ declaration about social and emotional skills, many Turkish research studies address children’s SED skills only, and do not specifically mention SEL in this context. It has been shown in Figure 1 that SEL programmes of other countries consider not only child development theories and cognitive theories but also pedagogical approaches, children’s health and well-being. Unfortunately, the

Turkish early years curriculum does not incorporate SEL, but focuses on SED. However, the basic approach of SED has been informed by child development theories to obtain the targets in the Turkish curriculum, while other countries are considering pedagogical, and mental theories and health and well-being factors in their SELD programme. There are some studies on SED and SEL in the Turkish educational context that focus on the development of social skills and the pedagogical contexts in which these can be fostered. Also, the literature is based on child development theories. Accordingly, the SED area in the curriculum has not been updated through actual research.

Recent studies have shown a considerable emphasis on the focus of SEL, however, traditionally, schools are mostly inclined towards academic instruction, goals and achievements such as mathematics, science, language and literacy. This situation can be clearly seen in the Turkish ECE system as well. However, it has been overlooked that well-qualified social-emotional competences are helpful for children's successful academic success. Fortunately, endeavours to promote SEL in the curriculum have proven important to developing amount of positive effect on children and young people, such as increasing SED competence, improving academic success as well as reducing well-being problems such as coping with stress and anxiety (Durlak et al, 2015; Humphrey, 2013). Thus, children develop into more effective learners, thereby increasing academic achievement, which is used as a justification for SEL in the curriculum. Therefore, SEL incorporates SED as well and they are not distinguishable for the purpose of this study. The following sub-section incorporates how the Turkish ECE curriculum includes developmental acquisitions in the educational settings, especially in promoting children's SELD.

2.6.1. A Local Perspective: Turkish ECE Curriculum and Implementation

Children start to express their emotions in the early years to connect with others around them, firstly with their families and then followed by preschool environment. However, children's learning must be supported by an appropriate curriculum too. This sub-section provides details about the early years curriculum in Turkey, which covers four main aims as stated in the policy document:

- 1- Promoting children's cognitive, physical, language and emotional development.
- 2- Preparing children for elementary school.
- 3- Provisioning children who come into the school from low social background.
- 4- Supporting children's ability to speak good Turkish.

The main implementation purposes of the pre-school stage are to provide and support children's physical, cognitive, language development, and promote their school readiness for the next compulsory stage of education. In Turkey, most pre-school teachers place more emphasis on the cognitive and language development of children. In this way, they place less importance on social and emotional development. This issue is very common in Turkey, as I myself experienced while working in this sector. Therefore, the main structure of this thesis is to understand teachers' beliefs and practices around SED, as this could be helpful to improve the pre-school curriculum and teachers' pedagogical approaches.

SEL is integral to curriculum frameworks in ECE. But unfortunately, Turkish curriculum's SED area for early years children is insufficient for supporting teachers' practice and their assessment. The curriculum was created by professionals who considered other countries' early childhood programmes, and contemporary early childhood education approaches. However, there is no information about which countries' programmes and which approaches, or theories were considered in the policy document. There is a statement in the curriculum document that the child is the centre of programme, but this study aims to explore whether this is respected in practice. The purpose of this section is to show how SEL is conceptualised in a sample of curriculum frameworks, beginning with the Turkish Pre-school Education programme. The curriculum takes into account social and emotional development skills and has set the following targets for children to achieve during pre-school education, along with and explanations of typical behaviours for each skill, and some guidance on what teachers should provide:

-Introducing himself/herself,

Explanation: there should be opportunities for children to introduce themselves; their name, personality, gender, physical appearance, or their interests in the classroom.

-Introducing his/her family members,

Explanation: being able to say their parents' phone number and address is expected from children. Also, there should be activities for children to introduce their families.

-Expressing themselves in a creative way,

Explanation: displaying creativity and originality in activities, and the ability to explain thoughts and ideas in creative ways are expected. For this purpose, drama, dance, art, music, poetry, and story-telling activities must be planned. It is expected that teachers should attempt to introduce new art programs, such as visiting art galleries and museums, visiting or inviting an artist or artisan into the classroom, visiting nature parks, attending concerts.

-Explaining and understanding others' emotions,

Explanation: children must gain empathetic skills; be able to read and understand facial expressions, and explain verbally their understanding of others. Teachers must plan activities for children to achieve this target.

-Displaying his/her emotions about a situation,

Explanation: children should be able to express their emotions in any situation. There should be opportunities for children to display their emotions when they are happy, sad, excited, angry, surprised and so on. Teachers should teach children that these emotions are necessary for daily life and that these emotions need to be controlled so as to not harm others or themselves.

-Defending their own and others' rights,

Explanation: teachers must plan activities to make children aware that they have rights in accordance with Children's Rights Agreement. There should be reading and watching activities about children's rights.

-Motivating himself/herself,

Explanation: teachers must plan activities to support children's motivations. It is necessary that children start a task of their own volition and be responsible for completing it themselves.

-Respecting differences,

Explanation: there must be activities encouraging respect for other people's characteristics, and social and cultural differences. Being a role model is important in this target. Therefore, teachers must be a good model and explain the importance of respecting others to children's families.

-Explaining their cultural characteristics,

Explanation: there should be activities to introduce Turkish culture as well as foreign cultures. For example, flags can be introduced. Various specialities of cultures such as celebrations, foods, clothes, music, toys, dance, money, etc. can be used in different activities.

-Fulfilling her/his responsibilities,

Explanation: some daily responsibilities should be given to children. Children's awareness about responsibilities and fulfilling them must be developed. Adults must be good role-models for children. It is also expected that teachers instil a respect for nature; not wasting water, electricity or food, and protecting animals. Teachers must teach children to be conscious consumers.

-Taking a particular responsibility in Ataturk themed activities,

Explanation: teachers must plan developmentally appropriate Ataturk-based activities to encourage children to learn about Ataturk's life and his revolutions. Teachers should give opportunities to children to express their feelings.

-Obeying the rules,

Explanation: obeying rules is important to maintaining a social life. Teachers must plan activities to teach children etiquette such as greetings, to thank, to be kind, to apologise, eating rules, cleaning rules, traffic rules.

-Protecting the aesthetics of their environment,

Explanation: there should be activities to teach children to observe their environments and to make them aware of the attractiveness of nature, to maintain the cleanliness and tidiness of environment to live pleasantly. There should be a learning process that children can design their own environment without harming nature.

-Realising the value of art,

Explanation: it is important that children realise and investigate artefacts' colours, shapes, lines, dimensions, texture, and rhythm. Also, art should not be isolated to only painting, there are also another aspects of art such as sculpture, graphics, photo, architectural structures and music. After investigating artefacts, children are provided the opportunity to express their ideas and emotions. Children are taught to take care of artefacts and to understand their value.

-Believing in himself/herself,

Explanation: self-conception is important in early years, and teachers must plan group activities, give children opportunities to express themselves, to make decisions, and to become leaders.

-Explaining that everyone in society has different roles

Explanation: there should be activities to teach children that everyone has different roles to play in society, e.g. teacher is a teacher in the school, at the same time he/she is a mother/father at home, and he/she has to share the house duties with his/her family members.

-Solving problems with others.

Explanation: this target aims to give children problem solving skills in their social life. There must be activities in which children encounter conflicts or problematic situations and allow children to solve them, such as drama activities, storytelling or language activities. (MEB, 2013).

These targets and explanation notes for the teachers are used to provide preschool children's SED in Turkey. When teachers plan their activities, they should consider

these targets and the explanations for guidance. Children are expected to achieve the targets at the end of the related activities. It is argued that the targets, their explanations and the nominal guidance for teachers are difficult to interpret and do not seem to reflect child-centred principles of play. The curriculum tends to be influenced by psychological theories, and even though there seems to be a staged approach to how the learning goals are defined and organised, there is no further information in the policy document. However, some of the targets are abstract, while others are more concrete, which questions how easy it is for children to demonstrate those targets. It is also questionable whether all these targets are useful or appropriate in the early years. The Turkish framework contrasts with the pedagogical assumption in research cited previously that children's learning and development are not linear and teachers need a sophisticated understanding play and pedagogy (Walsh et al., 2017). This confusing point renders teachers' practice problematic and this study aims to explore these problems in the context of Turkey to foreground these debates in a specific cultural-historical context. It is prescribed that pre-school children should gain satisfactory skills in clarifying their own identities and that of their families, expressing emotions, obeying rules, becoming creative, communicating, fulfilling their responsibilities during the school-based activities, and becoming aware of citizenship within an Ataturk-themed target. In Turkish culture, it is important to know Ataturk, the founder of Turkey and his importance in Turkish history. These targets, which are the critical points of this research, aim to ensure that children gain basic behaviours of SED in the early years in Turkey. However, unfortunately, there is no specific description of how SED should be implemented except through the targets and their explanations as described at the beginning of this sub-section. Therefore, there is a significant gap both in research on SEL, and in explaining how and in what ways the Turkish Early Years Curriculum guides teachers' practice and provision during ECE. But, as Humphrey (2013) highlighted, there are three common benefits of SEL:

“-Preventive, utility, whereby SEL helps to ‘inoculate’ children and young people from a variety of negative outcomes, such as emotional and behavioural difficulties.

-SEL promotes a range of desirable outcomes, such as increased social competence.

-these two properties make children more effective learners, thus increasing academic attainment” (p: 9).

From this perspective, it can be emphasised that SEL and SED are interwoven and it is hard to distinguish between the two. As discussed in the previous sections, SEL incorporates SED, and both are the focus of ECE policy frameworks. And yet, the Turkish ECE system seems to lag behind other countries in paying due attention to both of these areas. The inadequate conception of SELD in Turkey makes it necessary for an in-depth, rigorous study to be carried out. To make this point clear and understandable, the focus will be on both free play and structured play, because they take up most time in a day in Turkish early years settings. At the same time, Turkish professionals are working on SELD to develop this area in early years and primary schools, so the following section will present some of these studies.

2.7. Turkish Literature about SELD

Seven (2006) researched the relationship between the level of pre-school children's social skills and their attachment behaviours, focusing on 56 boys and 54 girls. Seven used two data collection instruments: first, the Cassidy Uncompleted Story of a Toy's Family and second, Evaluation of Social Skills System Basic Education Teacher Form. The research found positive correlations on the relationship between security of attachment and some sub-scales (collaboration, self-control, and assertiveness). There were no meaningful differences between gender, and educational background of parents, but there was a positive effect of socio-economic situations. The study suggested that SED skills were crucial for children in order to structure their personal development and increase happiness levels, and recommends that further research on SED skills in the early years is necessary.

The research by Gazezoglu (2007) found that in order to develop emotional well-being, self-confidence, positive pro-social behaviours, and self-care skills in children who are continuing pre-school education, play might be used as an effective method when compared with a traditional education style. Pre-test and post-test methods were used in the research. The sample included 20 children in the experimental group, and 20 children in the control group. Development of self-care skills scale was implemented and the experimental group received the 'Teaching with Play Programme' which was an 8 weeks programme and included 16 periods of play. The experimental group had higher scores than the control group in the post-test. It was concluded that the Teaching

with Play Programme can be used in the pre-school in order to effectively develop children's self-care development.

Dereli (2008) investigated the relationship between 6 year-old children's competencies in solving social problems and understanding emotions skills, using the Social Skills Education Programme using a pre and post-test, the "Wally Problem Solving Detective Game Test" which was developed by Dereli in light of Webster-Stratton's (1990) Pre-school "Problem Solving Test and Rubin and Krasnor's (1986) Child Social Problem Solving Test" and 'Wally's Feelings Test' which was designed by Webster-Stratton (cited in Dereli, 2008, p. 120). The findings showed that children who undertook the programme were more successful in solving problems and understanding emotions. Dereli (2008) concluded that educated children tend to use pro-social behaviours when they faced a problem.

Kaya and Siyez (2008) in their experimental study found that teaching social skills in order to improve children's communication and friendship skills must be undertaken from pre-school to high-school within social skills development programmes. There are different programmes to provide children with social and emotional competence. Montessori pre-schools programmes consistently score higher on helping on children achieve social and emotional attributes such as life-long learning, being independent, being tolerable, self-confident, making decisions, and being collaborative than schools with other programmes (Kocyigit and Kayili (2008). In order to prevent anti-social behaviours and to support pro-social behaviours, quality programmes that focus on social skills in ECE must be implemented (Ozbey and Alisanoglu, 2009). Gul (2006) found that when pre-school teachers use symbolic play as a leading activity, children make progress quickly in their development. This is because children can show their emotions, try to understand others' emotions, be empathetic, and solve problems in their play. It is significance that children can display their feelings about themselves and their social environment with facial expressions. This is a considerable point for social, emotional and personal development. Being aware of self-emotions and being able to express them might be supported in ECE period when children have the most potential to develop intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically (Celik et al, 2002).

A review by Turnuklu (2004) offered four considerable points for the levels of the Turkish curriculum to support students' SEL. First, there must be unique programme for each age group. Secondly, SEL programmes should not be separate, but must be integrated in other disciplines such as science, mathematics or history. Thirdly, teachers must consider SEL programme's targets in all social interaction activities. Finally, SEL programmes must include learning for teachers, school managers and parents. Moreover, an assessment measurement instrument was improved by Kabakci and Korkut-Owen (2010) for 6th and 8th class primary schools in Turkey. They also suggested that this instrument could be adapted to other age groups. Even though both research studies strongly proposed that SEL is the more important aspect of learning in pre-school, none of the Turkish curriculum supports this area. Unfortunately, these studies were not considered by the government to incorporate SELD into any aspect of the curriculum, not only for pre-school but also all levels of the curriculum. Also, the current SED area in the pre-school curriculum has not been developed through research studies.

Furthermore, it is also important for this research to clarify understandings on how teachers are being educated in the related faculties in Turkey for social and emotional development. In this related point there is a study by Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin (2016) which explores the importance of social emotional learning from the perspectives of pre-service teachers. The study covers 23 undergraduate students (known as pre-service teachers) who undertook a teacher training course in the school of education in a Turkish university. The study found that the vast of majority of pre-service teachers do not have adequate knowledge and instruction regarding SEL, and they need to be provided with opportunities to upgrade themselves in this regard. Improving teachers' knowledge on social-emotional learning should be considered in their training and teaching practices. Findings show that the pre-service teachers feel that they lack experience in managing their emotions, and anger control skills. Even though the candidates describe themselves as having clear understanding about communication and empathy, it seems that there is absence of understanding about these skills in practice. It has been found that this can be attributed to a lack of education in the training programme (Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin, 2016). It is an

important study to highlight the need firstly to support teachers' SELD prior to starting work as a teacher.

In 2015, there was an annual primary education symposium about SEL in practice and curriculum across all level of schools, which has been organized by the Association of Turkish Private Schools (TOZOK). There were 40 academics, 620 private school managers and teachers at the symposium. It was reiterated that social emotional competencies are essential for all members of society to function and communicate effectively. Recently, devastating situations in Turkey and around the world have spurred educators to emphasise cultivating skills such as tolerance, empathy, ethical, managing emotions, and improved social and emotional skills. This means that teachers and parents have an important role to play in supporting the development and improvement of young children's skills. An agreement has been provided by the symposium that:

“There must be a SEL programme in the schools for tolerant, successful, creative, and happy students. Well-improved SED skills are the pathways to academic success, self-discipline, self-awareness, social-awareness, decision-making, and communication and relationship skills. Therefore, there must be opportunities to provide those skills to the students through the curriculum and additional programmes” (2015; p. 180).

As can be seen from the relevant Turkish literature, these findings illustrate that there are insufficient educational frameworks in pre-schools to support SELD, and there is no specific SEL in early years contexts. Although there are financial resources and structures, there is still a gap among policy-makers in recognising the critical nature of young children's SEL. This is consistent with Dowling's claim that research studies, curriculum and guidelines for programmes have not highlighted this area sufficiently (Dowling, 2010). Therefore, this study considers the gap in the existing research and literature to support SELD in the Turkish early years settings.

2.8. Conclusion and Research Questions

The literature review aimed to provide a background for the importance of SELD, and the issues in the Turkish ECE system. The skills of being sociable, improving understanding others and the sense of self through play in the early years can have positive impact on children's academic and social competences. Weare (2007) discusses that enhancing SED can help give rise to better learning outcomes and success. Therefore, development of these skills is important to support children's subsequent life success and also academic success, and SELD must be structured in the curriculum and delivered through both open-ended activities such as play, and through intentional teaching activities.

In summary, the importance of SEL is well established, and there is evidence that specific programmes are effective in promoting specific competencies (knowledge, skills and concepts) in children of different ages. For young children, play provides the context within which many of these competencies develop, through both structured and freely chosen play. The extensive evidence on the value of SEL indicates that this strand of the curriculum is essential for ECE, so that the provision supports all areas of children's learning and development. However, it appears that the Turkish education system is falling behind in the SELD domain. Therefore, this research aims to explore Turkish pre-school teachers' understandings of SELD in the context of play, and what provision they make in their planning and curriculum activities. This study aims to raise the profile of SELD in the Turkish pre-school system. The outcomes may lead to teachers and policy makers having a better understanding of the importance of SELD that may inform policy and practice. However, this study will only be a tiny drop in the ocean of the Turkish ECE context and further research will undoubtedly be needed. It is important and original for this study to show the Turkish teachers' clear understandings about SELD. It would also help to develop not only SED area in the Turkish curriculum but also improve a SEL programme for early years in the Turkish education system.

However, to date, research on SELD has mainly focused on children's developmental pathways, and there is little research on teachers' understanding of SEL skills or how they put SEL into practice. In this context, it is important to ask how teachers conceptualise children's SELD in their play – from curriculum, educational background

or experiences? How are they planning for play, or maybe a better question would be *do* they plan play activities as a supportive tool of SELD? If so, how do they assess children's SELD in the ECE context? These are the main questions that will be addressed in this study. The major theories and research studies supported the conceptual framework for these central questions in this chapter. The answers to these questions will be reached through a multiple case study using video-recording, interviews with four teachers in two schools, within two different classes from each school. The next chapter will provide an overview of the research methodology and design, and how these research questions will be addressed.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Methodology is defined as “a theory and analysis of how research should proceed” (Harding, 1987, p. 2), and an “analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 161). Methodology is “the study - description, the explanation, and the justification- of methods, and not the methods themselves” (Kaplan, 1964, p. 18), and “a way of thinking about and studying social reality” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 3). From these definitions, it can be said that methodology ensures justification for the methods and research design of a study. On the one hand, methods are defined as “techniques for gathering evidence” (Harding, 1987; p. 2) or “procedures, tools and techniques” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 158). Methods can be used as a part of research action that includes procedures, data collection and analyses. Strauss and Corbin (1998) emphasised that “the techniques and procedures (method), on the other hand, furnish the means for bringing that vision into reality” (p. 8). In view of these definitions, this chapter aims to present the research methodology of this study, my research position, research approaches and design, sampling procedure, data collection techniques, ethical considerations, data organisation and analysis process.

Sikes (2004) emphasises that

“a reflexive and reflective and, therefore, a rigorous researcher” is able to “present their findings and interpretations in the confidence that they have thought about, acknowledged and been honest and explicit about their stance and the influence it has had upon their work” (p. 19).

In light of this, the first section presents my positionality that includes the influence of my background and its impact upon the methodology and individual methods used in this study. Secondly, research approach, design, and sampling procedure will be discussed in the relevant epistemological and ontological assumptions and their implications. Later on data collection process and its organisation and analysis process will be represented.

3.2. The Researcher and Positionality

Education has been a considerable part of my life since I was 14 years old. I started to undertake pedagogy sessions from the first year of high school, followed by undergraduate and Master's degrees. Even though the fundamental sessions provided basic knowledge about pedagogy, I became deeply interested in early years pedagogy theories and studies, and engaged in personal research outside of the course material. After graduation from high school, I decided to embark on my undergraduate degree in Early Years Education, with much greater emphasis on pedagogy. The postgraduate Master's degree was also in this area, and my research interest lay in personal, social and emotional development and play. My thesis topic was: "Reception classes practitioners' understanding of the relationship between social emotional development and indoors and outdoors play" (Karaoglu, 2013). Through this research I aim to further my academic career in this field and to contribute new perspectives on ECE from within the Turkish education system.

My personal experiences with pedagogy have cultivated in me a positive attitude towards researching social emotional learning and development (SELD). Also, it convinced me that in the Turkish education system, especially in the early years, there is a noticeable lack in curriculum, practice and teacher training. When I was working as an early years education teacher, my colleagues and I failed to prioritise SELD in children. However, in my 2 years of experience in the early years field, I realised that children who display a good sense of well-being and communication skills can contribute to the classroom ethos by learning effectively, playing well with their friends or teaching them skills and concepts. Even though my natural and spontaneous observations led me to these ideas, neither my colleagues nor I took specific SELD teaching activities into account. Furthermore, there was no explicit provision for SELD in the curriculum. From the experience, I decided to investigate teachers' understandings of SELD in their practice and how they consider the curriculum. I agree with Jackson's point, which states,

"Research can begin with initial thoughts of an area of interest. These thoughts become crystalized as further consideration is given to what is to be studied, the narrowing of the focus, the

setting of aims and objectives for the research and the formulation of research questions” (2013, p. 50).

Besides this, Sikes (2004) stated that researchers should be reflective “how they are paradigmatically and philosophically positioned” (p. 19) and be aware of the influence on their research. Also she cautions that:

“to present research design as being a straight forward technical matter of ‘horses for courses’, with objectively choosing the most appropriate, if not only possible, methodology and procedures for a specific research project would be misleading and even dishonest and immoral” (p. 19).

She emphasises the researchers’ ontological and epistemological assumptions. Also, presumptions regarding human nature influence the selection of using methods that are important for the research design, as Sikes highlighted. However, it must be underlined that the foundation of research comes from the understanding of ontology and epistemology.

3.3. Research Approach

Ontological and epistemological stances are a skeleton of the research. They are a theory of knowledge and how the researcher can reveal knowledge through using methods in line with specific approaches or paradigms. Ontology, in a broad sense, is concerned with the theories and “assumptions about the nature of existence” (Hammersley, 2013; p. 20). In other words, ontological claims and assumptions are

“...made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality” (Blaike, 2000, p 8).

From this perspective, my interest is to capture the understanding of teachers about SELD in children’s play, focusing on the pre-school contexts in which they work. The research constructed by the participants and myself relied on their perceptions and reflections in order to understand their meaning and their experiences. Social researchers seek “an understanding of the social worlds that people inhabit, which they have already interpreted by the meanings they produce and reproduce as a necessary

part of their everyday activities together” (Blaikie, 2011; p. 5). Therefore, this clearly shows that my methodology aligns with an interpretivist position.

On the other hand, epistemology is the theory of knowledge (Grix, 2002; Wellington et al. 2005); that is, “epistemological assumptions are concerned with how we know, with the nature of knowledge, with what constitutes knowledge, with where knowledge comes from and whose knowledge it is, and with what it is possible to know and understand and represent” (Wellington et al., 2005; p. 101). On this, I am in the post-modernist line with Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007) who state, “There is no absolute knowledge, no absolute reality ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered. [...] Instead the world and our knowledge of it are seen as socially constructed” (p. 23). This shows knowledge as being embedded in its circumstantial background, which includes cultural or historical contexts. Conversely, Pring (2004) discussed that while the scientific paradigm supports an objective reality, a constructivist paradigm denies this, and proposes “reality is a social construction of the mind, with as many constructions and thus realities as there are individuals” (p. 48). Also, Gergen (2011) pointed out that “constructionism has stimulated much work in cultural study, the critical and illuminating examination of everyday life practices and artifacts” (p. 3). Those approaches closely align with the context of this research, which attempts to understand teachers’ knowledge about SELD in children’s play, and the teachers’ pedagogical assumptions in the real life context. I consider myself as a social constructivist researcher, as Gillham (2000) stated, “...not a detached ‘scientist’ but a participant observer who acknowledges (and looks out for) their roles in what they discover” (p. 7). I did this through being present during video-recording sessions in the classrooms, and also engaging in reflective dialogues with the teachers while watching the recordings.

Blaikie (2011) discussed the origin of interpretivist approaches as follows: “Everyday reality is paramount; [...] that it is the social actor's, not the social investigator's, point of view that is the basis of any accounts of social life” (p. 4). This acknowledges the context of a social constructivist based study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) debated that “there is no single blueprint for qualitative research, because there is no single picture of the world” (p. 219). In accordance with this, I believe that there is no only one answer to any given problem, and truth is subjective and socially constructed.

In keeping with my ontological and epistemological stance, and social constructivist perspective, this study drives a qualitative and interpretivist approach embedded within a case study approach. Qualitative methods can be conducted “to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; p. 11). At this point, the case study approach which provides a basis for readers “to see and understand meaning of what is recounted, has to use a more overtly narrative format” (Gillham, 2000; p. 22). Also, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) state in their research: “case studies investigate and report the real life, complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance” (p. 289). These were some of the processes in this particular case study as well.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) proposed that a case study approach should “allow readers to understand how ideas and principles can fit together” (p. 289). This fits with the purpose of this study- to understand more about how the teachers create and use their own theories as they go about their SELD-based activities. The research focuses on real life problems and atmosphere, and on the children’s SED behaviours, SEL activities and relationships within them. Thomas (2011) described a case study approach as “local knowledge case” wherein the researcher has access to the “knowledge of context, which he considers to be a ready-made strength for conducting case-study” (p. 76).

In seeking to solution the research questions, this research’s purpose is to explore and understand the nature of the Turkish pre-school teachers’ theories and practices regarding SELD in children’s play. I value people’s experiences and subjective perspectives, as I believe that it is substantial to understand what their perceptions on certain ideas are influenced by. As Gillham (2000) highlighted, a research “has its own dynamic and there will be effects (on individuals, on institutions) precisely because there is someone asking questions, clarifying procedures, collecting data” (p. 7). Conversely, the research of natural phenomena needs the scientist’s interpretation on nature through the using of scientific perspectives and theories, and making “choices about what is relevant to the problem under investigation, the social scientist studies

phenomena that are already interpreted” (Blaikie, 2011; p. 5). Therefore, I prefer to use an interpretivist approach, with qualitative methods, and to take advantage of their strengths and relevance in the context of this study. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) highlighted, one of the reason “for choosing qualitative methods is: the nature of the research problem” (p. 11). My research undertakes to understand and find the meaning of experience and understanding of teachers’ knowledge based upon their practice in the field. In keeping with my interpretivist perspective, this research undertakes a pedagogical approach to enquiry, and for this reason embraces a qualitative design with related data collection methods.

My study focuses on the teachers’ understandings and their practices, and how these are related. In this research, I have documented the teachers’ responses to use when discussing their experiences with them. I also used video recordings taking in classroom observations, and discussed with the teachers interesting excerpts from the video data. I have noted down what they talked about, and I facilitated a discussion about their practices. As a result of my interpretivist methodology and my qualitative methods, some teachers told me about their understanding, practical problems and their self-assessment about SELD. “In qualitative methodology, the focus is on the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2004; p. 10). Based on this, my research is also exploratory within multiple case studies. Stebbins (2011) underscored the importance of exploratory research “in the social sciences, including even qualitative research circles, the idea of exploration is usually mentioned” (p. 2). However, Vogt (1999) provide an in-depth description for social science exploration in his perspective that:

“...a broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life. Such exploration is, depending on the standpoint taken, a distinctive way of conducting science—a scientific process—a special methodological approach (as contrasted with confirmation), and a pervasive personal orientation of the explorer. The emergent generalizations are many and varied; they include the descriptive facts, folk concepts, cultural artifacts, structural

arrangements, social processes, and beliefs and belief systems normally found there” (p. 105).

There is no previous work which focuses on teachers’ theories and beliefs about SELD in Turkey. This gives an originality to my research and provides an exploratory case study. I did not use a large sample of Turkish pre-school teachers as it would be difficult to explore a generalised idea of teachers’ perceptions about SELD in the play context. Instead, I chose to focus on four particular teachers to explore some of the challenges they faced in providing SELD in their Turkish pre-school settings. This research thus provided a multiple case study in two different pre-school settings. Considering this, this research avoids making generalisations about any particular samples, as they are “quite misleading, because with the frequent addition and deletion of questions in the interview guide (as part of theoretical sampling), the base number used to compute the proportions can fluctuate widely, depending on the question under consideration” (Stebbins, 2011; p. 6).

3.4. Research Design

In social research, it is necessary to design methods for gathering data and to structure planning before the collection of data. A research design is not only a work plan but also includes details of the plan, in other words, what has to be done during the data collection process (De Vaus, 2001). As Boeije (2010) stated, the research plan also includes the parts of the research process such as, “the research problem, research questions, purposes, sample, data collection, analysis and reporting should be tuned to each other” (p. 20). These include the techniques used; in this case, a questionnaire for teachers, observation schedules, the identification of the two data collection settings, the four teachers from whom the data was collected, and ethics considerations. However, before starting to discuss the research instruments, I will clarify and critique the use of a case study methodology from different perspectives.

As Hammond and Wellington (2013) suggest, much of social research is case study, and on the basis of the given definitions, educational settings are suitable for case study. The case study approach makes possible “a holistic approach to studying phenomenon in its natural setting” (Willis, 2008; p. 212). It is a purposeful research approach to collect in-depth data in a real life context (Cohen et al., 2007). However, the disadvantage of case

study has been stated by Bell as "... concern about the possibility of selective reporting and resulting dangers of distortion" (2005; p. 11). A main problem with this method is that generalisation is not every time reasonable as Denscombe highlighted "that the extent to which findings from the case study can be generalised to other examples in the class depends on how far the case study example is similar to others of its type" (1998; p. 36-7). The target of this research is to gain understanding of the Turkish pre-school teachers' beliefs about SELD in the context of play, therefore case study is suitable to fulfil "a detailed snapshot of a system in action" (Edwards, 2001; p. 126), including what the actors within the system know and think about a particular area of their provision. Moreover, Gillham (2000) states that:

"A case can be an individual: it can be a group- such as family, or a class, or an office, or a hospital ward; it can be an institution- such as a school or a children's home, or a factory; it can be a large-scale community- a town, an industry, a profession. All of these are single cases; but you can also study multiple cases: a number of single parents; several schools; two different professions. It all depends what you want to find out- which leads us on" (p. 1).

On the other hand, Yin (2014) suggests that when a study involves more than one case, it is termed a multiple case study, and each teacher in this study is a case in itself. Therefore, this research can be considered a multiple case study with four single cases. I also took into account two different settings in this study- a high and a low socio-economic status school. Two teachers were from the low socio-economic context, while the other two teachers were from the higher socio-economic context. Robson (2011) describes a "case as ...the situation, individual, group, organization or whatever it is that we are interested in" (p. 135). In accordance with Robson's definition, the case in this study is "Turkish pre-school teachers' beliefs of SELD in the context of children's play" and the case is explored in two schools of contrasting socio-economic status and location, with four teachers. These settings were chosen through convenience sampling- it was easy to gather the data in these two schools as my colleagues were working there. Gall et al (1996) described "case study as the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon" (p. 545). The case study approach allowed me to explore teachers' understanding in the classroom environment in a real life context. In my study, four in-

depth case studies from different pre-school contexts in two different cities in Turkey were developed. The research questions were addressed through interviews and observations examining the case under investigation through the data collected from the two contrasting settings. I used multiple case studies to gather a detailed understanding of the four teachers' pedagogical perspectives about SELD using play to organise the data and relate to earlier literature.

Stake (1995) describes “three kinds of case study: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective” (p. 45). On the other hand, Yin (2014) identifies types of case as exploratory, descriptive and explanatory, and emphasised that “each method has its distinctive characteristics and there are large overlaps among them” (p. 8). Exploratory case studies examine the conditions that exist in experiments. Exploratory questions such as “*What are the understandings of teachers?*” need to be asked when implementing exploratory research. “What” questions create a pertinent rationale for implementing exploratory research (Yin, 2014). In line with Yin’s definition of an exploratory case study, the current research seeks to explore what teachers understand about their practice of SELD in relation to Turkish policy for pre-school education. Multiple case studies allow for the consolidation of results through the replication of patterns, which develop the strength of the findings. As Yin (2014) stated, there are two approaches to building “replication logic: literal replication in which the cases corroborate each other, and theoretical replication where the cases aim to cover different theoretical conditions” (p. 55). However, in the replication logic “procedures also should reflect some theoretical interest, not just a prediction that two cases should simply be similar or different” (Yin, 2014; p. 57). This study engaged with the same theoretical interest in two different settings. This study aims to gather teachers’ understanding about SELD in the context of children’s play, as well as discover the theories they use in their practices. Also, the study recorded teachers’ comments and critiques of the SED area in the Turkish pre-school curriculum. In order to reach the aims of this research, it takes an exploratory “interpretive approach, which assumes an in-depth understanding and deep immersion of the subject” (Thomas, 2011; p. 124) and reflects the “methodological eclectic” by building with the multiple case study design (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; p. 297).

However, Thomas (2011) concluded “that: it is the inability of case study to offer generalizable findings that is at the core of the argument against this form of research as an instrument of serious inquiry” (p. 575). He contends that this argument “fails to recognise the limits of induction in social science generally” (p. 577), and suggests generalisation another way to build a theory, generalisation “being a fluid understanding explicitly or tacitly recognising, the complexity and frailty of the generalisations we can make about human relationships” (p. 577). Simply, generalisation “is making a judgement concerning the best explanation for the facts you are collecting” (Thomas, 2011; p. 212). My research avoids making generalisations as it provides a limited exploration in the relevant Turkish literature, but does provide some suggestions for the potential development of an SELD programme in Turkey. This study is like a drop in the ocean. It is clear by now that the Turkish teachers’ understandings and beliefs about SELD are a core element in this study. Therefore, the main emphasise for the methodology is the practice of teachers and their knowledge about SELD concepts. So, in accordance with these four single cases, the sampling and methods aimed to reach rich data from the two different contexts.

3.5. Sampling Procedure

As mentioned in the previous section, my work avoids making any generalisations, and the non-probability sampling use in the research is aligned with this intention (Leman, 2015). A convenience sample, which is a type of non-probability sample, Robson (2011) stated “involves choosing the nearest and most convenient persons to act as respondents” (p. 275). Greenstein and Davis (2013) state that although “non-probability sampling do(es) not provide control for possible researcher bias in selecting elements for inclusion in the sample, and they offer no means of assessing the amount of sampling error” (p. 53), it is quite useful when a probability sample is inconvenient or unnecessary such as “exploratory or qualitative research, researchers are typically unconcerned with generalising to a population. In this case, a non-probability sampling procedure can be adequate” (Greenstein and Davis, 2013; p. 53). I recognised the advantages of non-probability sampling for my research as it is easy to conduct and considerably cheap (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Also, they stressed that a non-probability sample can prove “perfectly adequate where researchers do not intend

to generalise their findings beyond the sample in question” (p. 155). As a result, I decided to undertake a convenience sampling within non-probability sampling.

A convenience sample, occasionally known as an opportunity sample, “involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; p. 156). Andres (2017) stated that a convenience sample is one that is “easily accessible and able to participate in research” (p. 8). On the other hand, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) cited another sampling type known as “volunteer sampling- in where access is difficult, the researcher may have to rely on volunteers, for example, personal friends or friends of friends...” (p. 160). I selected 4 teachers who were my colleagues in the undergraduate degree programme, rendering this an opportunity and volunteer sample in that the people already knew the research background and were willing to participate in my study. I deliberately chose people who were willing to be involved. Although there may be issues with convenience sampling regarding bias and trustworthiness, this sample was thought to be suitable, as the aim of the study was to acquire an understanding rather than generalisation of the issue (Robson, 2011). I was afraid that the teachers would not want to join the research or that they would find it too difficult and so would not be willing to be involved in the study. Therefore, sampling is always difficult, but as long as I acknowledge that this method was deliberately chosen despite its limitations. More importantly, I wanted to make sure that the teachers I chose would not drop out. My own approach to reduce bias is as follows: I asked the same interview questions to the all teachers, thus enabling me to gather the same information from the interviews. By asking the same questions, I ensured that I was fair to the teachers in terms of data gathering through not bringing my personal bias to the interviews, and being aware of my own positionality. Sometimes, I asked follow-up questions, if I wanted to be sure to obtain clearer answers. Some of the questions asked were, “What do you mean?” or “Could you please explain this point further?” in consideration with my observation notes. This ensured that the interviews were broadly similar, that I sought the teachers’ meanings and perspectives, and that I did not interpret the interview answers with my own bias. The approach I used to manage the sheer amount of data collection did not interfere in any way with the overall reliability of the study after interviews were

completed. At the end of the study, the participants commented on how their attitudes and awareness towards the SED programme have changed. Andres (2017) made a point that “volunteer samples within a convenience context [...] are bounded by ‘place’ and hence can be contextualized to give the findings more meaning” (p. 9). At present, the teachers in their pre-school settings are consciously making efforts to improve their practice. They were helpful and willing to assist in data collection during the long and tedious process. Also, this study includes children as participants in video-recording sessions. I recorded them while they were playing and sometimes the recordings were affected by their distractions. I will explain these points in-depth in the following sections.

3.6. Data Collection

The interpretive approach draws upon actions that “may be thought of as behaviour-with-meaning and shared experiences” (Cohen, et. al., 2011; p. 17). Interpretivism denotes a spotlight on how the social world is interpreted in cultural and historically situated interpretations (Robson, 2011), which can reveal the nuances and variations within different cultural contexts. Thus, I consider myself an interpretivist researcher, and the current study will employ qualitative methods in an interpretive paradigm, reflecting the position that “qualitative research is an intellectual, creative and rigorous craft that the practitioner not only learns but also develops through practice” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011; p. 4). The data collected in qualitative research is rich, deep and intensive through interviews and conversations. In this study, video recording was employed with the convenience sample to capture details and variations in practices and to act as a method for stimulated recall with the teachers.

The data collection methods for this research included pre-video interviews, video-day interviews, video recording of play activities, post-video interviews and an interview with reflection questions. This “cycle of data collection” (Bennett et al., 1997; p. 28) will be carried out in two settings with four teachers and their classes. Video recordings can be used alongside individual or focus group interviews to encourage and recall discussions, and can “provide a basis for reflection on practice and continuing professional development” (Jewitt, 2012; p. 4). The pre and post-interview questions were prepared in accordance with “teachers’ knowledge and beliefs that underpin their

classroom practice” (Bennett et al., 1997; p. 18) and the literature review. The video-day interview was prepared to gather and understand the teachers’ activities and determine the best visual location of the camera in the classroom. Reflection questions in the interview aimed to explore teachers’ criticisms about the curriculum, practice and the video recording process in the research. The interviews ranged from structured questions to open-ended conversations to provide for varied responses to the video-recorded material. Also, I used observation notes to develop or further explore a question. Table 1, as seen below, compares each method against the research questions to show which data addresses each of the questions.

RQ1. How do pre-school teachers in Turkey understand SELD in the context of play?	Pre-video interviews, post-video interviews, based on video recording, observation notes, reflection questions,
RQ2. What/how do teachers plan for play in their settings, to incorporate SELD experiences?	Post-video interviews based on video recording, video-day interviews
RQ3. How do teachers interpret SELD through their assessment practices?	Post-video interviews, based on video recording, reflection questions

Table 1: Research Questions (RQ) and methods

The research covered two pre-schools in Turkey and data was collected twice; once at the beginning of the academic year and again at the end (Figure 2). The reason for this was to enable comparisons to be made of teachers’ understanding of SELD and children’s interactions with their peers and teachers over time. This provided a better understanding of how SELD in the curriculum is implemented in practice over an academic year. I have chosen two different cities in Turkey, Ankara and Osmaniye, two areas of contrasting socio-economic and cultural status. Ankara is the metropolitan capital in the centre of Turkey while Osmaniye is a small city in southern Turkey. The school in Osmaniye is of low socio-economic status. It has six classes, five of them are for 5 year old children, and the other is for a mix of 4 and 5 years old children. The children attend school for half a day- three of the classes study in the morning, and the other three of them work in the afternoon. There were children’s toilets, a small kitchen for preparing children’s food in order to serve their food in their classroom, a room for

the teachers and manager, and the classrooms in the building. There was a small garden for children with some play equipment. There were also some pre-service teachers present during some of the days in order to assist the teachers. The other school in Ankara is in a high socio-economic area. It has six classes, three of them are for 5 year old children, two of them for 4 year old children and one is for 3 year old children. The children in Ankara's school are present for a full day. Ankara's school building has two levels. There was a big kitchen to cook the children's meal, a lunch room, two classrooms, a teachers' room and an observation room between the two classrooms on the first level of the building. On the second level, there were four classrooms, one observation room between two classrooms, the assistant director's room (it was also used as the second observation room) between another two classes, one room for the psychological counsellor, one room for the school manager, and also toilets for children. The classroom environments in Ankara were richer than the Osmaniye school's classrooms such as having many different toys, a variety of options for learning centres like a sand corner, house corner and drama corners. Ankara's classrooms provided many options for children's play area in the indoors and outdoors. While Osmaniye's school compound was small and had few play areas, Ankara's school had also an underground floor with a big drama space, and a large garden designed with plenty of outdoor play equipment.

Two teachers from each school were interviewed fourteen times in two data collection phases. The first data phase (beginning of the academic term) included one pre-video interview (only first term); three video recording-day questions; three post-video interviews. The second data phase (end of the academic term) included three video recording-day interviews; three post-video interviews; and one reflection interview (only second term). I intended to use focus group interviews with both teachers in the hope of new ideas from the co-constructive conversations. However, it was a challenge to organise due to teachers' availability and time constraints.

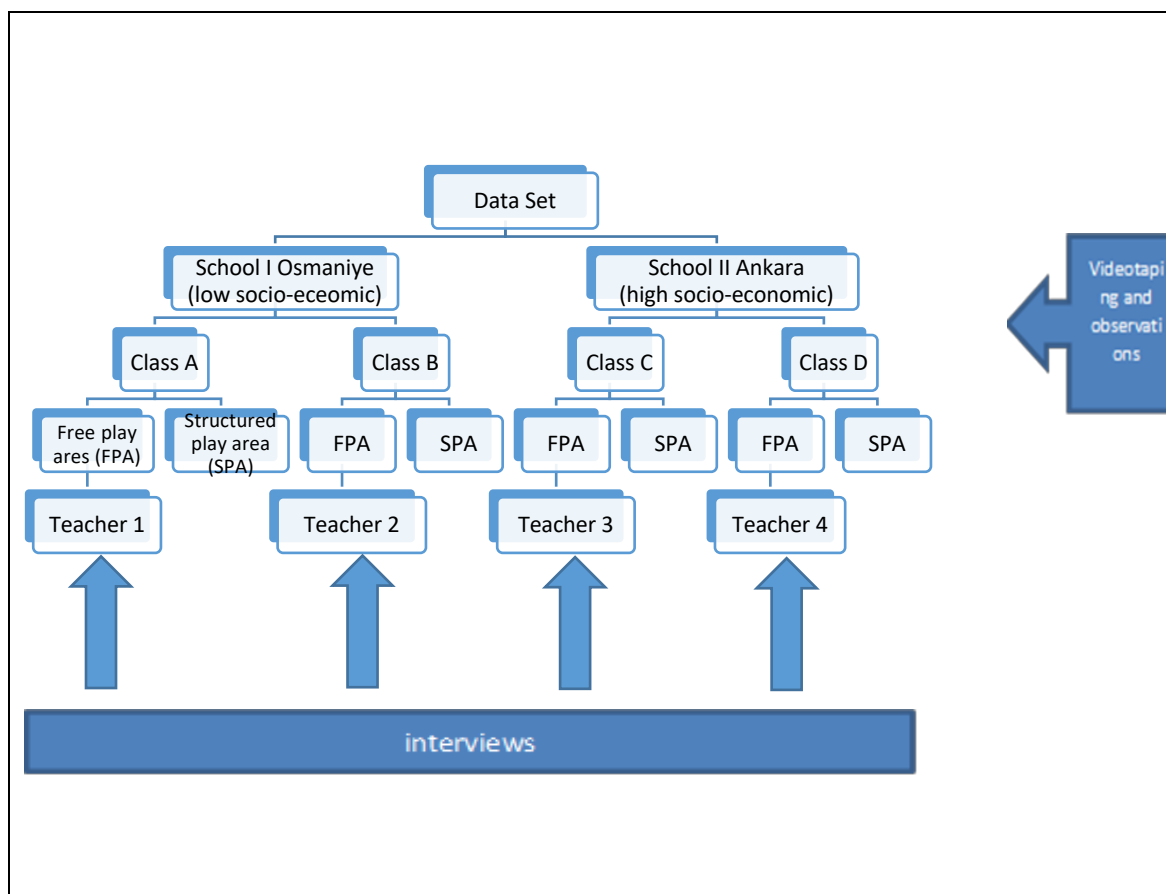


Figure 2: Interrelationships between the data settings and planned data collection methods in the free play area (FPA) and the structured play area (SPA).

This figure shows the two cities, four classes, play areas and the teachers involved in data collection. In total, there were two classes and two teachers from each school who participated in the data gathering process. The video recordings were done in both the free play areas and structured play areas in each class, with the cameras positioned according to the teachers' recommendations. I asked the teachers which part of the classroom would provide the best visual position for my camera. The teachers showed me the area where they organised children's play and suggested to me a place to obtain the best views. So, generally, I set up the camera in different places during the indoor and outdoor play activities. For example, sometimes the camera was on the teacher's table or in front of a window during indoor activities, while sometimes I handled the camera during outdoor activities. However, during children's free play time, I recorded one activity corner according to the teachers' recommendations. For example, Zara mostly recommended me to put the camera on the teacher's table in order to see the whole class. This was because she told me that in general, many children play in front

of the table. So this made it easy to record children’s free play and their dialogues. In considering the camera views based on the teachers suggestions, there were two video recordings done in structured play areas and one video recording in free play areas. So, each teacher had three recordings. There are a total of twelve recordings for the first phase of data collection. The same directions were implemented in the second data phase as well, resulting in a complete data set of twenty-four videotapes. These strategies enabled me to obtain a representative sample of the range of activities in the selected classes.

DATA SETS SCHEDULE		
DATA SET I _beginning of the academic term (28.09.2015- 26.12.2015)	A. Pre-video Interviews	All of these interviews were analysed as a whole data set from the beginning and end of the academic terms.
	B. Video-day Interviews x3 (f-p-p)*	
	C. Post-video Interviews x3	
DATA SET II _end of the academic term (25.04.2016- 23.06.2016)	B. Video-day Interviews x3 (f-f-p)*	
C. Post-video Interviews x3		
	D. Reflection Interviews	
*f: free play / p: planned play		

Table 2: Data Set Schedule

The table above shows the schedule of the data collection process. The data was processed twice - at the beginning and end of terms from each teacher.

In the first phase of data collection, the pre-video interview was used for each teacher before starting the video recordings. The video-day and post-video interviews were implemented in one free play period, and two planned play times for each class. In all, three videos were recorded of each playtime. This process spanned from 28th September to 26th December 2015.

In the second phase, video-day and post-video interviews were used for each teacher. The reflection interview was conducted to gather more insightful data from each teacher as the final stage of data collection. In the second data phase, video recordings also occurred three times in total - one free play time, and two planned play times. This phase lasted between 25th April and 23rd June 2016. Data collection twice in a year explored whether the teachers were consistent in their thoughts, and whether the curriculum supported the children in their SELD through the year.

There are video recordings in which I was aware of the children's distractions; they were curious about the camera and wanted to explore it instead of engaging in the intended activities. To minimise this, the camera was introduced into the classroom prior to the official data collection sessions to help children acclimatise to its presence. The camera was placed where children could investigate and ask questions. They also played with the camera, made short videos and watched them from the projected screen. During the data sessions, I operated the video camera while the children played or during art and craft activities. After a while, children were not interested in the camera anymore and they got used to seeing me in the classroom. The main video recordings also formed the basis for all the teachers' interviews. The teachers were asked questions about specific vignettes to gather information about their understanding of SELD in children's play. I spent a lot of time in the first term in order to obtain consent from the parents, the children and the teachers. It also took some time for the children to get familiarised with the camera. In the second term, it was faster and easier to collect my data than the first term. However, there were some extra-curricular end of term activities such as the graduation ceremony, pre-school festival, and portfolio days, when I lost some research days.

My interpretive research, includes children's videos embedded with teachers' dialogues mostly and aligns with Bennett, Wood and Rogers (1997) who emphasised that:

“An interpretive stance automatically connotes a cooperative approach since understanding of participants' perspective is not possible without extended interaction, which in turn requires a common agenda, and a sympathetic and empathic relationship between researchers and researched. In other words – research with, rather than research on, teachers” (p. 26).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) commented on a researcher's role as such:

“...to have the subject knowledge and research expertise required to conduct the case study, to be highly prepared, to have a sense of realism about the situation being researched, to be an excellent communicator, and to have the appropriate personality characteristics that will enable access, empathy, rapport and trust to be built up with a diversity of participants” (p. 296).

At the end of the first academic term, I gave the adult participants a small token of appreciation (I gave them English Tea as gifts). It is a common cultural practice in Turkish tradition to give small gifts as symbols of being polite and to express gratitude. Also, I gave the gifts to the teachers to incentivise them to remain in the study as I worked there for a long time and I did not want to risk them dropping out. At the end of the second data collection process, I gave some small presents and expressed my thanks for their cooperation and spending their time on my project. During the data collection process, I always strived to be a positive presence in that I was ensuring that I carried out ethical principles. I wanted to show respect to the teachers and the children. I also ensured to plan my research schedule around their timetable, as I wanted to make the process as convenient for them as possible. To show my respect to the teachers, I was also there to provide help to the teachers and the children. For example, I sometimes helped out with daily tasks such as preparing play materials, supervising and playing with the children or coordinating lunchtime. I stayed in the class and played with children, conducted some activities when the teachers were in general meetings or parental meetings, and sometimes I coordinated children's lunch time in the lunchroom. These are the approaches I used to ensure that my behaviours were ethical and respectful to their practices in the classroom. The methods that I used gave me insight into their practice of SELD in their play and interactions with the teachers to undertake this research. The teachers also very generously assisted me throughout the entire data collection process, as they were personally interested in the research and its methods. They then reflected on how they had begun a more reflective practice after their involvement in this study. This indicates that my presence was mostly positive and, as

far as possible, did not involve exploiting the teachers, or unbalanced power relationships.

3.6.1. Observation

The aim of using this method of observations is to collect information from areas in the classroom that are not within the frame of the video camera, and to provide the basis for pre-video and post-video interviews. As Cohen et al (2011) stated, observations can be helpful “in discovering whether people do what they say do, or behave in the way they claim to behave” (p. 184). By observing real situations in a classroom, the researcher will be able to monitor actual behaviour (Hammond and Wellington, 2013) including children’s actions and interactions. In accordance with Hammond and Wellington’s suggestion, I observed the physical settings and children’s actions during the activities when they are not in the camera’s scope. Sometimes I took notes of children’s interesting dialogues to ask the teachers further questions during interviews. For example, one of the children left the planned game activity in Umay’s class. I took note of this behaviour to ask Umay about this during the interviews, and she provided some extra information about the child. Another interesting observation from Ankara’s school was when some of the children were playing in their free play time. A girl from the group left and went over to join the other group of boys. I asked Irmak about this girl and she explained about her further. I discuss this kind of specific information in more detail in the findings chapter. In other words, I merged the observation notes with interview questions. Even though all the interview questions were the same for each teacher, as in the samples, sometimes, I needed further explanations. Moreover, Hammond and Wellington (2013) highlighted that observation could be useful for identifying real situations that may not be addressed in interviews. Therefore, I used my observation notes to encourage elaboration, to reach more in-depth data. At this point, I used the observation notes for asking for further reflections from the teachers in the interview when I thought these were needed. Besides, within the setting of Turkish pre-schools, children play in every part of the classroom. Observing a range of events over time in the classroom is intended to provide a picture of SELD in the context of children’s play.

Notes taken from observations done in areas in the classroom that are not within the viewpoint of the camera may be used as the basis for post-video interviews. Observation notes were taken twice from each class. The observations allowed me an in-depth views of children in their play and to record their interactions in any situation that may be of interest. This part of the data may prove to be a critical challenge within the research in terms of distinguishing between the concrete and the abstract nature of the Turkish pre-school education programme (TPEP) goals. I used the observation notes only in the data collection process and not in analysis. These observation notes were used to aid my recall during the video recording process and provided extra material for the teachers during the post-video interviews in case it was necessary.

3.6.2. Pre-video Interview

The pre-video interview was prepared to understand more about the teachers' demographics and uncover their perceptions about SELD (Appendices 9 and 10). The questions were as follows:

1. Years of experience
2. Age/Gender
3. What do you understand about SED? Can you describe your beliefs?
4. What do you understand about SEL? Can you describe your beliefs?
5. Do you observe children's SEL/SED in their play? How often and in what ways? Can you give me an example of how play supports SED/SEL?
6. What kinds of activities do you provide to promote children's SELD inside and outside the classroom?
7. Do you plan any specific activities for SED or SEL?

The pre-video interview was conducted once for each teacher at the beginning of the term, as it was necessary to obtain this basic information only once. The total of data includes four pre-video interviews.

3.6.3. Video-day Interview

Video-day interview questions were designed to understand "the teachers' intentions for the activity to be observed" (Bennett et al, 1997; p. 28). I asked the teachers about their planning and intentions for the play activities to be recorded, their understandings of

SELD, and how they interpret children's actions and interactions (Appendices 11 and 12). Also, teachers were asked to discuss the influences on their practice, including how they prepare the classroom environment and learning activities, and their understandings of the role of play in SELD.

The teachers were asked to discuss their reasons for the provision of the play activities to be recorded as well as their understanding and observations of SELD in children's play. Additionally, I asked them to suggest the best place to position the camera. Open-ended questions and prompts were used to stimulate recall and discussion, including:

1. What activities have you planned today to support SED and SEL?
2. What do you hope the outcomes will be for the children?
3. How will you know if these outcomes have been achieved? How do you assess children's learning and development?
4. Where do you recommend I put my camera to get the best recordings?

Video-day interviews carried out in each video-recording day. So, there are three video recordings from each teacher in one data phase. Total of the data includes twenty-four video-day interviews.

3.6.4. Video Recording

The use of video recordings as a research method came relatively late to the disciplines of sociology and education (Bloor and Wood, 2006; p. 56). A broad audio-visual record can encompass the subjectivity of the observer's perspective of an event (Cohen et al., 2011). Video recording is essential to concentrate on the structure of interactions and as Jewitt (2012) stated, "...the social and behavioural mechanisms and regularities that people use to coordinate and organise their activities with others: to making sense of and to reveal the structures at work" (2012; p. 4). In my research, children were acting as secondary participants in the video recording process. Thus, there is concern regarding technical and environmental issues, and the effects that this technique might have on children. As Bennett et al reported in their research "...children could explore the video camera and ask questions. In the event, few children appeared to notice the camera after more than a minute or two, and the general perception of both researcher

and teachers was that any effect was negligible” (1997; p. 29). Even though video recording has some disadvantages, these might be overcome by its strengths, as:

“...video is a multimodal record in which talk is kept in context and all modes are recorded sequentially. This enables researchers using video data to rigorously and systematically examine resources and practices through which participants in interaction build their social activities and how their talk, facial expression, gaze, gesture, and body elaborate one another. This kind of record cannot be made available using any other technology” (Jewitt, 2012; p. 6).

The table below indicates some “considerations, advantages and disadvantages of video” elicitation. (from Jewitt, 2012, page 8).

Considerations for video	Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to link video based data to social theories and themes • Understand the effect of video recording on data collection • Make sure the data is understood in context • Decide on the scale you will look at and how much data you need to address your question • Decide on analysis strategies for managing video data to avoid being data overload • What status will you give your data in your data set – primary, secondary? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video can support an exploratory research design and extended data-discovery • It can be 're-opened' for later analysis and capture things not noticed at the time of being present • Participants can use the camera to extend the researcher access to their life worlds • Video is sharable - participants can be invited to reflect and discuss it • It can be used effectively to support empirical comparison of strategies, style, and interaction across a data set • Video enables researchers to re-visit a moment 'not as past but formerly present' • It can re-awaken the memories and experiences of a researcher or participant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video data is limited and shaped by decisions in the field • Video data is partial: it includes and excludes elements • Video is primarily focused on the material external expression • It can be edited to represent the order events in new ways • It usually provides one perspective on an event • It generally records interaction over short periods of time • Video takes time to watch and review and can be difficult to meaningfully summarized

Table 3: Considerations, advantages, and disadvantages of video data (from Jewitt, 2012, page 8).

Several studies have used video recording as data collection in the educational context such as those regarding teachers' perceptions and reflections (e.g., Cherrington and

Lovebridge, 2014); teachers' practices and pedagogical knowledge (e.g., Hennessy and Deaney, 2009); teacher beliefs (e.g., Wood and Bennett, 1997); and differences between beginners and professionals (e.g., Ethell and McMeniman, 2000); pre-service teachers and teacher education programmes (e.g., Pui-Wah Cheng, 2001). Those are mainly of small-scale, focus on individuals, and take advantage of a case study methodology. In this research, my aim was to use video recording as "stimulating records (SR)". SR can help interviewers in a retrospective process to describe their perceptions and actions. Gass and Mackey (2000) stated that: "Humans have access to their internal thought process at some level and can verbalize those processes" (p.1). One of advocates of this theory, Lyle (2003) highlighted that SR affords the participant a "thinking-aloud technique" (p. 862) to access a participant's inner-world. Therefore, SR was used for the teachers during their interviews in this research.

Having taken the aforementioned considerations into account, I made some decisions surrounding the process of video data collecting sessions. The camera was put in the areas where children's play activities were easily viewed and their voices clearly picked up, and the teachers suggested to me the best positions for my camera. The video recording was scheduled to take place on three separate occasions in each class in order to capture in-class episodes where children's SELD might be observed. In total, six video recording sessions were scheduled in each school, followed by the two teachers watching and discussing the episodes. The purpose of the stimulated recall with teachers is to discuss their understandings of SELD during children's play. However, as mentioned above, video recording was time-consuming in the classroom due to the children getting distracted.

I planned to take three videos for each class, with each video lasting approximately 20 minutes. In the total of data there were twenty-four video recordings from all the teachers for both data phases. The amount seems like a low quantity, but the recording was time-consuming and as Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff (2010) stated, "video materials are a very rich source, even small amounts can deliver an endless array of issues and questions" (p. 59). I used the video recordings only for the purpose of discussing points with teachers, and not for any specific analysis. The videos allowed the teachers and me to re-watch some parts again or pause the video to discuss any part of it during the post-

video interviews. I faced some difficulties in hearing the children's dialogue during their free play time and I tried to do my best with observations and taking notes of some of their dialogues. Luckily, my camera was of good technical quality, and also I inserted an additional microphone separately. I did not analyse the content of the videos, but I did use them for in-depth data collection in the context of stimulated recall in the teachers' interviews.

As mentioned earlier, I recorded two structured play activities and one free play activity for each of the teacher's classrooms. Even though they planned the play in order to meet learning goals that were prescribed in the ECE programme, some of the teachers do not plan play for SELD specifically. The teachers let me know when they had planned structured play activities. In the first term, Zara's recorded planned play activities were "blue balloon game" and "fruit basket". In the second term, "show the uncomfortable things" and "a game about understanding disabled people" (an outdoor game). Umay's recorded planned plays are "cock game" and "blue balloon game" in the first term; "showing emotions game" and "filling buckets game" (an outdoor game) in the second term. Deste planned "moving play" which was also related with the second game and "big fish catches small fishes" in the first term. In Deste's class, both planned play activities were recorded in the same day, as she had requested, because both games were related to each other. Therefore, she thought that it would be easy to follow during interview questions and while watching the videos. Deste planned a "hoop balance game" and a "moving play" which were carried out in the play room in the school in the second term. Irmak planned a "dramatic play" and a "game about understanding visually-impaired people" in the first term; a "dramatic play" and "bulbul in the cage" in the second term. I also recorded children's free play on one occasion from each classroom in both the data collection processes. All these recorded games and play activities will be explained in-depth in the Findings Chapter.

3.6.5. Post-Video Interview

The post-video interviews took place whilst the teacher was watching the video recordings (Appendices 13 and 14). They were asked for their reflections and to consider how they implemented the curriculum, specifically for SELD. Open-ended questions were used in accordance with the research questions and were guided by the

literature review. Bennett et al (1997) stated that post-video interviews provide an opportunity to argue “factors which mediated teacher’s intentions and their fulfilment” (p. 28). In this research, teachers’ understanding of SELD is explored; therefore, it is important to discuss with participants their knowledge, intentions, beliefs and practices.

While watching the video, I asked open-ended questions in order to comprehend their understanding and reflections as teachers and to consider how they implement the SELD curriculum in their early years settings. The video was sometimes paused to further discuss teachers’ interpretations and reflections. The open-ended questions asked are as follows:

1. What aspects of SED can you identify in these episodes? Can you elaborate? What kind of SED-behaviours have you noticed in children’s play? Why do you think that?
2. Do you think children’s SED is evident in their play? Can you elaborate?
3. Do you think supporting children’s SED and children’s SEL is the same thing? Why do you think so?
4. What do you think about supporting children’s SELD?
5. Can you identify any of TPP aims/outcomes in this episode?
6. After watching these episodes how easy or difficult is it to evaluate children SEL/ SED?

The interview included open-ended and flexible questions and this provided me a chance to ask the teachers questions about specific children’s behaviours such as “Can you please tell me more about this child and why do you think he/she behaves like this? How do you think they display SELD?” The post-video interviews took place in both data phases. In total, there are twenty-four post-video interviews from all the teachers.

3.6.6. Reflection Interview

The reflection questions were asked to ascertain the teachers’ knowledge not only in the context of play, but also in the curriculum. I asked them for their criticisms and their recommendations about the role of SED in the curriculum and how it might be developed and implemented (Appendices 15 and 16). I also gathered data on what teachers think about school managers helping to conduct SED. Finally, the teachers

were asked what they think about importance of SELD in children's future. The reflection questions are as follows:

1. To what extent and how do you think children's SELD develops through play?
2. Do you think that there should be updates/renewals/improvements/ much more emphasis on TPEP SED's aims? If you were a programme-maker how would you develop the TPP to incorporate SELD outcomes?
3. What activities or programmes could be used to support children's SELD in the early years? How?
4. What do you think is the connection between play and SELD?
5. What do you think about a teacher's role in promoting SELD?
6. Have you ever planned any specific activity for SELD? If no, do you think you would consider it?
7. Generally, schools are turning towards cognitive, physical or literacy development. Do you think your head teacher supports SELD? Do you think TPP is sufficient to support it?
8. Do you think that early social-emotional competencies could help deal with problems in later life?
9. How did this study affect your practice? Can you explain it?

The reflection interview implemented once in the second data phase. So, there are only four interviews in total.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

I was very sensitive about ethical considerations from the beginning of the research process until the end. I used pseudonyms for all participants. In the case of asking them about a specific child, I did not use any sensitive information. The important things that I have underlined in my study are the teachers' practices regarding SELD in the context of play. There are some vignettes in the findings chapter that comment on SELD, not commending or not judging children. Again, I was very precise and careful in storing data during the data collection process- the video recordings of the children and voice recordings of teachers. I stored the files securely on my personal computer and ensured that no one else had access.

Researchers have a liability to evaluate ethical considerations (Borg and Gall, 1983). According to the educational research's ethical guidance "individuals should be treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, partnership status, faith, disability, political belief or any other significant difference" (BERA, 2011; p. 5). This study followed the guidelines outlined by the University of Sheffield's Research Ethics. The School of Education granted ethics approval and all participants granted informed consent (Appendix 1). Additionally, participants were given and reminded of their rights to withdraw, and their privacy was well respected in this study. Full details are in the appended ethical consent forms in Appendices 2, 5, and 7.

It is necessary to obtain consent and co-operation from the participants before beginning the research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Therefore, information leaflets and consent forms for provincial director, practitioners and parents were distributed before the first week of the study (Appendices 3, 4, 6 and 8). The participants had the freedom to decide whether to take part in the study and they were given time to comprehend the information given to them (Cohen Manion and Morrison, 2011). The information leaflets and consent forms gave detailed information such as the purpose of the study, data collection methods, the rights of participants and details of how confidentiality would be ensured at all times. It was assured that the data on the video recordings will be treated sensitively, and will not be shared with anyone. The data was kept in a password-protected folder on my personal computer during the data collection process; also collected data files' stocks will be destroyed after use. I strictly adhered to these ethical guidelines as written by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011). I was as "honest and open" (Hammond and Wellington, 2013, p. 61) as possible with my potential participants, the teachers and children's parents. Those who decided to take part in the research were asked to return the signed consent form before the interview process. Also, a consent form from parents was obtained prior to carrying out the video recording sessions.

Children's consent forms were completed in the classroom in the first week of data collection using smiley faces and sad faces as indicators of consent. The children were reminded that there would be no consequences if they chose not to participate. In the end, all of the children agreed to be a part of this research project. I obtained initial consent forms from the children at the beginning of each academic term. However, I encountered an ethical dilemma about consent from children. There were two options for it, the first one was asking before every video recording, and the second one was asking at the beginning of the data collection processes. The first option has been used by Chesworth (2018). She discussed in her work about working with ethical considerations associated with filming young children's play. She stated that acquiring consent from children on a daily basis to record their play shows that the researcher respects the children.

The second option was used by Flewitt (2005). She researched some ethical matters with young children during ethnographic filming-based case studies. She obtained ongoing consent from parents, teachers and children. But she also decided to use small microphones and voice recorders, and so she asked the children in every case if they want to wear the equipment. However, in my research I only used a camera, tri-pod and a high quality microphone on the top of my camera. I was very sensitive to children's consent to take videos on an ongoing basis. At this point I undertook the perspective of Flewitt (2005)'s study as she emphasises that "although the children knew they were being filmed, by standing at a distance my presence was not intrusive and did not appear to interfere with the natural progression and development of their play" (p. 557). Because my project as a multiple case study aimed to capture naturalistic data, therefore I did not ask the children's consent on a daily basis in order to keep the environment as naturalistic as possible. This is also consistent with capturing real life contexts as an aim of a case study approach. Mostly children (also the teachers) seemed as if they forgot about the camera during the videotaping episodes, although a few times some children were distracted by the camera and came to play with it. In this case, I stopped recording. My approach used to collect natural data was found to be satisfactory by the teachers. I ensured that children were comfortable with videotaping during their play. I was always mindful of the children's willingness to be recorded, but they never indicated in any way that they were unhappy or uncomfortable with being recorded.

During the video recording sessions, I was also very sensitive to the teachers' comfort with filming and being interviewed. Therefore, I was mindful about their attitudes during the data collection process. Sometimes, during classroom research, teachers might feel uncomfortable if they think their practices are being judged. For example, one of them seemed to be nervous about having videos taken. At this point, I was really sensitive to my participant feeling uncomfortable. I assured her that only the both of us would view the video for the purpose of clarification or further discussion. I reminded her that the aim of the video recording was to stimulate memory of the play processes that took place in the classroom, and so that she could easily recall certain incidents that happened during the sessions. During the acclimatisation process of video recording, she had become used to seeing the camera in the classroom. I started to record data when she had let me know that she was ready. By the second data collection phase, all children and teachers were used to seeing the camera and me in the classroom. Therefore, it was easier to collect data in the second stage.

I made it clear to the teachers that if they decided not to participate for any reason, they could change their minds and refuse the interviews. Fortunately, there were no dropouts from the teachers. However, some parents were really concerned about the video recording process. I attended a parents-teachers' meeting and I clearly explained the video recording process. I also explained to the parents the conditions and allowances as stated in the consent forms and reminded them that they were free to decline their children's participation. In the case that some or all of the parents refused consent to videos being taken of their children, my solution was to blur out the children's faces to allow for anonymity and privacy of the children. However, I did not have to carry out this plan as all the parents consented to the video recordings. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) stated, in my research position, I was often privy to confidential or sensitive material. Therefore, I had to treat the data collection process and the data itself with utmost care and sensitivity. Also knowing that parents were worried about privacy, I made clear that the tapes would only be watched by the teachers and myself during the interviews for the purpose of collecting more in-depth data on points of interest, and nobody but me would have access to the recordings. I also told them that the data would be destroyed once the research and examination process had been completed.

3.8. Data Organisation and Analysis Process

As an interpretivist researcher, my data analysis is viewed “as a matter of providing an understanding rather than providing something that is an objective, universal truth” (Denscombe, 2010; p. 236). In accordance with this, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) stated, “there is no one single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data; how one does it should abide by the issue of fitness for purpose” (p. 461). Therefore, data management is important to take the process meaningful and understandable. Well data management “facilitates interpretation just as good orchestration facilitates good dance music” (Meadows and Dodendorf, 1999, p. 196). Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao (2011) highlighted that:

“Researchers need a plan from the outset to sort, summarize, analyze, and store project data, including their process of working with the data through the iterative process. The iterative progress of qualitative research means that data management and data analysis are integral to each other.” (p. 2).

My research is a multiple case study and in line with this focused in-depth approach, the analysis aimed to capture the rich details, beliefs and understanding of the teachers, as well as the curriculum factor and its influences that contributed teachers’ practice. The aim is not what the teachers describe as SED competences through curriculum, but to go beyond thematic analysis. Thematic analysis has its own benefit as being flexible (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.8.1. Processing of Raw Data

Transcribing data was a very time-consuming process. After all the interviews had been finished, I started the transcribing process. I did not prefer analysis directly from the audio recording. This is because I consider the benefits of transcriptions as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) highlighted “that transcriptions can provide important detail and an accurate verbatim record of the interview” (p. 537). I had started analysis in Turkish as all the data were collected in Turkish language. Roulston (2013) highlighted that “interviews conducted in languages other than the language of presentation involve further decision-making” (p. 6). Making decisions about the key words was extra time-consuming. I also discussed the key themes/codes, which

contained cultural nuance, with my friends to ensure my translation was as accurate as possible. I used a tabulating system to illustrate clearer this long and tedious process in the next figure.

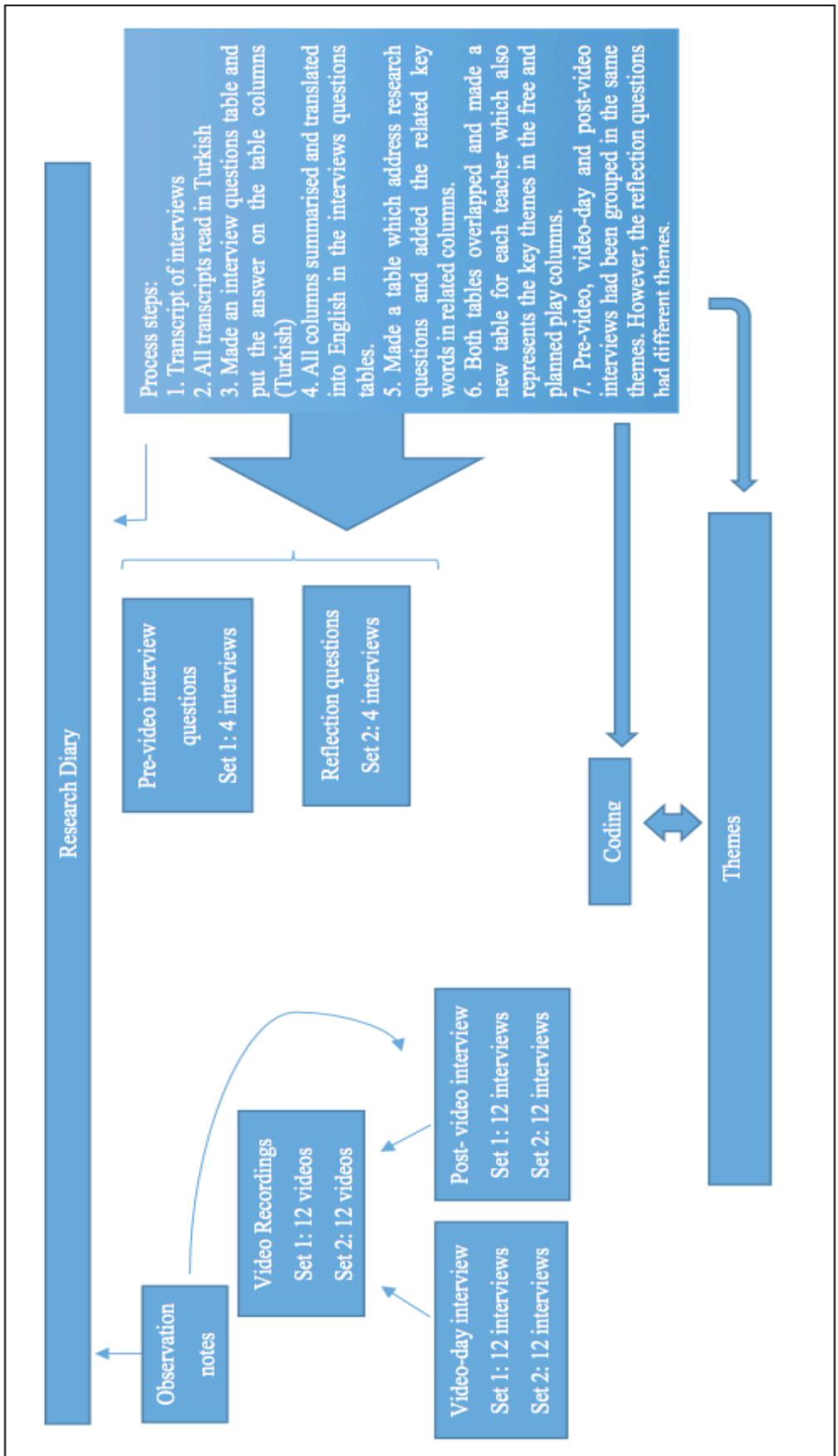


Figure 3: Tabulating of process

Figure 3 tabulates the data process and the steps it took to arrive at the themes. Firstly, I transcribed all the interviews, which were recorded in the Turkish language. It took a long time as each teacher has 14 interviews, so in total, the 4 teachers had 56 interview transcripts at the end of both data sets. In other words, the first data set has 28 interviews (12 video-day interviews, 12 post-video interviews and 4 pre-video interviews); the second data set has 28 interviews (12 video-day interviews, 12 post-video interviews and 4 reflection questions interviews) from the all teachers. I took observation notes in my diary and used them to inform the post-video interview. Pseudonyms were used for the teachers and the children who had roles in vignettes, which have been used in the Findings Parts. I also considered and took extra notes about teachers' hesitations, tones of voices, mood of the interviewee, non-verbal activities such as leaning back, mimics or sort of utterance (e.g. "um", "hmm", "yeah" and so on) during the interviews. In my research, these notes helped me to understand the clarity of interviewees and to respect those "who are frequently reluctant" (Roulston, 2013; p. 5), and to paraphrase the interview question.

I preferred to use many tables and colourful pens (used for each teacher and each theme), as I am a visually-dominant person. I have read and processed the data line-by-line many times over to prevent data loss or weakness of data. I used the analytical processes recommended by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) including "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data in order to strengthen" the data analysis (p. 12). In accordance with the Literature Review, I discussed SELD and the teachers' understanding in the context of children's play through psychological and pedagogical lenses. Hence, considering the existing theoretical framework, I decided on some key themes to help to organise and analyse the raw data and make it understandable. On this point, Roulston's (2013) work guided me in this process. Roulston (2013) stated "that there are no 'right' ways to transcribe and/or translate interview data, but the choices made in the processes of transcription and/or translation of transcription and/or translation allow certain kinds of analytic questions to be asked" (p. 7) and this liberty led me to find my own ways of analysis. After transcription, I made a table for each of the interview questions, which showed the respective point of teachers' answers to the questions in

Turkish. This helped me to easily see the important points. Later, I translated the tables into English. After this step, I found the key themes to use in the new tables showed the data from free and planned play, which I prepared for each teacher separately, and I read them again to put them into related key theme tables. At the end of data organisation and data reduction phase, I moved forward to data representation stage. In summary, the data analysis was informed initially by key themes from the literature review. These themes were further developed by the iterative process of analysis for the teachers' data, in relation to the research questions.

3.8.2. Coding of Data

Coding is the process of partitioning segments of the data into smaller units, and “then examining, comparing, conceptualizing and” categorising the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 79). At this point Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) stated that where the codes come from “might derive from the researcher’s own creation, or it may derive from the words used in the text or spoken by one of the participants in the transcribed data” (p. 561). I used codes to enable me to search and clarify the data. Open codes are simple to generate and to define categories and dimensions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Firstly, I used open codes in considering the teachers’ answers, and then I moved forward to axial coding to organise the open codes. “Axial coding works within one category, making connections between subgroups of that category and between one category and another” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; p. 562). Therefore, I did use open coding under the axial coding to group the data with similar meanings. Throughout this analytic process, I fractured, conceptualised and integrated to theory the data through the codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I broke up the data into the small parts as I explained in Figure 3 through considering the theoretical framework. After that, I formed the small parts in accordance with the relevant concepts as can be seen in the Table 4. I took into account Cohen, Manion and Morrison’s (2011) simplified description about finding “a code: a name or label that the researcher gives to a piece of text that contains an idea or a piece of information” (p. 559). Following this conceptualisation, I blended the concepts into the theories as the last step of the data analysis process. I was very sensitive to define and to develop codes in accordance

with the Literature Review, and then with the data analysis, through the process of open and axial coding.

There are various ways for open coding system and one of them is “line-by-line analysis” which “involves close examination of data” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; p. 119). Even though this step of process was time-consuming, it was important for generation of the categories and to develop the categories through further sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). After open coding, I used axial coding as a next step. The table below shows the open coding and axial coding lines from the data. This table is an example from the data to explain the process.




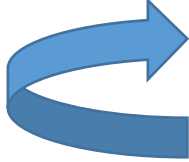

Open coding (sub-elements/examples)		Axial coding (elements)
Observation, assessment, focus on play process, planning activities, head out learnable moments, no specific planned activities, play types, teachers' role, curriculum.		Pedagogy
Learning society rules, gets from the conscious/planned activities based on acquisitions, conscious earn behaviours/attitudes, makes positive changes in SED.		SEL
Bringing children in good behaviours/attitudes, all developmental areas are positively affected, covers children's skills targeted in the curriculum, emotional intelligence, adopting social environment, knowing inner world, SED become active due to interaction with others.	 	SED
Communication, adaptation, solving problem, taking responsibilities, obeying rules, collaboration, respect for others' rights, expressing/displaying emotions, enjoying, defence own rights, eye contact, exchanging ideas, good understanding about relationship, motivation, following play, self-regulation.		Children's skills

Table 4: Coding transformation

This table shows the coding transformation from pre-video, video-day and post-video interviews in both data sets. I elaborated the open coding according to the literature review and organised them considering my research questions. The left column of the table shows the open coding which were categorised as on the right column. However, open codes of

children’s skills are also covered by the SED, as my research showed. This table is presented in-depth in the findings chapters for each teacher separately and discussed within the relevant literature in the discussion chapter.







Open coding (sub-elements/examples)		Axial coding (elements)
Too abstract in SED, not enough learning goals, lack of assessment, there is no targets about emotional characteristics, unclear points, not satisfied, open to interpretation (every teacher understands differently).		Curriculum issues
Adults and parents’ attitudes support SELD, especially free play areas are important.		Teachers’ reflections about SELD
Adding more goals about SED, there must be updates, renewal, improvements in SED, separate SEL programme would be useful in practice.		Requests for curriculum change
Well-planned activities, clear instructions, school manager should support, good guidance, providing extra materials.		Educators’ roles
Using video very useful, self-assessment, the study made aware of SELD.		Research impact
Scenario of life, important for children’s SELD, drama and dramatic play activities, putting SELD in the daily routines.		Play/activities

Table 5: Coding transformation for reflection interviews

Table 5 presents the axial coding coming from the open coding for reflection interviews. The left column shows the open coding that derived from the data, the right column indicates the elements of axial coding. The important thing in the analysis stage “is that the theoretical framework and methods match what the researcher wants to know, and that they

acknowledge these decisions, and recognise them as decisions” (Braun and Clarke, 2006; p. 8). While open coding originated from the raw data in considering the Literature Review, the axial coding was shaped by open coding taking into consideration the research questions and interview questions.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter firstly represented the background of methodology and the epistemological philosophy, relative to my own positionality as a social-constructivist. Secondly, I explained my positionality that I am an interpretivist researcher, which led to the use of qualitative methods embodied within a multiple case study. Lastly, I explained how I organised data and processed the analysis. I narrowed down the data to make it clear and understandable. Data analysis made use of guidelines from Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Braun and Clarke (2006) for the qualitative research. In particular, these processes took attention to the positive aspects of methods and challenges encountered. Braun and Clarke (2009) stated, “through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data” (p. 5). I will provide an in-depth analysis of the data in the following two Findings Parts.

I will explore the analysis of data in the following two chapters. I have decided to split my analysis city by city due to the reason that I believe it will make it easier for readers to follow, given that there is a large amount of qualitative data for each teacher. The analysis starts with Osmaniye’s teachers Zara and Umay (Findings Part 1), and continues with Ankara’s teachers Deste and Irmak (Findings Part 2). Osmaniye’s school is where the data collection process began, and continued in Ankara during the data collection process. Everything presented in these following chapters relate specifically to SEL and SED in the context of play, in indoor and outdoor activities, and the teachers’ reflections about this video-based research. I mostly critically discussed about playful pedagogy as it is the main focus of this thesis in considering the Literature Review. The relevant content is presented using tables and diagrams to complement the written narrative. These have been included and in order to ensure clarity of data reduction and presentation for the reader. The data had

a lot of content and was very rich. So, I funnelled the raw data through these two chapters. These chapters pay attention to the similarities and the differences, particularly with regard to the beliefs and practices across the two settings. In addition, the tensions and dilemmas experienced between the rhetoric and realities of SELD in practice added a depth and richness to the thesis as a whole, and enabled me to illuminate the implementation of the preschool curriculum in Turkey.

4. FINDINGS PART 1

4.1. Introduction

The process of data analysis was outlined in the previous chapter. This chapter aims to present the research data analysis and findings. Flewitt (2006) highlighted that “the process of representation always involves processes of selection, limiting what the reader of a research text can know about the dynamic event” (p. 45). In this line, I aimed to provide a convincing amount of the data in this chapter in order to provide the reader with sufficient and valuable information regarding the findings. Firstly, I will restate the data collection process, including the data collection timetable, and how the findings address the research questions. Next, I will provide the findings of the two teachers in Osmaniye, and the relationships and themes found within the data, as the purpose of this qualitative research was to understand teachers’ perspectives about children’s SELD in their free and structured play. The third and fourth teachers’ data will be presented in the next Chapter 5, Findings Part 2. I presented a rich and detailed account of data, as Cohen et al. (2011) suggested, “Interspersed with relevant figures, tables’ emergent issues, analysis and conclusion” (p. 301) to ensure that the data was presented clearly, and made easily accessible to the reader. It will be explained that in-depth qualitative data were gathered twice - once at the beginning of the term and once at the end of term from the teachers, how the data were analysed and the main themes that were covered. This is followed by the themes and sub-themes that help to categorise teachers’ answers according to the themes of this research.

4.2. Understanding the Data

DATA SETS SCHEDULE		
DATA SET I _beginning of the academic term (28.09.2015- 26.12.2015)	A. Pre-video Interviews	All of these interviews will be analysed as a whole data from the beginning and end of the academic terms.
	B. Video-day Interviews x3 (f-p-p)*	
	C. Post-video Interviews x3	
DATA SET II _end of the academic term (25.04.2016- 23.06.2016)	B. Video-day Interviews x3 (f-f-p)*	
C. Post-video Interviews x3		
D. Reflection Interviews		
*f: free play / p: planned play		

Table 6: Data Set Schedule

I inserted this table here a second time to restate the data set schedule (as seen in Methodology chapter). In the first phase of data collection, pre-video interviews were carried out for each teacher before starting the video recordings. The video-day and post-video interviews were implemented in one free play period, and two planned play times for each class. Altogether, there were three videos taken for each play time. This phase of data collection took place between 28th of September and 26th of December 2015.

In the second data phase, I collected the data through video-day and post-video interviews from each teacher. The reflection interview was used to gather deeper data for each teacher after the video recordings and video recording-related interviews. In this phase, videos were also taken three times in total, during one free play period and two planned play times. This phase took place between 25th of April and 23rd of June 2016.

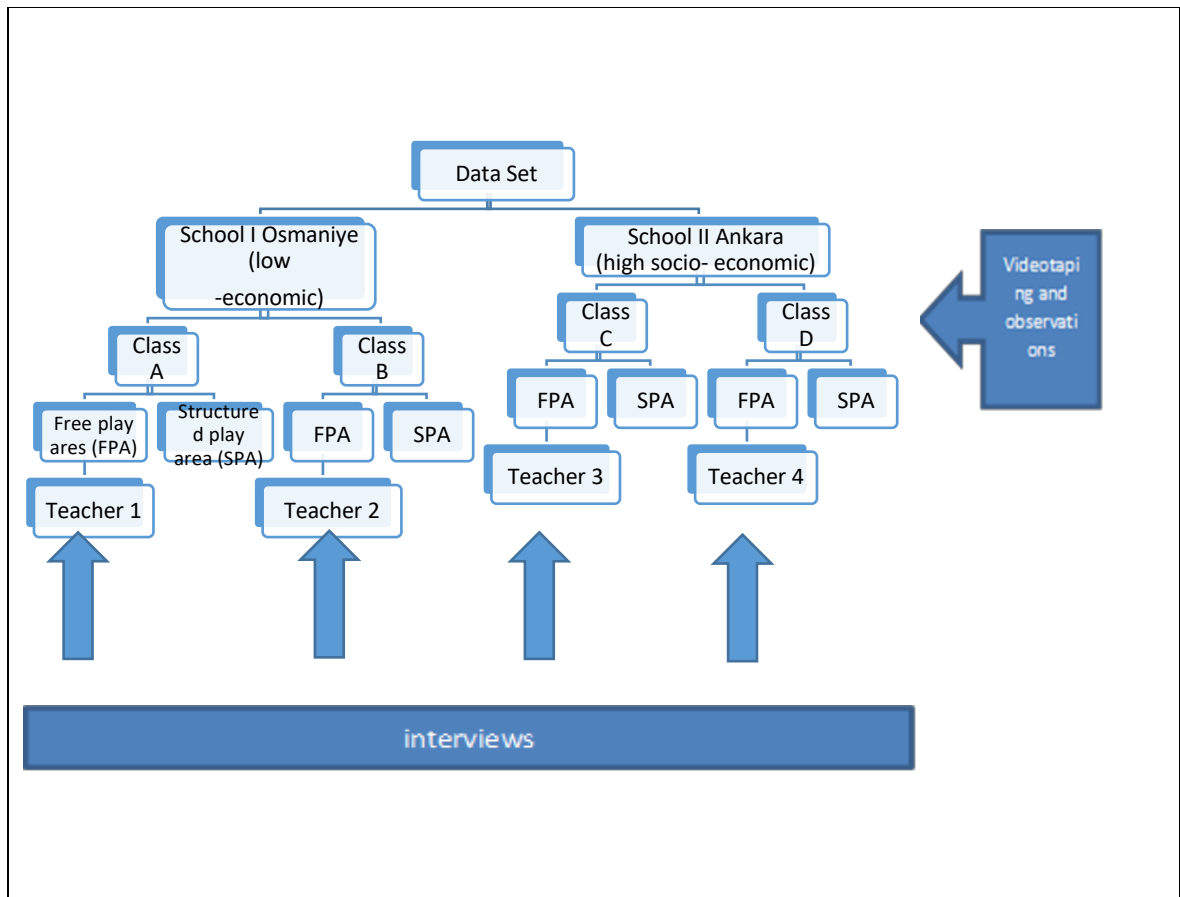


Figure 4: The interconnection of data phases

*FPA: Free Play Area

**SPA: Structured Play Area

The figure above introduces the interconnection of the data processes (see Chapter 3). There were two teachers from school I in Osmaniye, which is small city in Turkey and of low socio-economic income. It is located in the southern part of Turkey, and is also my hometown. There were two teachers in school II, which is in Ankara, a large city, of higher socio-economic income and is the capital of Turkey.

DATA ADDRESSED IN THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	
RQ1. How do pre-school teachers understand SELD in the context of play?	Pre-video interviews, post-video interviews, based on video recordings.
RQ2. How do teachers plan for play in their settings, to incorporate SELD experiences?	Post-video interviews, based on video recording, reflection interview.
RQ3. How do teachers interpret SELD through their assessment practices?	Post-video interviews, based on video recordings, reflection interview.

Table 7: Research Questions (RQ) and methods

Table 7 shows the research questions and how these were addressed in the various interviews. The first research question was addressed by the pre-video interviews and post-video interviews. The second research question was tackled by post-video and reflection interviews; and the third research question was explored by post-video and reflection interviews. Finally, the last research question was explored by post-video and reflection interviews. Also, for each teacher, the first and second data phases have been combined to make all of the data meaningful and easy to manage in the discussion chapter.

The teachers were from the same school and both were female. One of them was Zara, aged 28 years, who has 6 years of experience in ECE, and the other teacher was Umay, aged 36 years who has 14-years of experience. Both teachers graduated from the pre-school teaching departments in Turkish universities. There were 26 children in each of the classes and two teaching assistants were present on three days in a week. The assistants did not help out with the teachers' activities, they just observed the happenings in the classroom and helped out with children's care activities such as toileting, assembling in the classroom at the beginning of the day, their breakfast, lunch and any other required care. Before starting the study, I took part in a parents' meeting at the beginning of term to inform them verbally about my study. I issued consent letters to determine who would be willing to

participate in the study and personally collected them back in the same week. Before starting the data collection process, there were test video-recording sessions to enable children to get used to the camera in the classroom.

4.3. Presenting the Main Themes from Teacher 1: Zara

1st Term	<u>1.Pre-video Interview's Themes</u> -SEL, -SED, -Pedagogy.	<u>2.Video-day Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>3.Post-video Interview's Themes</u> -SEL, -SED, -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	
2nd Term		<u>2.Video-day Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>3.Post-video Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills, -SED.	<u>4.Reflection Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy: Curriculum issues, Play/activities, Curriculum changes/requests, Teacher's reflection, Educators' Roles, -Video Recording/ Research Impacts.

Table 8: Emerging themes from the interviews with the first teacher

Table 8 above illustrates the themes that emerged from each interview for Teacher 1, Zara, in Osmaniye. The themes of pedagogy, SEL and SED emerged from the pre-video interviews, which were carried out in the first term. These terms are defined as the core (main) themes. The video-day interview, which was conducted before the video recording in both terms, helped to discern themes related to pedagogy and children's skills. The post-video interview, which was conducted while the teacher was watching the videos in both terms, revealed the themes of SED, SEL, pedagogy and children's skills. The reflection interview was carried out only in the second term, and it was useful for merging the in-depth data on the two main themes about pedagogy and the research impact of the video

recordings. In addition, there are more sub-themes under pedagogy such as curriculum issues, play/activities, changes/requests, teacher's responses, and educators' roles. Each of the themes and sub-themes are examined in depth in the following part, with examples provided from the teacher's comments.

4.3.1. Narrative of Pre-Video Interviews' Themes

As shown in Table 8, the first term's themes will be expanded in relation to the first teacher's answers in the pre-video interview. The pre-video interviews were only conducted in the first phase of data collection. The remainder of this section describes some data related to SEL, SED and pedagogy:

SEL: According to Zara, SEL is related to all developmental areas, and is necessary for school readiness and emotional readiness. It is possible that SEL can be achieved through learning activities. This means that SEL can be seen in all learning activities including SED-related activities.

SED: According to Zara, children are not independent people without their social and emotional experiences. She believes that SED determines children's attitudes and behaviours in the real world.

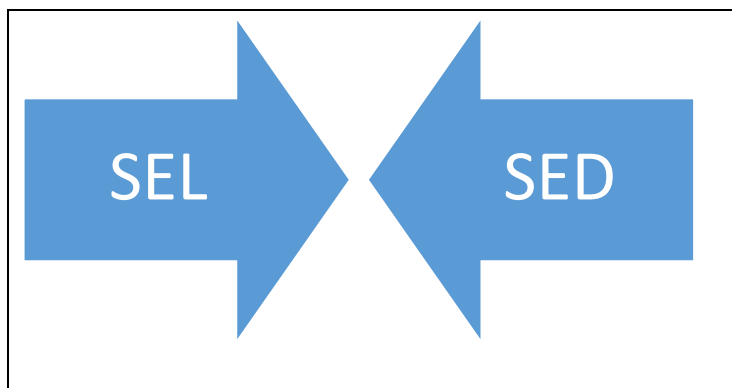


Figure 5: Converging SEL and SED from Teacher 1

Figure 5 illustrates that the idea that SEL and SED are similar to each other according to Zara's comments, as SED is the basis of SEL in the various learning activities like reading

and writing activities, or creative activities like art and drama. SEL and SED converge and interact with each other to affect children's learning and development in different ways.

Pedagogy:

There are four sub-themes that emerged from the main theme of pedagogy.

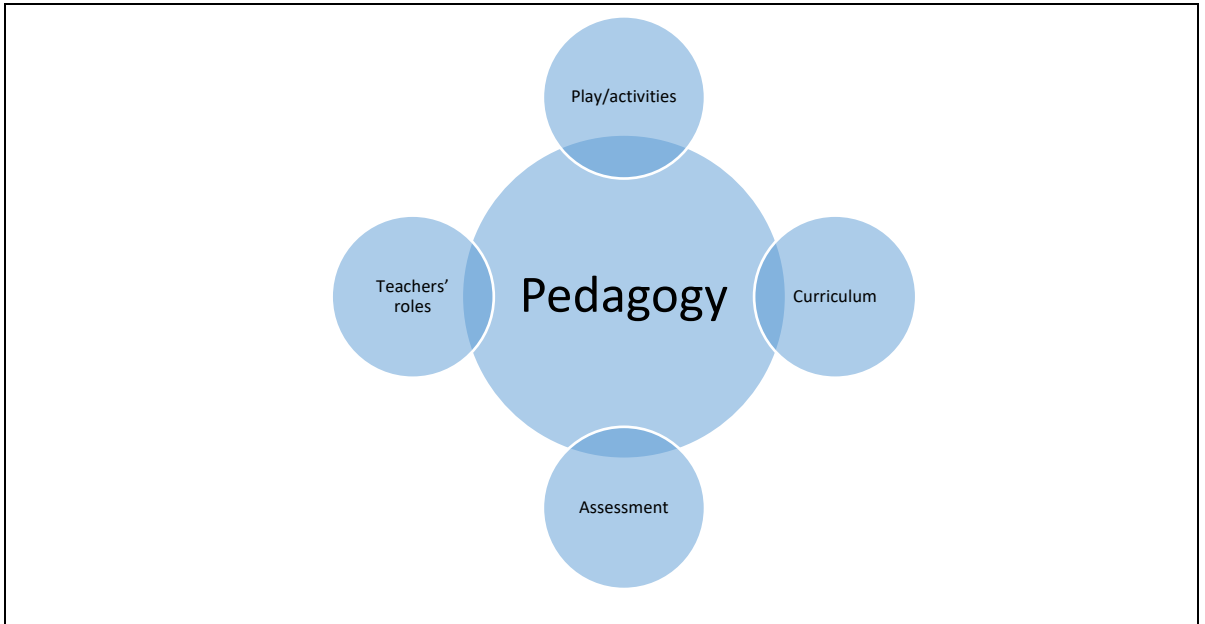


Figure 6: The core theme and sub-themes from Teacher 1

Figure 6 shows the sub-themes of pedagogical perspective in this context. The main theme of pedagogy was sub-classified into play/activities, teachers' roles, curriculum and assessment in accordance with the comments of the teachers. These have been explained and placed in a comprehensive table below.

Pedagogy			
Play/activities	Teachers' roles	Curriculum	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Trouble with sustaining children's attention in the game, -Makes children joyful, -Must be appropriate for children's developmental level, -Should be enjoyable, -Based on communication and interaction activities, -Outdoor activities supported by the inclusion of parents and friends, -Visiting a nursing home better than going to a cinema. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No thoughts on how they should/can support children's SED specifically, -Handing out learnable moments, -Re-plan spontaneously, -Classroom management, -Focus on play processes and rules, - Feeling a lack of confidence when play is not enjoyable, - They never planned any specific SELD activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A separate activity of SED makes the programme more complicated because learning is a whole development process for children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Observation -Observation and assessment of SED is very difficult, -Get feedback from children.

Table 9: Key points for each sub-theme from Teacher 1's pre-video interview

Zara had some trouble with sustaining children's attention in play. According to her, the play must be joyful and appropriate for children's developmental level. She feels a lack of confidence when the play is not enjoyable for the children. Even though she never prepares any specific SELD activity, she prefers to plan play or activities based on communications and interactions in the classroom. For her, classroom management is really important during play, but she thinks there should be opportunities to spontaneously re-plan play to respond to learnable moments as well. This is because children might realise and pursue

something unexpected during any activity. In the interview, Zara said, “If I catch the moment, I think and reflect on what they can learn socially and emotionally”. However, she expressed a lack of confidence about supporting children’s SED specifically with outdoor activities. When planning out of school activities, she prefers to choose visiting a nursing home rather than going to a cinema. She believes that a trip to the nursing home can be more beneficial for children’s SELD as they are provided with an opportunity to interact with other members of the society, gaining an understanding of others. Furthermore, these outings should take place with parents and friends in order to further support children’s SELD. Zara argued that a separate activity of SED makes the programme more complicated because she thinks that learning is an entire developmental process for children. She believes that SED related activities should be incorporated into the daily school programme instead of having separated activities in order to target the entire learning and developmental spectrum of a child. Also, she highlighted that there is no specific assessment schedule. Instead, she does informal observations and gets verbal feedback from the children at the end of play activities. She focuses on observations of children’s abstract skills to evaluate areas such as how children played, what they learned emotionally, and how they expressed their feelings.

4.3.2. Narrative of Video-day Interviews’ Themes

There are two main themes that emerged from these interviews, which were conducted on the day of the videotaping episodes. They are pedagogy and children’s skills, with the key points from the answers summarised in the tables below. The interview was conducted twice, so there are two tables showing both data phases. The interview was implemented on the videotaping day before the recording. There are two tables, one from each data phase, to indicate the themes and sub-themes.

Pedagogy				Children's Skills	
Free Play		Planned Play		Free Play	Planned Play
Assessment	Teachers' Role	Assessment	Play	There is no data about children's skills.	-Obey the rules, -Respect for others' rights, -Following the play rules, -Motivation.
-The biggest challenge in SED: they do not know whether learning is sustained or not.	-Zara does not control free play.	- Zara can estimate children's behaviours as she knows them personally, -Observation, - Feedback from children.	-Blue Balloon, -Fruit Basket.		

Table 10: Categorized themes and sub-themes from Teacher 1's video-day interviews of Data Set 1

Table 10 shows two themes that were investigated in-depth in line with free play and planned play in the first data phase. In children's free play time, Zara had some doubts about whether or not learning was sustained over time. She gives children the freedom and time to play however they want, out of the teacher's control. Therefore, there was no comment on the children's skills before the videotaping episodes. In planned play, the teacher more or less knows the children personally and can estimate the children's behaviours for assessment of SELD before the playing begins. In addition, the teacher planned to make observations and get feedback from children at the end of the game. The names of the play activities in this phase were "Blue Balloon" and "Fruit Basket", and the following accounts illustrate the key themes.

In the Blue Balloon game, the children were all sitting together in two rows, back to back. The teacher switched on the music, and a balloon was then thrown in the air. Children took the balloon and threw it to the others when the music was playing. When the music was

stopped, the child who was left holding the balloon was taken out of play. In the Fruit Basket game, children were grouped into four teams namely: banana, orange, cherry, and kiwi, and they sat in a square formation. When the teacher said “banana”, the children belonging to the banana group switched places with each other, when the teacher said “orange”, children in the orange group changed places with each other and so on. When the teacher says “fruit basket”, the groups had to change places with the other groups, but the children still remain in their original groups. According to the teacher, there were no winners or losers in this game as it is played for fun, and she always kept in mind whether the children were enjoying the game or not. From both games, Zara aimed for the children to gain a greater understanding of obeying rules, respecting others’ rights, following instructions, and personal motivation.

Pedagogy				Children’s Skills	
Free Play		Planned Play		Free Play	Planned Play
Assessment	Teachers’ Role	Assessment	Play	There is no data about children’s skills.	-Motivating, -Protecting aesthetics of environment, -Solving others’ problems, -Awareness of disabled people, -Become conscious of disabled people.
- No plans for assessment, - Observation notes recorded.	-Interfere during any crisis, -Get close and listen to them, -Try to encourage them.	-Conversation at the end of play, - There is no idea about assessment, -Prefer to observe process, -It is better to observe them in free play.	- Name of the game: “Show the uncomfortable things”, -The second play aimed to develop awareness of disabled people and help them trust in each other.		

Table 11: Categorised themes and sub-themes from Teacher 1’s video-day interviews of Data Set 2

Ideas related to pedagogy and children's skills are shown in Table 11. They have been categorised under the themes of free play and planned play for the second term. Zara did not aim to assess children's SELD during free play but did take observation notes. So, there is no consideration about identifying children's skills in their free play. She only interferes during crisis times, gets near and listens to their dialogues and interactions, and tries to encourage them during free play.

The first planned play was called "Show the uncomfortable things". The children took turns to say to their friends: "There is something there that makes me uncomfortable." The other children would then ask questions to understand the "uncomfortable thing", and attempt to help their friend fix it. The aim of this game was to help children to understand others' feelings and perceptions and increase their awareness of their classroom's aesthetics and maintenance. The second play activity took place in the garden. The aims were to reinforce children's awareness of disabled people, specifically visually impaired people and to encourage them to trust in each other. The game was played in pairs. One of the children would give directions to another who was blindfolded and that child would try to follow the directions of his partner. The game took almost half an hour and they gathered in a circle to assess and discuss the play at the end of the session.

The pre-video interviews for both play activities with the teacher revealed the following as possible SED skills: children will display positive self-motivation, they will strive to maintain the aesthetics of their classroom environment, they will help each other resolve problems and discomforts, and they will be more aware of visually impaired people. In a wider sense, the teacher hoped that these games would instil in the children self-confidence, a sense of ownership of their space, cooperation and helpfulness, and empathy and understanding for others. The next section, which discusses the post-video interviews will explain whether the teacher found that the aims of the game were achieved or not.

4.3.3. Narrative of Post-Video Interview's Themes

There are three main themes that emerged from Zara's post-video interviews: SEL/SED, children's skills and abilities, and the teacher's pedagogy, which has several sub-themes.

The key points are categorised and displayed separately in the tables below. The post-video interviews were implemented after videotaping, and questions were asked while Zara was watching the videos. The interviews took place once at the beginning of the term and once at the end of term, so there are four tables showing both data phases.

SEL/ SED		Children's Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play	Free Play	Planned Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Manipulation (SEL), -Requires teacher interventions (SEL), -Role playing (SED), -SED is spontaneous, -Found in learnable moments. 	<p>When I asked about SEL and SED, Zara referred to the children's skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tolerance for others, -Interaction, -Communication, -Taking care of the environments, -Smiling, -Transferring of knowledge, -Explaining ideas, -Showing their emotions, -Making eye contact, -Problem solving, -Defending their own rights, -Sustained play, -Interrupting others' play, -Potential to hurt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tolerated behaviours, -Smiling, -Obeying the rules, -Respecting their friends, -Displays of leadership, qualities, -Taking risks, -Fulfilling responsibilities, -Self-confidence, -Solving others' problems, -Showing emotions, -Finding solutions, -Explaining others' emotions, -Motivation, -Expressing own feelings, -Protecting their own and others' rights, -Willingness to take responsibility.

Table 12: Categorised two main themes (SED/SEL and children's skills) from Teacher 1's post-video interviews of Data Set 1

Table 12 shows two themes of three, in the planned play and free play categories. In children's free play, Zara thinks that she manipulated the process, which she considers is an effective method for supporting children's SEL. She believes that children's SEL requires a teacher's intervention. When children are role-playing, she thinks that they are working on

their SED. Therefore, SED develops spontaneously in learnable moments. Zara identified the children's skills as tolerating each other, good interaction and communication, taking care of their environment, smiling, transferring knowledge, explaining ideas, showing their emotions, eye contact, problem solving, defending their own rights, continuing play, interrupting others' play, and potential to hurt. According to Zara, there were some interesting points that she noted, as shown in this example; Erman (5 years old) held and made eye contact, and explained to Mehmet (4 years old), who appeared to want to hurt him and interrupt his play, "You can make a car using the blocks over there." The teacher commented,

"That was really nice; he tolerated his friend's behaviour and tried to explain his ideas. If I had not seen this behaviour in the video, if I had seen this in the classroom, I might have thought Erman and Mehmet were fighting."

In planned play, Zara discussed the children's skills with regards to questions about SELD. In her view, children displayed their SELD through their SED skills such as tolerating behaviours, smiling, obeying the rules, respecting their friends, leadership, taking risks, fulfilling responsibilities, self-confidence, solving others' problems, expressing emotions, finding solutions to problems, explaining others' emotions, motivation, protecting their own and others' rights, and willingness to take responsibility. She reported that seeing these skills is an important indicator of how children developed and what they learned socially and emotionally.

Pedagogy					
Free Play			Planned Play		
Play	Assessment	Curriculum	Play	Assessment	Teacher's role
-Dramatic play, -Children's nature.	-Observation, -Some bias about observations, -Lack of confidence, -Too complicated and abstract to observe, -Should have observation points/guidelines, -Watching videos with children to discuss and evaluate.	-SED and SEL different from other developmental areas, so there should be specifications.	-SED is evident in their play, -Supports SED.	-Should involve note-taking, -Observing behaviours, -Making evaluation with children, -Very hard to evaluate, -Serious difficulties related to assessment, -Lack of confidence, -Saw her expectations were met.	-Relevant directions/instructions, -Should not be limited by planned activities, -Guidance, -Opportunity for education, -Supporting SED and SEL are same, -Giving children responsibilities during play.

Table 13: Categorised one main theme (pedagogy) with sub-themes from Teacher 1's post-video interviews of Data Set 1

Table 13 displays the main theme of pedagogy, and its sub-themes - play, assessment, curriculum, and teacher's role - in the first data phase. These are investigated in the sections on free and planned play as in the previous tables. According to Zara, children generally prefer dramatic play in their free play times. She thinks this is due to the nature of being a

child. She feels a lack of confidence about the SELD observations due to personal bias, and she also said that the skills are too complicated and abstract to observe. She stated that if there were some observation guidelines, it might be helpful to understand whether children achieved the various SELD skills or not. She stated that there might be another solution to the problem of SELD assessment, and thought that watching the videotapes with the children and discussing what they had done can provide more information about their learning and development. According to her, teachers should be passive in trying to understand children's behaviours clearly during their free play and should not manipulate or affect the process in any way.

Zara thinks that planned play can be a more useful way gather evidence of SED in their play, and also help children in their SED. Taking notes, observing behaviours, making evaluations of play with children might be effective methods of assessment. However, she found assessment of SELD to be challenging and that there are serious issues relating to it. She stated that this is due to the fact that the curriculum targets for SED area were quite abstract and many of them unclear. Therefore, it was hard to assess children's SED skills. In the pre-video interview, Zara also stated some of her expectations before the game: she thinks teachers must give relevant play directions and give children responsibilities during play, and there must be good guidance provided by the curriculum. Teachers should not be limited by planned activities; instead, they should be able to recognise and take spontaneous opportunities for education and teaching to support children's SELD. She also highlighted that SED and SEL are the same thing, so they should not be considered as separate during the play activities.

SEL/SED		Children's Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play	Free Play	Planned Play
-Some children progressed well in their SED, -Positive improvements.	When I asked about SEL and SED, Zara referred to the children's skills.	-Fulfilling responsibilities, -Creating positive play opportunities, -Being popular with friends.	-Well motivated, -Children had fun, -Solving others' problems, -Fulfilling responsibilities, -Trusting their friends, -Positive team dynamic, -Understandings of being visually impaired.

Table 14: Categorized themes (SEL/SED and children's skills) from Teacher 1's post-video interviews of Data Set 2

Table 14 above shows two of three themes in the second data phase of post-video interviews. Overall, Zara thought some of the children progressed well in their SED. It was observed that the children made some really positive improvements. For example, Mehmet was able to create his own imaginative free play and was able to join in with others' play as well. The teacher observed the children fulfilling their own responsibilities, creating positive play opportunities, and being popular with friends, which are all important skills identified in this play episode. Again, when Zara was asked about SELD, she referred to the children's skills, such as being well motivated, having fun, solving other's problems, fulfilling their responsibilities, trusting their friends, working as a team, and recognising the difficulties of being visually impaired.

Pedagogy					
Free Play			Planned Play		
Assessment	Teacher's role	Curriculum	Assessment	Teacher's role	Play
-Changes in behaviour were observed, -Increases the quality of programme, -Free play can be used as a part of daily assessment.	-Star application, -Self-assessment.	-Should be supportive to help improve negative behaviours.	-Zara observed her expectations in the game, -Children were well-motivated compared with the first term, -Seemingly no regression, -Lasting behaviours or not, arguable.	-Instructions should be clear, -Regular/irregular adult control.	-This play was suitable to observe children's SELD, -This play made children aware of the layout and tidiness of the classroom.

Table 15: Categorized one main theme (pedagogy) with sub-themes from Teacher 1's post-video interview of Data Set 2

Table 15 displays the second data phase that followed: one theme of three within sub-titles of assessment, teacher's role, play and curriculum. In free play, Zara stated that she observed some changes in the children's behaviour such as: empathetic skills and, playing harmoniously. She also thinks that free play can be used as a part of daily assessment. Also, Zara added that provisions for free play time increases the quality of the preschool programme. Furthermore, she realised that negative and problematic behaviours were increasing in the middle of term and found a solution with a "Star Application". In this application, every child has a star at the beginning of each day. If the children display negative behaviours or do not follow rules, the teacher will remove their star at the end of the day. At the end of each week, the children who did not lose a star during the week will

receive a gift from the teacher. This activity motivated children to regulate their behaviours and practice discipline through reinforcing and rewarding positive behaviours. Zara stated that the curriculum should have provisions to support children who have anti-social or negative behaviours in their free play. Zara had trouble in the practice of SED areas with problematic behaviours, because she believed that she has not got enough knowledge and practice skills to manage this. If the curriculum included some guidelines on this, she could have benefitted.

In the planned play episodes, she stated that she observed instances of her goals being met. For example, the children were much more motivated in terms of their play when compared with the first term. She noted that there was no regression of their motivation to learn during the academic year. Additionally, she mentioned that she was not sure whether or not the children were learning lasting skills, because of the inability to assess these skills over the long term. Zara reflected that she should always provide clear instructions and implement regular and spontaneous adult control as well. She gave an example as follows:

“At the beginning of term, I was controlling every aspect of play and tried to make my instructions always clear. But now, in the second term, I was often giving very few instructions, sometimes simply being passive and observing in their play. I just give it a go for the children, but they sometimes feel extremely free in this area and they cannot control themselves as a result. So, the teachers should also teach them how they should continue the play, and obey the rules without adult control too.”

Zara found that the play was suitable to observe children’s SELD. As she expected in the pre-video interview, this play made children aware of the layout and tidiness of the classroom.

4.3.4. Narrative of Reflection Interview’s Themes

This part of the interviews covers in-depth data related to pedagogy and the impact of this study. Engaging with the teachers through these interviews involved a sustained reflection on their practice. As a result, there were five sub-themes found under that of pedagogy:

curriculum issues, plays/activities, requests for curriculum change, educators' roles, and teachers' reflections.

4.3.4.1. Curriculum issues

Zara described the following curriculum issues. She highlighted that there is a real gap and there are many unclear points in the curriculum, which lead to difficulties managing the preschool programme on a practical level. In other words, there are problems when translating the curriculum to practice in daily activities. She also added about the in-service training,

“I do not know anything about the new curriculum, the Ministry of Education has organised a 45-minute information session to provide updates. I think it is not enough time to get the whole updated curriculum.”

She thinks that there is no consistency in the curriculum. The curriculum is continually being updated and changed but not based on any real evidence or research. She agrees that she does not see big problems on paper; rather the problem lies mainly in the practice and application of the new curriculum. She thinks that these changes should be supported by pedagogical research and background information. She emphasised that the implementation of SED in the curriculum is also not very clear, and that the SED skills in the curriculum should be observable and explicitly stated.

4.3.4.2. Plays/activities

With regard to play activities, Zara believes that role-playing scenarios help children learn how to fit into various roles in real life. When they are acting, teachers should structure the play with clear and understandable instructions. She commented that when she plans a play, if she focuses only on SED, there will definitely be outputs related to children's SED skills. The most effective way to support children's SED is through play. Dramatic activities include SED too, and SED is interwoven in all kinds of play.

4.3.4.3. Curriculum changes/requests

Zara proposed some changes to the current curriculum, saying:

“I would add more points like-solving your own problems, your problems with others, and solving others’ problems. It is a nationwide issue that people try to solve the problems of others before solving their own.”

She also mentioned that it would have been more useful if there was a table of what had been revised, and that which explained what each update or change actually consisted of. Zara suggested that the curriculum should be easy to apply in practice without having to go through all the details.

4.3.4.4. Educators’ roles

Zara expressed an opinion about the role of educators, saying that when children are playing, teachers should structure the play with clear and understandable instructions. This means that the guidance and scaffolding of teachers is really important in children’s play. When teachers are planning a play and practicing it, they must consider children’s age, needs, their attention spans, and interests. She thinks that a school manager should also support the promotion of SELD as this is important to help the teachers in their practice.

4.3.4.5. Teacher’s reflection

Overall, when reflecting on her practice, Zara recognises the importance of SELD in children’s early years. She places emphasis on SELD but faces challenges in provision. She seems to lack confidence as a practitioner. She says:

“I do not plan any specific activity for SELD. I want to, but I feel that I am incapable of this, feeling a lack of confidence. My perspective is that if you can do it perfectly, do it, otherwise, do not do it. I am a perfectionist, so I do not do things by halves. I always try to make my practice perfect.”

She also said of the curriculum,

“I do not have complete knowledge of my own curriculum, so I am not able to suggest what is missing or lacking in it. When I plan play or activities based on SED, I feel I miss out on some other

activities such as learning activities for reading skills, or readiness for school activities. Our society wants us to teach their children mathematic skills, and reading and writing. You know, there is a high level of social pressure. This is why I do not want to spend too much contact time on SED activities. Nobody cares about it.”

She was also self-critical in her lack of SED specific activities in saying that, “Maybe it is about my management of time, I don’t know.” She added more comments about her practice, saying that,

“I got well-acquainted with the preschool curriculum of 2006 when I was studying at the university. It was explained to us then as it was the latest and most updated one at that point in time. Right now, I do not want to comment a lot because I am not very sure. I have graduated with a good knowledge from the university but after joining the preschool sector as a practitioner, all my vocational expectations have been altered due to my professional experiences. I am really long way from my dreams. There is also no clear aim and structure as to how the government can help teachers improve and grow professionally. I go to the school every day, do the same activities, and come back home. It is quite mundane. That is all there is to my professional life. Even though the curriculum will be changed in a few years, the same things will be happening again”

Overall, she feels a great lack of confidence in supporting children’s SELD in practice due to a lack of support from the government and the challenges she faces in her professional life.

4.3.4.6. Impact of research and video recording

Zara found the videos taken of play time activities to be really useful for a more reflective practice. She emphasised that it was useful to watch herself in practice, helping her to realise her body language and, communication skills. The videotapes also provided her with opportunities to get feedback from children’s actions and the behaviours that she had missed. She also added “If there were more video recordings it would be helpful for improving my practice.”

In summary, Zara's data phases, she had some beliefs that there are conceptual similarities between SEL and SED. She believes that SEL refers to structured activities to teach children positive social and emotional behaviours, and SED refers to an area of children's development. SED can be supported by SEL activities; mostly playful activities. However, Zara believes that she can take also advantage of learnable moments, which she calls "spontaneous learning" during the unplanned activities or during free play. Moreover, if she needs, she can make a new plan during the day based on spontaneous learning moments. She thinks that play is a good way to observe and detect children's SEL. Therefore, the teacher should provide well-structured play opportunities if he or she wants to target children's SEL. She thinks that free play is the easiest way to observe children and their SELD. However, she could not carry out formal observations or focus on the children's learning outcomes during the planned games as she was directly involved in the activity. While she was watching the videotapes, she observed the children's displayed skills and knowledge such as communication, problem solving, eye contact, showing emotions and so on. She also observed a child interrupting others' play and hurting his friends, which she commented was a negative thing. Interestingly, she remarked that negotiations might be a part of SEL, they can be learnt from the society. At this point, the curriculum could have been an effective document to support children's SELD in positive ways, but unfortunately it is inadequate.

Her thoughts about assessment are that observations are the only way to evaluate children's SELD. Also, she stated that note taking could be a useful way to help evaluate children's SELD. However, it is time-consuming and nobody asks the teachers whether they took notes about children's behaviours or not. Taking notes as a method for assessment of SELD has been stated in the curriculum as an evaluation tool. Even though the curriculum has stated the basics of SED, unfortunately, the curriculum does not have any point about SEL. She complained about the current educational policy, which does not allow teachers to improve their quality. She thinks that there are not enough opportunities provided for teachers' career advancement or professional development. She emphasised many times that she felt a lack of confidence for her ideas about SELD and the early years curriculum.

She also feels a lack of confidence about SELD in practice. Nevertheless, she was happy to participate in the research and to watch and comment on the video recordings.

4.4. Presenting the Main Themes from Teacher 2: Umay

1st	<u>1. Pre-video Interview's Themes</u> -SEL, -SED, -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>2. Video-day Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>3. Post-video Interview's Themes</u> -SEL, -SED, -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	
2nd		<u>2. Video-day Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>3. Post-video Interview's Themes</u> -SEL, -SED, -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>4. Reflection Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy: Curriculum issues, Play/activities, Educators' roles, Curriculum changes/requests, -Video recordings and research impact.

Table 16: Emerging themes from the interviews with the second teacher

The above table depicts the themes that emerged from each interview with Teacher 2, Umay, in Osmaniye. There were three interviews conducted in the first term: a pre-video interview, video-day interview and post-video interview. SEL, SED, pedagogy and children's skills are the themes that emerged from the pre-video interview. In the categories of the video-day interview, there are two themes: pedagogy and children's skills. The post-video interview's themes are SED, SEL, pedagogy and children's skills. In the second term, there are three types of interviews, as can be seen from the table a video-day interview, post-video interview and reflection questions. Pedagogy and children's skills are the themes of the video-day interview. Children's skills, pedagogy, SEL and SED are the themes of post-video interview. There are two themes in the reflection interview: pedagogy and video recordings and research impacts. Curriculum issues, play/activities, educators' roles, and

curriculum changes/requests are the sub-themes of pedagogy. Each of the themes and sub-themes will be examined in the next parts in depth, with examples taken from Umay's responses.

4.4.1. Narrative of Pre-Video Interview's Themes

As shown in Table 16, the first term's themes will be expanded in accordance with the second teacher's comments in the pre-video interview. It has been used only in the first data phase.

SEL: According to Umay, it consists of conscious behaviours, and consciously planned activities are necessary to promote it. She also added that "play with related social emotional learning and development might be spread and discovered in planned activities."

SED: Umay defined SED as communication with the social environment and developing children's positive behaviours. She especially highlighted that SED becomes active when children are interacting with others.

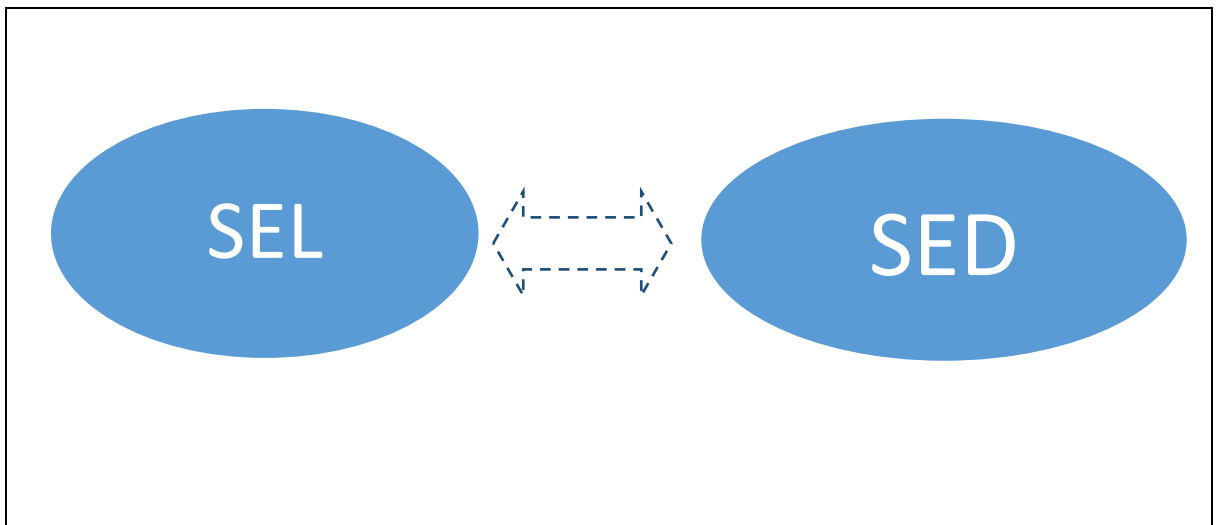


Figure 7: Converging SEL and SED from Teacher 2

Figure 7 illustrates that SEL and SED do not have any overlapping points, according to Umay's comment, as both terms have separate conceptual meanings. However, both of them can be supported by similar activities, especially play activities. Thus, they are related in this way.

Pedagogy:

Another theme that emerged from the pre-video interviews with Umay is pedagogy, and it has four sub-themes as shown in Figure 8 below.

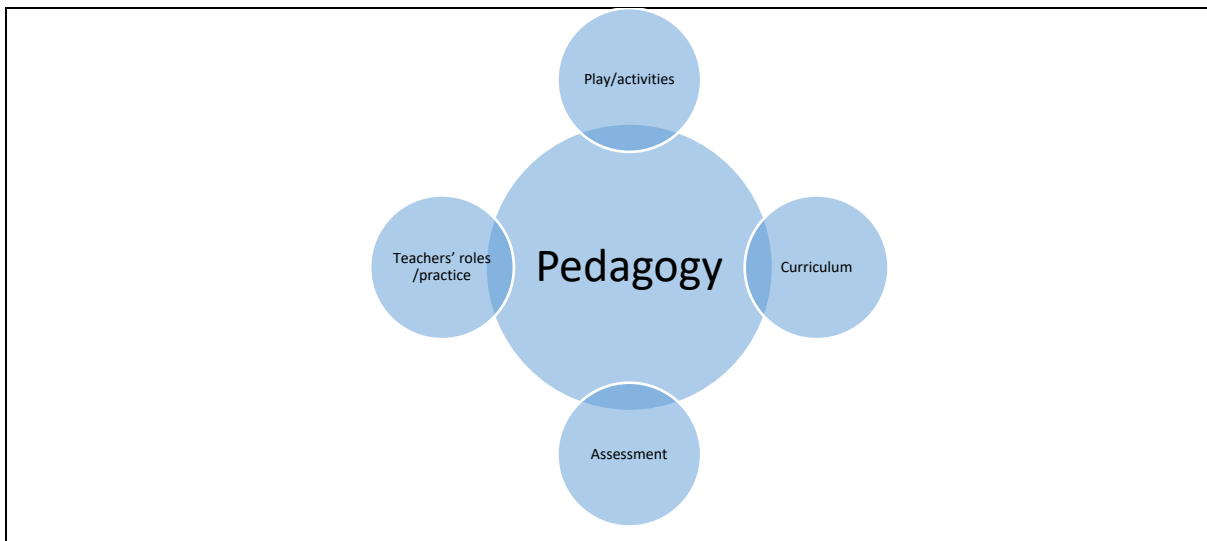


Figure 8: Pedagogy and its sub-themes from Teacher 2

Play and activities, curriculum, teachers' roles and practice and assessment were found as sub-themes of pedagogy and have been discussed by this teacher in great depth. They are all explained in the table below to show the inter-relationships between them.

Pedagogy			
Play/activities	Teacher roles/practice	Curriculum	Assessment
-Field trips, cinema, nursing home, restaurants, library, picnic, museums, -Number of story based activities and games might be increased.	-Considering their emotional expressions, communications, and their attitudes (fighting, screaming etc.), -Umay considers SED within other areas, not separate and not specifically, -Cognitive development always takes priority, -She prefers to focus on children's academic success, because this is society's expectation, -Using pre-plans.	-Not enough planned play and aims related to SED in the curriculum.	-Not observed specifically (maybe 2 out of 5 plays).

Table 17: Key points for each sub-theme of pedagogy from Teacher 2

Umay highlighted some key points about pedagogy and its four sub-themes. She thinks that field trips, picnics, going to a cinema, visiting a nursing home, restaurants, museums or libraries are useful outdoor activities for supporting SELD. However, she can prepare only one field trip in each academic term or sometimes an entire academic year due to time and resource constraints.

Additionally, she thinks that story-based activities and play might be helpful for raising the children's SELD in the classroom, but Umay does not usually plan any activities in this area. She thinks this is a major component missing in her practice, and she is aware of this situation. When I asked how she acknowledges SELD, Umay answered that she considers children's emotional expressions, communications, and their attitudes in the classroom during any activity. Umay also does not make a distinction between SED and other developmental areas during activities. This is the reason why she usually does not plan any specific activity for SELD. She makes the cognitive-developmental areas a priority, because she thinks that her role is primarily about children's academic success as this is

what society expects. Even though there are targets and acquisitions about SED, Umay emphasised that there is not enough planned play or aims and descriptions about SELD in the curriculum. Also, she mentioned that it is always easier to use pre-plans, in other words, ready to use plans, which are not compulsory for the teachers. This is because she thinks that the curriculum does not have any structured plan, it has only goals and acquisitions. She added that she does not often use observations specifically for SED; usually only conducting observations during 2 out of 5 play activities.

Children's skills	
-Not focused on solutions,	-Communication skills,
-Adaptation to classmates,	-Taking initiative.

Table 18: Key points for the theme of children's skills from Teacher 2

When I asked about observation considerations, Umay reported that she only observed certain skills as listed in Table 18. For example, many of her students do not focus on finding solutions when faced with any problematic situations. Few children can solve their problems in the classroom without her help. Other traits that she observes are their communication skills, adaptation to classmates and whether they take initiative in the play or in any activity.

4.4.2. Narrative of Video-day Interview's Themes

There are two main themes from this interview, which are pedagogy and children's skills, with the key points from the teacher's answers summarised in the table below. The interview was conducted twice, so there are two tables showing both data phases to indicate the themes and sub-themes. The interview was conducted on the videotaping day, just before the recording, in both terms.

Pedagogy			Children's Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play		Free Play	Planned Play
Assessment	Assessment	Play	There is no data in this section.	-Fulfil their responsibilities, -Obey the rules, -Taking responsibility, -Expressing their emotions, -Children's level of enjoyment.
-No assessment.	-Observation, -Estimate children's behaviours during play.	-Cock Game, -Blue Balloon.		

Table 19: Categorized themes and sub-themes from Teacher 2's video-day interview of Data Set 1

Table 19 shows two themes and these themes investigated in-depth the areas of free play and planned plan in the first data phase. In free play, Umay did not make any assessment records for children's SELD. This is because it was hard to observe children when they were playing freely and in different play areas. In planned play, she reported that she will observe children's expected behaviours during the play. She also added that she does not know children at the beginning of term, so she tries to get to know them better and understand them by observing their chosen activities and behaviours. During observations, she also considered whether the aims of play have been achieved.

Children played the "Cock Game" as the first planned play activity. In this game, they form two groups and stand opposite each other. They touch the palms of their hands to palms of the child opposite them and crouch down. When the teacher gives the cue to start, they begin to push each other with their palms. When one child pushes another child off balance, he or she wins the round. The teacher's intention from this game is for the children to fulfil their responsibilities in the game and obey the rules. She also saw this game as a chance for them to display their emotions. The "Blue Balloon Game" played in this class is the same game as described in section 4.3.2 (p. 88). Umay expects that this game will also help children to fulfil their responsibilities in the play, obey the rules, and express their

emotions. She also underlined that it is important for children’s SELD whether they enjoy both games.

Pedagogy		Children’s Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play	Free Play	Planned Play
Assessment	Assessment	-Adaptations,	-Fulfilling the responsibilities,
-The teacher aims to assess children, -Informal observations.	-Observation during the play to see whether they aims have been fulfilled.	-Communications, -Showing negative behaviours.	-Adaptation in the play/understanding play, -Expressing emotions, -Obeying the rules, -Being patient, -Motivation, -Empathy, -Expressing themselves in creative ways, -Waiting for their turn, -Understanding others’ emotions.

Table 20: Categorized themes and sub-themes from Teacher 2’s video-day interview of Data Set 2

In table 20, there are two main themes, and both are indicated in the free play and planned play sections. In this section of data, pedagogy has been investigated only in the sub-theme of assessment. Umay explained that she aims to assess children during free play through observation. When I asked what her intentions were for this observation, she mentioned observation of their adaptations, communication with each other; and also she would check and control their negative behaviours. For example, Yusuf recently lost his grandfather and has been displaying some problematic behaviour in the classroom, especially during free play. He hurts his friends, disrupts their play, and throws the toys. So, Umay thinks that it might better to keep a closer eye on him, and educate and correct his negative behaviours.

In planned play, Umay aimed to assess children’s SELD through observations. Before the play, she made some estimations about the children and creates an imaginary checklist in her mind, but not on paper. The first game was played outside. The teacher separates the children into two rows and puts two buckets in front of the groups. First, the group members fill a glass and send it to the back of the group. The last group member, at the

back of the line, empties the glass of water into the bucket. The game goes on until the first team fills the bucket. She expects to observe children's motivation, fulfilling responsibilities, adaptation in play, being patient in waiting for their turn, obeying the rules, and their happiness and enjoyment of the children.

The second play is related to understanding emotions. There are four different emotional faces - happy, worried, sad, and angry - drawn on the board. While the music is playing, the children dance, and when the music stops, they freeze and imitate any one of the faces. One child is 'It' and he or she would guess the feelings of any child and asks, "Why are you feeling this way?" The children reply, and the game continues with another 'It' so that every child gets a turn. In this game, the teacher expects children to learn empathy, how to express themselves in creative ways and to understand others' emotions.

4.4.3. Narrative of Post-Video Interview Themes

Post-video interviews were conducted twice, once at the beginning of term and another time at the end of term. The questions were asked during and after watching the video-recording. There are two different themes, children's skills and pedagogy, which have been indicated via the free play and planned play categories.

Children's Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Displaying emotions, -Showing positive and negative feelings, -Taking responsibilities, -Playing harmoniously, -Problem-solving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fulfilling responsibilities, -Playing harmoniously, -Displaying their positive emotions, -Respecting others' rights, -Motivation, -Self-confidence, -Expressing themselves in creative ways, -Problem-solving, -Fulfilling their obligations, -Expressing emotions, -Cooperation.

Table 21: Categorized one of two main themes (SED/SEL and children's skills) from Teacher 2's post-video interview of Data Set 1

Table 21 lists details about the children's skills according to Umay. While watching the video recordings, Umay realised that in free play, the children were displaying their emotions in various ways, and displaying positive and negative feelings and reactions. For example:

“Buse sometimes has trouble cooperating with her friends. She finds it difficult to share toys, and often throws fits when she does not get her way. She had some health problems when she was a baby, went through some complicated medical operations and still she sees a doctor regularly. So I think her parents coddle her.”

Umay elaborated “I can easily observe her behaviours during free play periods and think about what I can do to help her learning and development.” Umay gave another example:

“Ali is a really silent, passive and quiet child. Even though he feels shy to communicate with me, he displays a good grasp of communication skills for his age, he is active and has fun with his friends. I can see his attitudes in free play easily. Generally, many

children can be seen taking responsibilities and playing accordantly. They show their emotional attitudes in play and I can easily observe that some of them are really creative. For example, in the home corner, children were playing pretend baking. They were using the toys in different ways. Later on, when the other children wanted to join in, Ali said ‘We need a driver so that you can pick them up from their house’. It was the most attention-grabbing thing that I have never realised before - this creativity in their play.”

She highlighted that while watching the video, there were some note-worthy behaviours that she observed such as problem solving. For example, Melih and Ecem were playing with three cars. Another child came and wanted a car too. At first, Melih did not want to give it to him, but Ecem suggested, “We have three cars, Melih, so he can take one of them and we will still have two cars, no problem”. Ecem found a quick solution to prevent any conflict in this situation. As the teacher had seen, the children displayed SELD skills from the planned play activities including fulfilling their responsibilities, playing harmoniously, putting forward positive emotions, motivation, self-confidence, expressing themselves in creative ways, solving problems, fulfilling their obligations, and cooperating effectively with each other. Umay also gave another example about respecting others’ rights as quoted below:

“When I asked who had won the game, Yusuf said ‘We ended in a draw.’ but Nur said Yusuf won. Finally, Yusuf conceded that Nur rightfully won, because he felt guilty. In this case, Yusuf respected her right to have won the game and it was right for him to do this. This was not the aim for this game but I saw it during the action.”

This instance shows that play supports children’s SELD by giving children opportunities to make decisions in social situations and respect others’ right that may help to prepare them for real life.

Pedagogy					
Free Play		Planned play			
Play	Teacher's role/practice	Play	Teachers' roles/practices	Assessment	Curriculum
-Happy and harmonious play, -Free play is the best for children's interaction.	-Rich classroom settings, -Providing different learning centres.	-Positive play atmosphere, -Evidence of SED, -A section of children's life.	-SED and SEL are not the same, -Too much time spent regulating the play, -Focusing on the aims of play.	-Making evaluations, -Watching video-recordings, -They would talk about their feelings.	-Evaluation criteria are not clear and they are very complex.

Table 22: Categorised the theme of pedagogy with sub themes from Teacher 2's post-video interview of Data Set 1

Table 22 displays one of the main themes, pedagogy, and its sub-themes play, assessment, curriculum and teachers' roles and practices in the first data stage. These themes are investigated under the sections free and planned play as in previous tables. According to Umay, in free play, children seemed to be playing harmoniously and happily. She observed that they played well together in cooperative and mutually beneficial ways. She also highlighted that she "the children were very active in their free play rather than outdoor play or any classroom activities like art and craft." She thinks that the teacher's role is important to provide different learning centres and to create a rich classroom environment. As she said, "If the classroom setting is rich, the observations and expectations will be met". Umay also stated that she does not conduct assessments of SELD in children's free play.

In the planned play categories, there are four different sub-themes: play, teachers' roles/practices, assessment and curriculum. Umay reported that while watching the video, there was a positive play atmosphere and she also added that this play was a useful evidence of SED. She was confused about the differences and similarities between SEL and SED as she said for the first play, "the game was suitable to support their SED, but there

was SEL as well”. When I asked her to elaborate on this, she said that she could not explain this point further; that was the extent of her understanding on SEL and SED. She discussed that the role of the teacher in planned play is pivotal and the teacher should also focus on classroom management. During the play activity she focused on whether or not the play achieved its aims and purposes as she thinks that this is a teacher’s responsibility, amongst ensuring that the children are safe and happy. This means that the teacher has a responsibility to ensure SELD takes place under her supervision.

Umay also discussed that the aims for the second play activity were achieved. At the end of the game, there might be time for discussion and evaluation with the children. When I asked “How?” She replied, “I think we can ask them how they felt, whether they liked it or not, which is the best enjoyed part, whether they have any ideas for future activities or not”. The assessment section in the curriculum is not clear and she finds it is complicated for supporting SED. The teacher brought up the issue of teacher to child ratio and mentioned that it is really difficult to focus on each child with only one teacher. There is no assistant teacher or classroom aide on hand.

SEL/ SED		Children's Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play	Free Play	Planned Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -They gained many new ideas about Ataturk, -Conscious about citizenship, -Much more emphasis on their friends' emotions, -Sharing their happiness, -Empathy skills improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Referred to children's skills for both planned play activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No dispute, -Good communication, -Empathy, -Helpful, -Tried to find solutions, -They are not shy anymore, -More self-confidence, -Expressing themselves better. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Obeying the rules, -Adopted the play, -Better fulfilled responsibilities, -Progression, -Collaboration, -Happy, -Positive, -Had fun, -Classroom conscious, -Expressed their emotions.

Table 23: Categorized two main themes (SEL/SED and children's skills) from Teacher 2's post-video interview of Data Set 2

Table 23 shows two themes out of three for each post-video interview in the second data phase. Umay thinks that in free play, she can see that some children gained much new information about Ataturk, which means they are more conscious about citizenship, and many of the children place much more emphasis on their friends' emotions. They also displayed an ability to share in their friends' happiness. This made her realise that the children's skills of empathising with others have improved between the two terms. She wanted to add that there was no regression in children's behaviours and their SEL/SED, when she compared the first term and second term videos. She explained further that there were no disputes that occurred; instead, children displayed good communication amongst themselves, empathy, they were helpful to each other, and they worked together to find solutions to problems. Umay explained that the children seemed more confident and outspoken and they seemed to be expressing themselves better. In planned play, when I asked about SEL and SED, the teacher referred to SEL and SED as children skills. Umay identified some of the children's skills while watching the video such as obeying the rules, better fulfilled responsibilities from the first term, playing harmoniously, solving conflicts

effectively and better collaboration. Umay also commented that the children were feeling happy, generally in a good mood, positive and they seemed to be having fun. For the second game, they expressed and recognised their own and their friends' emotions in positive and appropriate ways.

Pedagogy				
Free Play		Planned play		
Play	Assessment	Teacher's role	Assessment	Curriculum
-Free play has a big role in children's SED, -In free play it is easy to see children's nature without any disturbances.	-Parents' feedback, -Observations.	-She did not consider children's emotions; only their social behaviours.	-The goals have been reached, -Observation, -Children's answers in the play.	-Follow the curriculum, -Consider the curriculum.

Table 24: Categorized one main theme (pedagogy) with sub themes from Teacher 2's post-video interview of Data Set 2

Table 24 illustrates the various categorised pedagogy themes from the post-video interviews in the second data phase. Umay thinks that free play has a big role in children's SED and it is easy to see children's nature in this kind of play. "To be honest, I never said 'Today, let's observe children's SED.'" she commented, as she also explained that she did not aim to assess children's SED or SEL. According to her, parents' feedback, and sometimes having a look at the classroom observation sessions, might be helpful for assessment, but not always. In planned play, Umay expressed that she does not consider children's emotions as much as she considers their social behaviours. She puts less emphasis on emotional development, more emphasis on social development. According to her, social interactions are more important than emotions, because she considered social aspects of SED as more important for society. She also declared that for both of the planned play activities, the aims and goals were reached, and so she was able to assess these well. Also, she makes observations in the planned play activities. For the second game, she assessed the children's answers when they were asked, "Why are you are happy/sad/angry/worried?" And so, for the second play she also considered children's

replies for the assessments made. Umay stated that, she always follows the curriculum closely and considers the goals as stated. However, in the curriculum, there is no assessment criteria related to children's SED or SEL. According to Umay, children had fun and enjoyed both of the games. However, there is nothing related to emotional development in the curriculum.

4.4.4. Narrative of Reflection Interview's Themes

This part of the interviews covers in-depth data about pedagogy and the impact of this study. There are four sub-themes of pedagogy. The sub-themes are: curriculum issues, curriculum requests for changes, play, and educators' roles. Another theme is the impact of the research and video recordings. All this will be explained in-depth with the points raised by the second teacher.

4.4.4.1. Curriculum issues

Umay reported the issues that she faces about SEL/SED in the curriculum. She thinks that SED gains and indicators are limited and she has difficulties with some points in the curriculum, for example, "children expressing themselves in creative ways". This is a sensitive point because she feels that the goals are superficial. She gave other examples about the curriculum issues she faces such as:

"A child solves a problem, but the content of the problem is important. There is no description of it. The child has problems with the difference between motivation and fulfilled responsibilities, and there is no clear outcome."

She thinks there is an uncertain point in the curriculum regarding the issue of children expressing themselves. She states that some children may be able to express themselves only with their chosen friends in a small group, which means that they might feel less confident in another environment. Umay mentioned that although SED is important in all aspects of life, it is unfortunately mentioned only superficially and unclearly in the curriculum. She defined another problematic target from the curriculum for her: "The 'child's respect and understanding towards others' differences' is not really clear. What

kind of differences are we talking about- nationality, physical ability or language differences?” According to Umay, cognitive development is tangible, but the terms of SED are intangible. She thinks the curriculum does not sufficiently support the daily activities. This is an important point that Umay brought up as it is clear that more emphasis needs to be placed on SED.

4.4.4.2. Curriculum changes/requests

Umay mentioned some requests and possible changes to the current preschool curriculum when I asked how the curriculum could be improved. She mentioned examples such as:

“There could be other gains related to explaining the emotions and thoughts of children, and recommended that changes should be made about social, and especially emotional characteristic gains, because these are not clear or sufficiently explained in the current curriculum. There could be some items added for understanding the positive and negative thoughts of children. There should also be clearer and more understandable gains for expressing their emotions towards their friends and teachers.”

She added that there should be more directions about understanding children’s growth and developmental changes between the beginning of the semester and in the middle of the semester. The SED area in the curriculum is restricted and should be clearly specified, and should be more focused and deep rather than vague and superficial. She gave another example from the curriculum document: “Sense of citizenship should not be just related to Ataturk; geography education on world flags and the world map would also be useful.” She thinks that it would be really progressive if the government develops a specific programme related to SEL/SED. She also considered that there should be specific activity times dedicated to SEL and this should be supported with the curriculum, so children would enjoy learning much more and feel happy in their daily activities. She mentioned that an extension or additional support and guidance for this area would be good.

4.4.4.3. Play/activities

Umay thinks that play has a big impact on children's SED behaviours. Play is a fundamental tool for children's learning and development in all areas, not only in SED. However, play is the most effective way to support children's SED. Children are better able to express their feelings and emotions when they are playing. It is therefore important to try to understand children's play through observations and assessments so as to better understand and support them as individuals. She also mentioned that children show their improvements of SED especially in their free play. She thinks that children learn best through play, so the teachers must put much more emphasis and importance on all kinds of play. She is regretful that there is not enough time allocated for play but unfortunately, she has to pay much more attention and give more time for academic and school readiness, for example, writing, reading or counting exercises. This idea is the same as what was discussed by Zara, (as mentioned earlier in section 4.3.1) (p. 84) regarding the idea of prioritising "school readiness" over SELD.

4.4.4.4. Educators' roles

According to Umay, an educator's role in children's play involves guidance and keeping the play enriching. Teachers must place more emphasis on play for SEL and SED. She gives time for SED-based play once or twice in a week at the most. She mentioned that the school manager should also support and promote SED, but there is nothing stated about this in the curriculum.

4.4.4.5. Impact of research and video recording

Umay stated that this study and re-watching the video recordings had positive effects for her:

"I had no awareness about SELD before you came. Also, we did not notice that we were lacking in the provision of SELD until you visited us. I can re-watch the play episodes again and the things that I missed during the games. Watching the videos can be a kind of assessment tool. Right now, I wish we could record a video to watch later. It is really useful to help me to understand the details of my practice."

She also added that from now on, she would use a video recorder for certain activities to watch later with the children, and also to assess them in certain ways.

As a result of Umay's reflective data, she thought that SEL and SED are not different concepts in the educational context; it is very difficult and vague to make distinctions between them. However, she thinks that both SED and SEL could be supported by the same activities. She also used observations rarely in case of unwanted situations such as Buse who had some social difficulties, and Yusuf who had lost his grandfather recently. Umay's understanding about children's SED skills as she watched from the videotapes were communication, taking responsibilities, waiting for their turn, expressing and showing emotion and motivation. She mostly focused on children's enjoyment and happiness during the game, and her confidence increased when she perceived that the children had fun at the games. However, she felt a lack of confidence about unclear points of the curriculum, as mentioned in the last section. She found the curriculum complicated and not helpful for the implementation of SED in her early years setting. Therefore, she used pre-planned activity resources to plan activities for the children. It is a noteworthy point that her understanding about SED mostly emphasised on social skills, and less on emotional skills. Regarding this, she also made some self-criticisms.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the data processes and the findings from the two teachers in Osmaniye. The teachers' comments were investigated and discussed in-depth in this chapter. All related interviews have been shown with the tables and respective narratives. There are also examples from the teachers' practices and some examples of vignettes from the children's activities. The findings continue with the next section, which explain the teachers' thoughts in Ankara.

5. FINDINGS PART 2

5.1. Introduction

This part of the findings will explain the main points gathered from the two teachers in Ankara, which is the capital city of Turkey. The third and the fourth teachers' understandings have been investigated in-depth and the findings will be presented accordingly. Deste is the third teacher in this study. She is 34 years old and has 12 years of experience working in the early childhood industry. Following her, Irmak is the fourth teacher in this research. She is 32 years old and has 8 years of experience. As previously done in Chapter 4, the teachers' comments following the themes will be presented in the tables and they will be expanded narratively in the following main sections, with some vignettes to illustrate their practice.

Both teachers graduated from the pre-school teaching departments in Turkish universities. Both classes in Ankara have 20 children each. There is additional data from Deste, as she has a role in the school's management affairs, which involves planning the aims and programmes of the school. Furthermore, she had a part to play in educating pre-school teachers during their in-service training in her local area, with the Ministry of Education.

5.2. Main Themes from Teacher 3: Deste

1st Term	<u>1. Pre-video Interview's Themes</u> -SEL, -SED, -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>2. Video-day Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>3. Post-video Interview's Themes</u> -SEL, -SED, -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	
2nd Term		<u>2. Video-day Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>3. Post-video Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>4. Reflection Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy: Curriculum issues, Plays/activities, Curriculum changes/requests, Teacher's reflection, Educators' Roles, -Video recordings and Research impact.

Table 25: Emerging themes from the interviews with the third teacher

Table 25 indicates the themes from all the interview data from the third teacher, Deste. There were three interviews conducted in the first term: a pre-video interview, video-day interview and post-video interviews. SEL, SED, pedagogy and children's skills are the themes from the pre-video interview. In the video-day interview, there are two themes - pedagogy and children's skills. The post-video interview themes are SEL, SED, pedagogy and children's skills. In the second term, there are three types of interviews as can be seen from the table, video-day interview, post-video interview and reflection interview. Pedagogy and children's skills are the themes gathered from the video-day interviews. Children's skills, pedagogy, SEL and SED are the themes of post-video interviews. There are two main themes in found in the reflection interview, which are pedagogy and video recordings and research impacts. Curriculum issues, play/activities, educators' roles, and curriculum changes/requests are the sub-themes of

the pedagogy. Each of the themes and sub-themes will be examined in the next parts in depth, with examples from Deste’s comments.

5.2.1. Narrative of Pre-Video Interview’s Themes

As shown in the Table 25, the first term’s themes will be elaborated on in accordance with Deste’s comments in the pre-video interview. This interview was used only in the first data phase.

SEL: Deste commented about SEL is related to emotional intelligence, making connections with real life contexts, emotional experiences during learning activities, and considering children’s emotional and intelligence development. She thinks that “SEL is actually children’s SED in practice or activities”.

SED: Deste thinks that SED affects all developmental areas. If children are lacking in their SED, their other developmental areas are affected negatively. She perceives that without SED, it is difficult to support children’s other developmental areas such as their cognitive and literacy development.

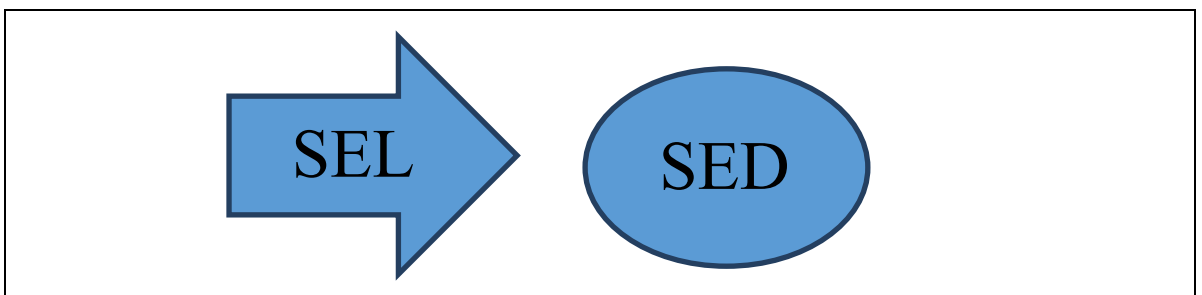


Figure 9: Converging SEL and SED from Teacher 3

Figure 9 shows the effects of SEL on SED according to Deste’s understanding. They are not separate domains from each other as SEL impacts SED. She believes that SEL is related to children’s learning experiences, and so it affects SED.

Pedagogy:

The following diagram illustrates the sub-themes of pedagogy.

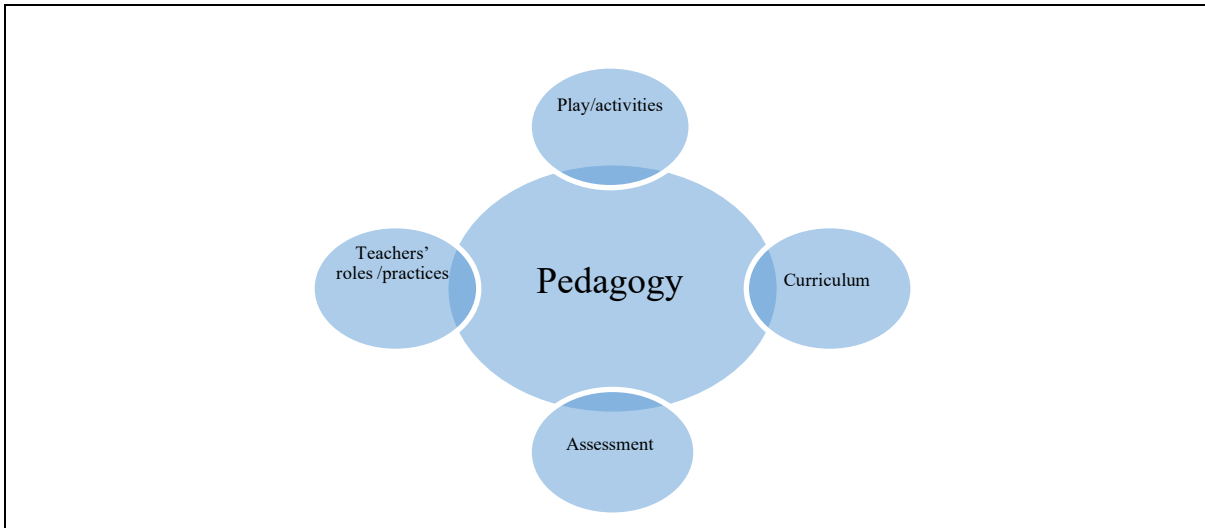


Figure 10: Pedagogy and its sub-themes from Teacher 3

The above figure indicates the sub-themes of pedagogy that emerged in the pre-video interview. Deste’s comments have been categorised under the pedagogy section and the elaboration of the sub-themes will describe her understandings. The details are listed in the following table.

Pedagogy			
Play/activities	Teacher’s roles/practices	Curriculum	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Eye contact based activities, -Drama workshops, -Presentation of their valuable objects, -Labour Project, -Field trips, -Democracy Day, -Nothing Day, -Grandparents Day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consider children’s emotions, -Try to make children aware of their ideas and emotions, -Support children’s SED with various activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cognitive development and academic success are primary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Observation, -Observation notes.

Table 26: Key points for each sub-theme from Teacher 3

The table above illustrates the key points of pedagogy’s sub-themes: play/activities, teachers’ roles and practices, curriculum and assessment. In the play category, Deste

uses eye contact based activities to support children's SED and SEL. Deste gives an example about this:

“We have an activity of greeting people around the school. The children say hello to parents, neighbours or grocery store staff, teachers, and their classmates as well. The important point in this activity is to encourage them to make eye contact with others during the exchange.”

She believes that this simple activity can help to promote their confidence and social skills when interacting with others. She also has other activities to support children's SEL and SED such as drama workshops, field trips, and the invitation of grandparents to the school. She thinks that these activities are beneficial for children's SELD as they allow children to interact with others besides their immediate family and those in the school. Furthermore, these activities provide an environment for children to express and regulate their emotions. Deste also conducts show-and-tell activities with the children such as inviting the children to present their most prized-possession. In this show-and-tell activity, children will bring their favourite object from home and explain to their friends why it is valuable, and what it means to them. This activity gives a chance children to talk to their friends about something meaningful to them. Deste believes that this can help to increase a child's confidence as they present their item, and also lengthen their attention span as they listen to their friends' presentations.

Another activity is the “Labour Project”. This project is aimed at helping children to understand people who work in restaurants, cafes, or the cleaning sector; in other words, labourers. Deste thinks that this activity is helpful in teaching children empathy. “Democracy Day” is another activity considered to be enjoyable and fun for children to learn about their rights as citizens of a society, and to understand the meaning of democracy in real life. On this day, children will vote for the meal they want to eat, amongst other voting preferences. Deste uses this activity of voting in daily activities as well, when children want to play two games in a limited amount of time, or when choosing a book for reading time. “Nothing Day” is another interesting activity to increase children's consumer awareness, where one aspect of provision is reduced or removed each day. One day is a no toys day, and instead, children play with recycled

materials such as plastic bottles, pens, paper and wood. One day, there is no electricity and they go through the day without electric lights, using candles or oil lamps instead. Another day, there is limited water and they have to learn how to ration water when they are using the toilets and sinks. All the above-mentioned activities are ways in which Deste provides for children's SELD in her early years setting.

According to Deste, the role of an educator should involve considering children's emotions, trying to make children aware of their own ideas and emotions, and supporting children's independent SELD through various activities. One example that she provided is as follows: she created a "Peace Corner" in the classroom. She invites children to use this corner when they face troubles with regulating their emotions. She hopes to supply children with the space and time to reflect on their emotions and behaviour in times of peace or conflict. She asks them questions to help them understand their own emotional states, and also that of their friends. Deste also elaborated on the difficulties of SELD provision: even though she and the school manager defend supporting children's SEL and SED, the curriculum does not place much emphasis on these areas. Instead, the curriculum prioritises cognitive development and academic success. Despite this, she still attempts to find time for SELD focused activities, as she believes that it is necessary for children. In addition, she found that for assessments of children, observations and observation notes are useful. She uses these notes when communicating with parents, and has found it useful for her to understand more about how the children behave outside the school setting.

5.2.2. Narrative of Video-day Interview's Themes

There are two main themes, pedagogy and children's skills, within the free and planned play categories. Pedagogy has two different sub-themes; play and assessment in planned play, and assessment in free play. All of the detailed information from Deste's interviews is explained in-depth in the tables below. There are two tables from both data phases to indicate the themes and sub-themes in line with the play categories.

Pedagogy			Children's Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play		Free Play	Planned Play
Assessment	Assessment	Play	There is no data in this section.	-Warm up, -Collaboration, -Focused attention, -Taking responsibilities, -Obeying the rules, -Respecting others' rights.
-Observing closely, -Considering their dialogues, -Taking notes.	-Estimate children's behaviours during the play.	-Warm up game for the second play activity, -Active game.		

Table 27: Categorised themes and sub-themes from Teacher 3's video-day interview of Data Set 1

Table 27 shows the categorised themes and sub-themes from Deste's video-day interview in the first data phase. She said that in children's free play, she observes the children closely to listen to their dialogues and exchanges, and takes notes if necessary. There is no data about children's skills in their free play as she did not comment on this. In planned play, Deste can estimate whether or not the children will achieve the goals she set out for them. She reported that this is because she knows all the children well and can estimate their attitudes in the play. The first play was a pre-activity for the second game, which was an active game. In the first game, Deste will pretend to be a shark and try to catch the children who are pretending to be small fish. Children must run from the shark and when they are caught, they must freeze on the spot. The other free "fish" can unfreeze them to enable them to re-join the game. Attention and collaboration skills are expected from this game, along with taking responsibilities, obeying the rules and respecting others' rights.

Pedagogy			Children's Skills	
Free Play		Planned Play	Free Play	Planned Play
Assessment	Teacher's role	Assessment	There is no data in this section.	-Managing collaboration, -Leadership skills, -Fulfilling responsibilities.
-Observation	-Conducts related activities, -Free areas, -No intervention.	-Observations done to assess whether they met the expectations, -Assess with children.		

Table 28: Categorised themes and sub-themes from Teacher 3's video-day interview of Data Set 2

Table 28 indicates the categorised themes and sub-themes from the second part of the data. Pedagogy in free play has the two sub-themes of assessment and teacher's role, but there is no data about children's skills. In planned play pedagogy, there are the sub-themes of assessment and children's skills.

In free play, Deste conducts related activities in every learning centre so that she can see who is interested in the various types of activities. Also, she provides them with free areas in the classroom. She places materials in the related centres in order to develop specific behaviours. While children are playing in the different learning centres, Deste never interferes in their play, she only observes. In planned play, she aims to observe the children for assessment while they are playing to see whether or not they have gained the expected skills. Also, at the end of play, she engages in a discussion with the children in an "assessment circle" to gather feedback from the children. In planned play, she aimed to teach children how to work in collaboration with each other, leadership skills, listening to instructions, and fulfilling personal responsibilities.

5.2.3. Narrative of Post-Video Interview's Themes

Post-video interviews were conducted twice, at the beginning of the term and at the end of the term. The questions were asked during and after the watching the video

recordings. There are three different themes -pedagogy, children’s skills and SEL and SED. The themes are categorised under free play and planned play.

SEL/SED		Children’s Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play	Free Play	Planned Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEL and SED progress from small parts to big parts of a puzzle, -Expressing ideas, -Showing emotions, -SEL and SED are not same, but they support each other during the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supporting SED requires supporting SEL, -SEL develops alongside SED, -SEL and SED are very similar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Making regulations, -Making decisions, -Sharing desks, -Using the Peace Corner, -Respecting others, -Expressing themselves in front of a group, -Getting involved in a play, -Making an effort to find a solution, -Self-control, -Collaboration, -Kindness, -Defending own rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bravery, -Taking responsibilities, -Obeying the rules, -Collaboration, -Fear of failure, -Gathering attention, -Self-motivation, -Preserving rights, -Self-confidence, -Acceptance of loss or failure in the game, -Expressing emotions, -Getting his/her friends’ opinions, -Problem solving, -Mini competition, -Self-criticism, -Fulfil responsibilities.

Table 29: SEL/SED and children’s skills themes from Teacher 3’s post-video interview in Data Set 1

Table 29 shows two main themes, SEL and SED and children’s skills in the first data phase, which have been categorised under free play and planned play. Deste thinks that SED and SEL progress from small parts to big parts of a puzzle. SEL is a small piece of a bigger puzzle, and each piece fits into children’s overall development. The big picture of the puzzle represents SED. In other words, she means that SEL can be seen as individual skills, which contribute to a wider developmental overview, or SED. Even though they are not the same, they support each other during the processes of learning and development. For example, the ways of expressing ideas, existing in the classroom or showing their feelings are important elements of recognising and analysing children’s overall SED. Deste spoke about the children’s skills observed in the free play video: they tried to make some rules, made decisions, expressed themselves in front of a group,

got themselves involved in the game, displayed self-control, collaboration, and defended their own rights. One of the children had shared his work desk with a friend, and both of them benefited. Some of the students were discussing an earlier conflict and one of them invited another to the “Peace Corner” (see page 126). According to Deste, the children displayed efforts to resolve their problems and conflicts. One of the children, Sevgi, had a headache and had mentioned this to her friends. Her friends then told another group of children who were playing loudly to “Keep calm and play softly please. Sevgi has a headache”. This action pleased the teacher and she commented that through this incident, the children showed real kindness and respect for each other, which was one of her aims.

In planned play, the teacher thinks that supporting SED is related to supporting SEL as the two develop in parallel and they are very similar to each other. However, SED is more spontaneous while SEL is planned and intentional. So, these planned play activities support the SEL of children. The skills of the children that the teacher observed on video were seen as evidence for SEL improvement and these included bravery, taking responsibilities, obeying rules, collaboration, high self-efficacy, sustained attention, self-motivation, preserving rights, self-confidence, acceptance of own failures, expressing emotions, respecting others’ opinions and ideas, problem-solving, creating a competitive atmosphere, and fulfilling responsibilities. Some children were self-critical at the end of the play evaluation in the talking circle. Deste gave an example, “One of the children said we should be careful about the blocks on the ground, but we were not. They slowed us down”. Deste laughed a lot while watching and reviewing the videos, and mentioned that she really enjoyed them. Also, she stated that the competitive atmosphere when children were playing made them more motivated.

Pedagogy				
Free Play		Planned Play		
Assessment	Teacher's role	Play	Assessment	Teacher's role
-Parents' meetings, -Observations, -Watching the videos.	-Knowing children's personalities, families and backgrounds.	-Both games served the planned aims, -Continuity of the rules, -Monday Blues.	-Making evaluations with children, -Watching the videos.	-Clarifying the rules, -Using precautionary sentences, -Various role-plays.

Table 30: Pedagogy and its sub-themes from Teacher 3's post-video interview in Data Set 1

Table 30 shows one of the main themes from the third teacher's post-video interviews in the first data phase. In the free play category, there are two sub-themes of pedagogy: assessment and teacher's role. Deste assesses the children's SED with parents in weekly parents' meetings. Through these meetings, she also obtains more information about children's backgrounds to understand their individual differences and home and social environments. Because, she thinks it is important to understand the reasons behind their differences. She said:

“It is important to assess if each child has passed certain developmental milestones as they grow, and if not, to understand why they face challenges in certain areas. Some children are much more selfish and persistent in their ideas. When you know children, you assess them with their own criteria.”

This is an important point to note as it appears that Deste's practice of assessment in the classroom was restricted by the gaps in the Turkish pre-school curriculum- the curriculum was not extensive enough to support her practice of assessment, and so she had to come up with her own criteria. Deste went on to discuss that while she observes children, she considered how they carried and asserted themselves amongst their peers. After watching the video, she added, “I realised that I ignored many things in the

classroom so it was nice to see and evaluate myself.” According to her, knowing children’s personalities, families and children’s background is part of a teacher’s role to provide children with better SED support.

In the planned play category, there are three sub-themes of pedagogy: play, assessment and teacher’s role. She highlighted that both types of play served to achieve the planned aims and acquisitions. She also believes that rules should not be imposed all the time. There should be some flexibility with the rules because she thinks that too many rules can restrict children’s play and their freedom to learn and develop in their own ways. She assessed children’s SED in conversation circles at the end of play, according to the children’s answers. Deste asked the children questions like: “How did you find the game? What would you change?” These questions enabled her to see whether children displayed any regression or further development from what she originally planned before the activity. Also, she had the chance to examine the reasons for any unreached targets. This kind of feedback from the children can also help the teacher with her future plans for similar activities. She highlighted that while watching the video, she made self-evaluations and saw for herself some points that she missed during the play activity, such as unclear directions. Only when watching the video later did she realise that the instructions that she gave the children were not clear. This point is an example in showing that the process of re-watching play episodes can help a teacher engage in a more reflective practice, and hopefully improve on his or her pedagogy in the future. She thought that a teacher’s role in games or play activities should be about clarifying the rules, using warning or precautionary sentences to ensure children are safe and aware, and providing children with different role-playing activities. Deste explained, for example, that she would give the role of shark (see page 127) to some children instead of herself.

Children's skills	
Free Play	Planned Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sharing, -Trying new things, -Adopting the rules, -Self-discipline, -Tolerance, -Expressing their own ideas, -Questioning, -Never giving up, -Bravery/courage, -Helpfulness, -Determination, -Motivation, -Finishing the job, -Creativity, -Many progressions compared to the first term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Maintaining eye contact, -Taking risks, -Problem-solving, -Leadership, -Learning by experience, -Taking and fulfilling responsibilities, -Finding different solutions, -Collaboration, -Respecting others' rights, -Focusing on play, -Expressing their ideas.

Table 31: The theme of children's skills from Teacher 3's post-video interview in Data Set 2

Table 31 shows one of the main themes of the post-video interview with Deste in the second data phase. Sharing, trying new things, adopting the rules, self-discipline, tolerance, expressing their own ideas, questioning, never giving up, displaying bravery and courage, helpfulness, a determined attitude, motivation, fulfilling responsibility, creativity, were all aspects of progression when compared with the first term. For example, at the beginning of term, Ali lacked self-confidence and usually looked for an adult's help when engaging in various activities. However, he has recently been trying to work independently on different tasks in the learning centres. Another examples is Ahmet, who normally is reluctant to change his clothes independently, but towards the end of the term, he began to show more willingness to do so. Another clear evidence of SELD progression is as follows: There was some soap and water that the teacher laid out for the children to make soap bubbles. One child came over to this learning corner and Elif said to him, "There are five children are playing now, so you have to wait." and

she turned back the water tub and said to her friends: “Our other friends are waiting to play in here, so if anyone is feeling bored, they can go to another learning centre”. Deste saw this as a display of SELD: children being able to respect rules and boundaries, and consideration for their friends. Deste also stated:

“At the beginning of the term, the children seemed to be facing a lot of difficulties in communicating with each other, and they were arguing and fighting a lot during play. However, now, they seem to have settled down and are getting along better. They are playing more cooperatively and are friendlier towards each other.”

In the planned play activities, there were some key points that were brought up about children’s skills. These skills were identified as targets for children to meet during the planned play and some of the expectations were met such as maintaining eye contact, taking risks, problem solving, leadership, learning by experience, taking and fulfilling responsibilities, finding different solutions, collaboration, respecting others’ rights, and focusing on play. One example of a game is as follows: all the children had to stand in a circle and join hands in the centre of the circle. The aim of the game was to walk in a circle together and prevent a hoop balanced on top of their hands from dropping to the ground. During this game, she observed that there was no regression in terms of children’s SELD. She also added that she was able to see different children taking responsibility during the game, who was making effort and who was trying to solve problems. Deste gave another example:

“Sevgi normally never told me when we ran out of ‘post-it’ paper. She would just wait there. But this time, she came to tell me about the lack of ‘post-it’ paper. She used to remain silent previously. In this game, I saw it as a big step in SELD for her.”

Deste went on to describe another child’s SELD progression: Yeliz used to experience some difficulties in being understood by her friends, as her language abilities are not strong. She also found it difficult to understand the other children’s conversations. As a result, she often played alone and was very shy. However, in the second game, Yeliz played collaboratively and fulfilled her responsibilities with happiness. It is an important progression for her. Another point that Deste raised was the gender separation in the classroom. She reported that generally, the girls do not want to play with the boys, and vice versa. They tend to play amongst the same gender and this was very

common at the beginning of term. Now this is less common. Deste was also impressed with Emrah who motivated his friends during the game by saying, “Let’s do it, we will win the game!” The teacher was impressed with this evidence of him motivating his friends, and she also stressed that this is important for collaboration. Moreover, in terms of children displaying the ability to express their ideas, Deste commented:

“Zeliha never used to share her thoughts or ideas during circle time. She used to simply echo the answer of the previous child. But this time, she tried to come up with her own responses and reflections. I was happy to see her take a step in this way.”

Pedagogy			
Free Play		Planned Play	
Assessment	Teachers’ Roles	Assessment	Teachers’ Roles
-Observations, -Portfolios.	-Supporting some children, -Controlled freedom.	-Observation, -Answers and feedbacks of reflection questions.	-Asking relevant questions during evaluation, -Taking observation notes for easy recall later on, -Making effective observations.

Table 32: Pedagogy and its sub-themes from Teacher 3’s post-video interview in Data Set 2

Table 32 shows detailed key points with the related themes in categories of free and planned play. In free play, Deste mentioned the concepts of observations and portfolios. She said that:

“I think in SEL; the assessment of the learning processes is more important than the results or outputs. You can see the children’s learning and developmental process when we prepare their portfolios. These contain evidence of their free play activities as well.”

She thought that SEL develops progressively and through understanding the process of SELD in children, we can gain a better assessment of their SELD. In other words, the children's portfolios can provide an understanding of their SELD through various learning processes. Deste commented on observations and a teacher's role in free play saying that, "It is hard to conduct formal observations in planned play or teacher-led activities, because we are involved in the process- we are supporting them or replying their questions." According to her, there is another role of the teacher that involves providing boundaries for children in their free play. This makes it easy to carry out observations during their free play.

In planned play, Deste carries out observations as an assessment tool, and she also considers children's feedback about the play. She mentioned that she had the chance to observe all planned acquisitions in children's skills and heard expected answers about both play activities. Furthermore, she saw really good strategies and reasoning skills displayed by the children. According to her, it is important to ask good questions to make children reflect on their behaviours and actions at the end of the game, when they are talking in a circle. Deste thought she should pay more attention to making effective observations and taking notes during the play activities. She commented that writing down notes in a notebook could be useful to help her remember and discuss certain behaviours with parents in any necessary situation.

5.2.4. Narrative of Reflection Interview's Themes

This part of the interviews covers in-depth data about pedagogy and the study's impact. There are four sub-themes of pedagogy. The sub-themes are: curriculum issues, curriculum requests/changes, play, educators' roles/practice and teacher's reflections. The last theme found is the impact of the research and video recordings. All these mentioned themes would be explored in-depth with the data from the third teacher.

5.2.4.1. Curriculum issues

This teacher, Deste spoke about curriculum issues in SEL and SED as follows:

“The programme usually does not satisfy our needs, but we reorganise and adapt it according to our perspectives. If I had more time to think and reflect, I could find better things but I do not do this and I make do with the simple things in the curriculum. I think it is because of a gap in the curriculum.”

She thinks that there are too many aims, many of them redundant and unnecessarily abstract. She states that other developmental areas are more concrete. She uses new aims that are not stated in the curriculum, and also considers the opinion of the community of other teachers in the school. She emphasised that there are no activities dedicated to teaching children self-care other than during lunchtime and toileting. She believes that there needs to be more specific activities aimed at SEL/SED to facilitate the children’s growth. She added,

“The current curriculum is very stereotypical, and we have been made to believe in it and follow it closely. However, I think that we need new and contemporary aims.”

Another important point brought up by Deste that the curriculum is too open to the teachers’ own interpretation- every teacher understands it in a different way. She elaborated by saying: “five different teachers may interpret an aim in five different ways.” She suggests that a strategic plan should be prepared every 5 years as an obligation and states that although this may be done, the updated curriculum unfortunately never rules. It seems to work well on paper but not in practice. She suggested:

“I think that the best way forward would be to come up with a 5-year plan and implement it, study it to understand its benefits, and then restructure it as necessary for another 5 years. There also needs to be more specific and achievable targets in the curriculum to help teachers in their daily tasks in their early years settings.”

5.2.4.2. Curriculum changes/requests

The teacher recommended some changes and some requests for a more supportive curriculum for SEL and SED. She suggested that there should definitely be new aims added which are not currently included in the curriculum. Aims must be simple, specific and understandable to better support the teachers in their practice. There should be

fewer aims as well so as to be more focused on the important SEL and SED skills. The curriculum should create awareness for all the preschool teachers across Turkey. Deste believes that the curriculum should also support the teachers who do not have sufficient materials. Moreover, the curriculum must include regulated improvements and revisions that help to destroy current stereotypes and create new points of view.

5.2.4.3. Plays/activities

There were some reflections about SELD and play activities that emerged through the interviews with Deste. She discussed:

“SED and SEL develop with play especially. Children’s social skills can be observed easily in both planned and free play. Even if you plan to observe children’s specific behaviours during a certain activity, you may not be able to see them. However, you can observe them easily and spontaneously in their free play. These free play activities help children become the most effective learners, I think because they enjoy games and having fun. That is how they learn. I plan SED supported activities and they are generally dramatic play activities. However, I think almost every activity involves SED, even reading a book, completing daily routines, start of the day and end of day activities. If the teacher or caregiver is able to turn the situation into a learning moment for the child, it can be supportive of the child’s SEL and SED. Of course the most effective way is play, every kind of play. Specifically, free play is really important, even though it takes up a lot of school time. It takes time to start a game, organise the children, allow them time to warm up to the game or even decide on a game. However, I am aware of this time-consuming process and I give them extra time for playing. Also, there is a chance that I can catch observe many things about children’s SED and SEL and hopefully provide opportunities for this. On the other hand, even if I used the best-designed game in the world, I cannot observe as much as in their free play times. This is when they are the most free and relaxed. Planned play is of course important for teaching children social life and daily life skills and rules. Real life experiences and social life necessities can be promoted or developed in planned play.”

Overall, Deste seemed to be very aware of the importance of play in practice to promote children’s SELD.

5.2.4.4. Educators' Roles

Deste reflects on the role of educators and their practices. She believes that a teacher's duty is being a good guide and helping children to find their own solutions in times of crisis. She mentioned that she placed an extra emphasis on SELD during Nothing Day, Democracy Day, and the creation of Peace Corner. She also stated that the school manager is really important in supporting children's SELD. It is because the school manager is the one who decides on the school policies and activities, and the one who supports the teacher in school. The school manager has developed many projects, as Deste reported in the pre-video interview section such as "Nothing Day" or "Democracy Day" or a simulation of a children's rights protest (see pages 125 and 126). The activities were conducted in the school garden, with their own homemade materials, and the children gained real life experiences and social skills from these projects.

5.2.4.5. Teacher's Reflection

Deste has some additional reflections as follows:

"I never ignore SED, because we are part of the wider society. I feel that our preschool children have already achieved the academic expectations of their developmental level- their mathematics, language and cognitive skills are developing well and they are 'school ready'. We need to help them to be 'society ready' by working on their social and emotional skills. Therefore, our target should be to raise children- the future of our society, as individuals who understand themselves and are self-aware, happy, are sociable and have a sense of community, and who love to learn. I think SED is as important as cognitive, physical and language developmental areas. For example, Sevgi is the best example in my class. She has some trouble in language and some cognitive areas, it is not very bad but I find it difficult to sustain her attention. However, over the past year, she has shown some progress in SED, and it seems that her attention span and development has improved greatly. Now she can easily express herself in various creative ways such as printing. Her prints are really wonderful; at the same time, she has started to show interest in mathematics and language activities in the classroom."

According to Deste, first of all, she teaches self-awareness and understanding of the environment, then she teaches children academic skills, numbers, colours and shapes.

At the same time, she commented that SED is the foundation for children to express themselves using language well and efficiently, and for them to establish good communication skills.

5.2.4.6. Impact of research and video recording

Deste gave feedback about the data collection process and research impact. She stated that my study made her aware of SELD. In the beginning of the academic term, she did not take into account the assessment at the end of play. She did not practice this. But after the research and watching the videos, she made some changes to her practice. Deste stated that because of this research study, she realised that it was important to make assessments of the play and activities with the children at the end. This will help to improve on her activity plans in the future. She started reflection time after watching videos of the first term. Deste emphasised that I helped to increase her awareness in this area. She said:

“I had a chance to evaluate myself too. I saw that I have different attitudes from the first semester. I felt that I learnt how to calm down and relax during the guidance of play, I feel more capable and able to guide the play activities in better ways. I am more confident in providing effective activities for the children.”

In essence, Deste stressed that watching the videos was a really effective way to see herself from the outside and improve upon her practice. She seemed well satisfied to have been a part of this study.

Overall, Deste had a clear understanding about SED and SEL differences, and she made relevant connections between the two terms. She stated that emotional intelligence is important for emotional experiences during learning activities. SED is the basis for other developmental areas; if SED works well, all other developmental areas improve well. When comparing Deste’s perceptions of SELD to those of Zara and Umay, it can be seen that she seems more aware of SELD and attempts to organise specific activities targeted at SELD. Deste has many ideas to support children’s SELD through play. She also criticised the curriculum as it does not support the teachers effectively in their practice. She believes that she can turn to the community or local area to create a

network or support system whereby they can develop their own programme specific to the culture or area.

5.3. Main Themes from Teacher 4: Irmak

1st Term	<u>1. Pre-video Interview's Themes</u> -SEL, -SED, -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>2. Video-day Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>3. Post-video Interview's Themes</u> -SEL, -SED, -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	
2nd Term		<u>2. Video-day Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>3. Post-video Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy, -Children's skills.	<u>4. Reflection Interview's Themes</u> -Pedagogy: Curriculum issues, Play/activities, Educators' Roles, Curriculum changes/requests, Teacher's reflection, -Video recordings and research Impact.

Table 33: Emerging themes from the interviews with the fourth teacher

Table 33 displays all the themes from the interview data of the fourth teacher, Irmak. The data was collected in Ankara. There are three interviews in the first term: pre-video interview, video-day interviews and post-video interviews. SEL, SED, pedagogy and children's skills are the themes from the pre-video interview. In the categories of the video-day interview, there are two themes - pedagogy and children's skills. The post-video interview's themes are SEL, SED, pedagogy and children's skills. In the second term, there are three types of interviews as can be seen from the table: video-day interview, post-video interview and reflection interview. Pedagogy and children's skills are the themes of video-day interviews. SEL, SED, pedagogy and children's skills were found to be the themes of the post-video interviews. There are two main themes found

in the reflection interview, theme which are pedagogy, and video recordings and research impacts. Curriculum issues, play and activities, teacher's roles and practice, teacher's reflection, and curriculum changes/requests are the sub-themes of the theme of pedagogy. Each of the themes and sub-themes will be examined in the next parts in depth, with examples from the teacher's comments.

5.3.1. Narrative of Pre-Video Interview's Themes

As shown in Table 33, the first term's themes will be expanded in accordance with the fourth teacher's comments in the pre-video interview, which was used only in the first data phase.

SEL: Irmak thought that SEL affects SED behaviours in positive ways. It is a concept that develops and supports children's behaviour with planned social and emotional activities.

SED: According to Irmak, it is about life skills and the ability to adapt to one's social environment. She also elaborated: "SED is understanding one's inner world and making a bridge between that and the social environment."

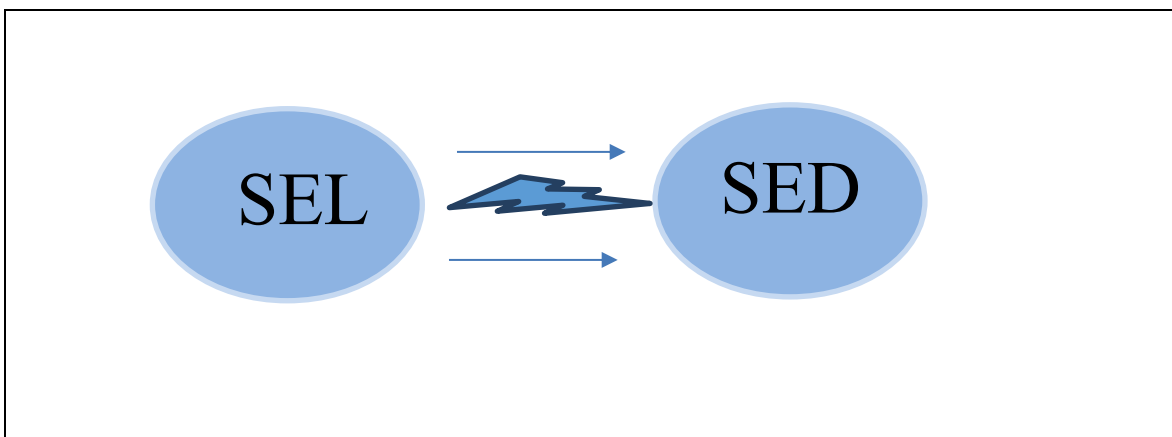


Figure 11: Converging between SEL and SED from Teacher 4

Figure 11 shows the relationship between SEL and SED; that there are one-way effects from SEL to SED, according to Irmak's understanding. In other words, according to her, SEL impacts SED as she believes that learning leads to development.

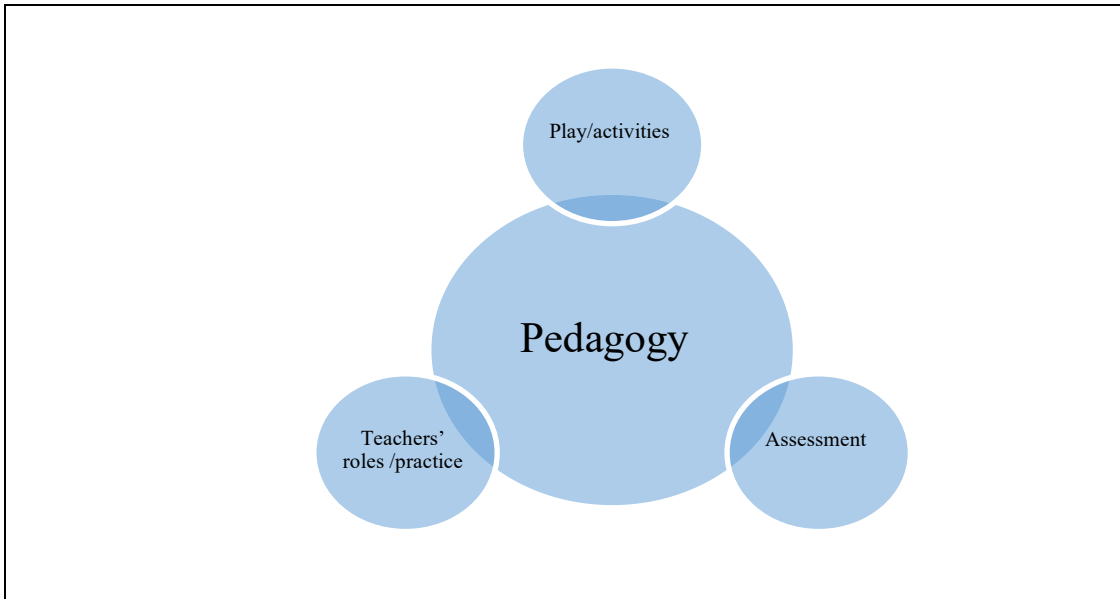


Figure 12: Pedagogy and its sub-themes from Teacher 4

The figure above indicates the sub-themes of pedagogy that emerged in the pre-video interview. Irmak’s comments have been categorised under the pedagogy section and the sub-themes will help to clarify understanding. The details are shown in the table below.

Pedagogy		
Assessment	Play/activities	Teachers’ Roles/Practice
-Observation, -Taking notes.	-Play in the home corner takes longer in free play, -Responsibility Eggs, -Out of school activities, -School-based projects.	-No specific plan for SED or SEL, -Using dramatic activities to support SED and SEL.

Table 34: Key points for each sub-theme from Teacher 4

The table above details the sub-themes of pedagogy and the related key points. Irmak assessed children’s SEL and SED via observations in class and taking down notes during observations. Irmak said, “I do observe the children every day, but I take notes on two days in a week. When I am taking notes, I consider children’s SED in all their play”. Also, she added that it is easy to observe children in their free play. It is harder for her to make observations of the children in their planned play activities rather than in free play and during start of the day conversations. According to her, this is because

during planned play activities, she focuses on classroom management and does not totally concentrate on the children’s behaviours. When the children are playing in the home corner, it is one of the most appropriate places for quality observation for her. She highlighted that their play continues for a long time in this corner and it is possible to observe many different things about the children, and get to understand them better. She also noticed how their interactions increased positively over the year. She used the “Responsibility Eggs” activity that gives children responsibilities in different areas of the school- the classroom, dining hall, corridors, and during some adult-initiated activities. There were small containers, or “eggs” from which children will pick a slip of paper. The paper will determine their tasks and responsibilities for the day. It can range from being the teacher’s assistant, getting the children to line up during mealtimes or other activity times, or being a kitchen assistant. This is one activity that she thinks greatly benefits the children, as they are made to feel important and responsible for something other than themselves. She thinks that this can improve their self-confidence and social skills in general. She thinks that outside of school activities may help to support children’s SED such as a swimming course, a visit to the theatre or family-based activities and outings. There are also school-based projects, which are supported by the school manager such as Labour Project, Nothing Day, Democracy Day, or trips for dramatic activities. These suggestions are similar to Deste’s ideas (page 125).

Irmak does not regularly plan any specific play activity for SEL or SED. She thinks that SED and SEL are related to all activities. However, she places some importance on SED especially in dramatic activities. She has not planned any play activities for SED, but planned for school activities such as going to the theatre, Nothing Day, Labour Day, or other outings.

Children’s skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communication skills, -Emotions, -Behaviours displayed during difficult times.

Table 35: Key points for children’s skills from Teacher 4

Table 35 shows the teacher’s considerations of children’s skills while she was observing them in their play. She looked at their communication skills, their emotions and attitudes when they face troubles or difficulties, such as kicking their friends or screaming, or starting an argument.

5.3.2. Narrative of Video-day Interview’s Themes

Pedagogy			Children’s Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play		Free Play	Planned Play
Assessment	Assessment	Play	There is no data in this section.	-Express him/herself in creative ways, -Fulfilling responsibilities, -Self-motivation, -Recognising others’ feelings.
-Observation, -Taking notes.	-Observation of expected behaviours.	-Dramatic play, -Moving play (about visually impaired people)		

Table 36: Categorised themes and sub-themes from Teacher 4’s video-day interview of Data Set 1

Table 36 explains the themes and sub-themes in the different play categories. There are two themes in the video-day interviews during the first data phase. During children’s free play, Irmak observes them in close proximity so as to be able to listen to their dialogues. She takes notes if she finds an interesting conversation or occurrence. There is no data about the children’s skills in free play categories as I did not ask related interview questions about children’s skills in the video-day interview for free play. In planned play, Irmak has conducted a dramatic activity and a moving game. She stated that she planned to observe the following expected skills from the first planned play activity: children being able to express themselves in creative ways and fulfilling their responsibilities. For the second game, she expected to observe self-motivation and empathy.

The first game is a kind of dramatic play activity where the children are divided into five groups; Irmak will give each group the name of an item, which is not known to the other groups. Each group will then have to try to get the others to guess what the object is using their bodies or sounds, but not with words. The second play aimed at helping the children to understand the struggles faced by visually-impaired people, which Irmak hopes will extend to targeting socio-emotional skills of empathy, consideration and care for others. In this game, children will form two groups and the teacher will place a block on the ground as a pathway to a chair at the end. One of the children will be blindfolded and the others will guide him/her along the pathway, to arrive at the chair. There is no winner or loser in both play activities.

Pedagogy			Children's Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play		Free Play	Planned Play
Assessment	Assessment	Play	-Collaboration, -Communication,	-Protecting the interests of group,
-Observation	-Observation, -Planned assessment with reflection questions.	-Children will decide on the name (dramatic play), -Bulbul in the Cage.	-Expressing emotions, -Solving problems.	-Giving a name to the game, -Taking and fulfilling responsibilities, -Self-motivation.

Table 37: Categorized themes and sub-themes from Teacher 4's video-day interview of Data Set 2

Table 37 shows the key points in related themes of the video-day interviews during the second data phase. In the free play category, the teacher used observations as assessments of the children's SELD. She will observe children's reactions, emotions, expressions, communication with others and how they solving problems. She confirmed that she could easily observe their social interactions and skills during their free play periods. In the planned play category, Irmak will use observations to see who takes

initiative, who protects the interests of the collective group, collaboration skills, and she also will observe whether or not they can find creative solutions to problems.

The first play involves different phases. Firstly, children will get into a group of three and will be given a big newspaper page which they have to keep between each other's hands, then between their forearms, then between their backsides. Later, the newspaper will be laid out on the ground and children will dance around the paper to music that Irmak controls. When she stops the music, the children must freeze, and all be standing on the paper. If any group member stays out, the group will be eliminated from the round. In the last phase of this newspaper game, Irmak will fold the paper in half first, for the first round, and then continue folding the paper into smaller sizes for subsequent rounds. To pass the rounds, all children in the team must try to fit into the area of the paper. The game will continue until one group is left.

The name of the second game is "Bulbul in the Cage". Children will form a circle by joining their hands and there will be a child standing inside the circle, who is known as Bulbul. Bulbul is supposed to break out of the circle, and the other children will try to prevent this by working together to close any gaps between them. Irmak also planned to ask the children to name the game, and also asked them reflection questions at the end of the game, for the purpose of assessing the activity.

5.3.3. Narrative of Post-Video Interview's Themes

Post-video interviews were used once at the beginning of the term and another time at the end of the term. The questions were asked during and after watching the video-recordings. There were three different themes that emerged: pedagogy, children's skills and SEL/SED. They have been indicated in the free play and planned play categories. In this section, the fourth teacher's comments will be explored in detail.

SEL/SED		Children's Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play	Free Play	Planned Play
-SEL may be supported by the teacher consciously and in a structured manner, -SED can be supported by additional materials.	-It is possible to observe SED in almost every activity, -SEL is about planned activities, -SEL is a continual process.	-Sharing toys, -Compatible collaboration, -Exchange of ideas, -Friendship, -Confidence, -Self-motivation, -Expressing feelings, -Children were smiling and happy, -Creativity, -Display emotions, -Problem solving, -Playing harmoniously, -Using objects in different ways.	-Happy, -Helpful, -Playing harmoniously, -Leadership, -Collaboration, -Asking friends' opinion in decision making processes, -Fulfil responsibilities, -Self-motivation, -Initiative, -Bored, -Respecting others, -Besides understanding disabled people, they enjoyed the game.

Table 38: Related key points for SEL/SED and children's skills from Teacher 4's post-video interviews of Data Set 1

Table 38 show the key points for SEL/SED and children's skills for Irmak in the free play and planned play categories. When discussing the free play episode, Irmak said:

“I asked them if we should play a game, build a big road or a car park, something like that. I added extra materials and supported SED in their free play in this way. For another group of children, I just laid out some extra materials and backed away.”

This is because, she thought that adding materials and encouraging them provided them with sustainable play and this supports SELD. She also added that making play sustainable is helpful for supporting children's SELD in their free play. Irmak was very careful and very interested in children in the classroom even in their free play. She made

it a conscious effort to support their play. Irmak thought that she supported their SED and different creativities in their free play time. In essence, she believes that SEL is much more about intervention and active effort of a teacher, but supporting children's SED does not require a teacher's intervention. Sharing toys, compatible collaboration, exchange of ideas, friendship, confidence, self-motivation, expressing feelings, smiling, creativity, displaying emotions, problem solving, accordance, using objects in different ways, have all been highlighted as children's SELD-related skills. The following example was interesting to the teacher, and she mentioned that it impressed her greatly. One of children said, "I will make a road here using blocks" and all the others agreed and accepted her suggestion; there was no negotiating. She took this to mean that they have a good understanding about friendship, compromise and collaboration. One member of the playgroup was playing rough and throwing the toy cars around. When Irmak cautioned him against doing so, another child came up with a quick solution and placed a block to use as a car stopper, to prevent the first child from throwing the cars around. The teacher was impressed as she saw it as a creative and quick solution to continue with their game. He had used the object in a different position and purpose. She also thinks that this display showed that they were playing very collaboratively. She added:

"I heard many sentences like such: "Let's do it. How can we make it better? Join us!" I think these kinds of dialogues refer to good friendship and social skills, high motivation, accordance in play and problem solving. I realised that all of them were happy and smiling."

Another notable incident was this: There was a group of four children playing together while another, Umut, was playing alone with a car. When one of the children from the group noticed this, they invited him to join in their play. The teacher commented that she saw this as evidence of SELD in this instance, with them collaborating and trying to be inclusive in their play.

In planned play, Irmak expressed that it is possible to observe SED in almost every activity, even before the start of the play. According to her, SEL is about planned activities and, SEL continues during the play process. However, she did not trust her

knowledge and added, “I have no exact idea about the differences between SED and SEL, it is really complicated for me to explain in-depth”. In planned play, children seemed to be enjoying themselves during both play activities, and played cooperatively and according to the rules. In the first game, the teacher identified possible instances of good leadership and collaboration. The children also considered their friends’ opinions and thoughts when choosing a name for their group. In the first game, Melike was only willing to participate because there were boys in her group. Irmak explained her analysis:

“Melike gets on better with the boys than the girls, and only wants to play with the boys. I think the reason is that she has a twin brother so she is more comfortable playing with boys. Her parents are aware of this situation. She got very unhappy and unwilling to cooperate during a previous art activity when she realised that there were other girls in her group. Her motivation was really low during the previous activity. But now it seems that she has overcome her reluctance to play with girls.”

Irmak was happy to see the children listening to and considering their friends’ ideas. According to Irmak, during both games, all the children fulfilled their responsibilities, even though they felt bored in the second game. She found the second game a little problematic, as “they got very bored.” She reflected that she should have stopped that game or changed something to sustain their interest when she realised that they were getting bored. One child rearranged the messed up blocks on the ground, which seemed to show helpfulness and a sense of pride and ownership for the play area. During the game, all of them played according to their turns and respected each other. The outcomes of the blindfolded game were not as she had expected. According to her, besides gaining a greater understanding of disabled people, she evaluated that they enjoyed the game and had fun.

Pedagogy					
Free play		Planned play			
Assessment	Teacher's Role	Assessment	Play	Teacher's Role	Curriculum
-Observation	-Providing extra materials, -Giving directions, -Directing children's attention to other learning centres.	-Observation, -Portfolios, -Answers to reflection questions, -Video recording or photo taking, -Checking whether goals were achieved.	-Evidence, -Bored, -Should be fun, -Space, -Competition	-Asking children reflection questions, -Include competition, - Plan fun games.	-Poor evaluation of SED, very intangible, -Problematic in SED.

Table 39: Pedagogy and its sub-themes from Teacher 4's post-video interviews in Data Set 1

During children's free play periods, she uses observations to gather in-depth information on how the children are thinking, feeling, reacting to others, and gaining understandings of self. Also, Irmak finds that observations during free play can provide strong evidence for children's SELD. She discussed her efforts in promoting SELD as follows:

"In free play, I ensure that I provide sufficient materials to sustain the interest of the children, and to provide more time for me to make observations of them playing. I also provided some directions for children who seemed lost and brought to their attention to the activities in other learning centres. I wanted to help to maintain a comfortable and peaceful environment so I tried to foresee potential problems based on my knowledge of the children, and intervened in the situation if necessary. I do intervene if a child finds it difficult to join in with the group play".

In the first game (as shown on page 147), Irmak used observations as a way to assess children's SELD. She considers how they behave towards each other, how they react to each other, how they communicate, and how they agree or disagree when making decisions. She finds these factors as evidence for SELD, which according to her, are easy to observe in games. She also added:

“The teacher can ask the children to reflect on the activity and respond to some discussion about the play at the end of the process, so that the teacher can evaluate the children's answers as well.”

She found that the curriculum lacks a proper guideline or tool for the assessment of children's SELD. The elements regarding SELD are all intangible. She said:

“There are only observation forms; the rest is up to the discretion of the teacher. A teacher might evaluate behaviour as negative that I have deemed otherwise. There is no specific criteria for SELD assessment so it is really hard to do this.”

In the second play activity, Irmak was upset because she felt that the game did not achieve her aim of enabling the children to understand more about disabled people. She criticised herself by saying that she should have introduced some element of competition, or made the game fun so the children would enjoy themselves more. Also, she reflected that should have found a bigger play area for the game. Irmak discussed the importance of children having freedom and fun in games, to enable more learning and development to take place. She added; “If I was able to achieve the goals that I set out in this game, I think that children's SELD would have been targeted.” She thought that the game lacked a competitive and fun element. Children loved both roles in the game (blindfolded and navigator), so during the game, they seemed to be enjoying themselves, but Irmak noted that they played outside of the planned aims. In this game, children did not consider the aim, they played game for fun and enjoyment not for learning purposes. According to Irmak, children appeared to be bored during the game and they wanted to make more enjoyable. She stated that the next time she would try to include a sense of competition, and place more focus on the reflection after the game, so as to increase their awareness of disabled people.

Children's Skills	
Free Play	Planned Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Determined, -Comfortable communication, -Sharing ideas, -Many of them were shy, but now they are outgoing, -Better at explaining themselves, -More confidence, -Positive changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fulfilling responsibilities, -Protecting group interests, -Positive development, -Helpful, -Willing to play together, -Happy, -Had fun, -Voted for the name of the game.

Table 40: The main theme and related key points from Teacher 4's post-video interviews of Data Set 2

The table above shows the fourth teacher's related comments and key points about the main theme- children's skills in free and planned play. In free play, the teacher observed that the children displayed the ability to sustain their attention and keep themselves busy over long periods. They stayed focused on one activity over a sustained period and proved to communicate effectively with one another. At the beginning of the term, many children were shy, but now they have overcome this and are more outgoing as she observed in circle time. All children can express themselves easily. For example, Melike experienced significant positive changes. At the beginning of term, she did not use to express herself very well; her preferences or wants. She was only comfortable when she was playing with boys and was always reluctant to play with the girls. However, at the end of term she played cooperatively and effectively with both the boys and girls.

In planned play, Irmak observed SELD in the children such as fulfilling responsibilities, protecting their group interest, proceeding positively, helpfulness, willingness to play, and enjoyment. There were no complaints or disharmony amongst the children. They also supported and helped their friends in the second game. The teacher commented that the game seemed to help children form stronger bonds. At the end of play, the children shared their ideas about possible names of the game. They then voted and decided on

the name “Paper Ship”. According to her, this process of voting teaches children the importance of respecting others’ ideas, which is an important socialising skill that children need to master.

When I asked about children’s SEL and SED in these video recordings, Irmak referred to the children’s skills. She thinks that development of children’s skills is evidence for SEL and SED.

Pedagogy					
Free Play		Planned Play			
Assessment	Teacher’s Role	Assessment	Teacher’s role	Play	Curriculum
-Observation, -Videotaping to re-watch later, -Portfolios, -Taking observation notes.	-Much more emphasis on presentation skills, -Emotions are important, -Put interesting materials in learning centres.	-Children’s reflection, -Observation.	-Being merciful, -Preventing problems.	-Team spirit, -Suitable for SED.	-There are no clear assessment points.

Table 41: Pedagogy and sub-themes from Teacher 4’s post-video interviews of Data Set 2

Table 41 indicates Irmak’s understandings about the other main theme, pedagogy. There are also sub-themes that followed: under free play- assessment and teacher’s role, under planned play- assessment, teacher’s role, curriculum and play.

In free play, Irmak had a chance to do some observations of the children, because she says that she provided many play opportunities and activities in the learning centres. She believes that assessment of playing and learning processes is important for SELD. So, she takes photos and observation notes during their free play to put into children’s

portfolios. She compiles all the data and assessments that she has gathered about the children during the term, and uses them to communicate with parents and families about the child's progress or challenges. She noted that during observations and assessments, she can easily pick up SED and SEL of the children. Taking notes is important for the portfolio to show children's competence. She gave an example about taking notes from her previous experience:

“Firstly, I take notes in my special notebooks, this is my way. A child can count 2 plus 2, this is an observation too. But you know it is so tangible, so I am not writing this down. I note down instances when a child makes a request of his/her friends, when he/she is polite to friends, her/his sense of humour, when they show complex skills in a play. For example, Ayse, fictionalised a very good play, she tried first and checked the steps of play, fixed them and asked her friends ‘Who wants to play with me?’ To me, this is impressive.”

In this term, Irmak placed much more emphasis on children's presentation skills of like expressing themselves and speaking up in front of a group without hesitating, because at the end of term they will present their portfolio to their families; she wants to prepare them for this. Irmak also added that she has put interesting and remarkable materials in the learning centres such as recycling stuff, different size and colours ropes and beads. She mentioned about how she promotes the emotional skills of the children:

“I use emotions to target children's empathy skills whenever I can. I ask the children questions like: “How do you feel? Why do you feel this way? How would you feel if you were him/her? What would you like to do?”

She hopes that these questions will stimulate children's thinking about the feelings of others, and a greater understanding of their own emotions.

In the planned play category, Irmak stated that there are clues for assessment. She observes the children's skills and looks for clues related to SELD. She also said:

“I tried to understand what the children are feeling and their awareness about the play. I observed all the aims that I planned for the game such as making a team, contending for the team, fulfilling responsibilities. It is hard to see some of the

observation points during the play, but it is easy when watching the video recordings.”

On the other hand, Irmak highlighted that there are not clear assessment points like other developmental areas. In Emre’s situation, Irmak commented that

“Maybe those are working with me. Because I cannot stand up emotionally to the children, I have made some mistakes in my management of their feelings and consequently, their SELD was affected as well.”

She found that the play was suitable for SED and it inspired children’s team spirit. Also, Irmak used voting to prevent any disagreement or unhappiness about the name of the first game. At the end of both games, Irmak asked children to discuss their reflections about the game; whether they had fun, if they liked it, and what issues they faced. Children answered and the teacher asked more reflection questions such as: “How can we play it in another way? What can we use instead of paper? Do you have any other ideas about making this game more fun?” She thought that these questions would give children a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the game, and the environment around them.

5.3.4. Narrative of Reflection Interview’s Themes

This part of the chapter covers in-depth data from the interviews about pedagogy and the study’s impact. There are five sub-themes of pedagogy. The sub-themes are: curriculum issues, curriculum requests and changes, play, educators’ roles, and teacher’s reflections. Another theme is the impact of the research and video recordings. Those sub-themes and the themes will be explained in-depth with the main points of the fourth teacher.

5.3.4.1. Curriculum issues

Irmak reported some of the problematic issues in the curriculum. She gave her comments and examples about the issues of the curriculum:

“Since it is a flexible programme, I add more aims when I think it is needed. I directly write my own targets. Actually, I am not

really connected to the curriculum in this respect. I can give examples of my additions: child can say his/her name and physical characteristics. Secondly, child can say the name of his/her mum and dad and their occupations. I think this is a very simple acquisition for SED. I care more about social and emotional characteristics such as creativity, willingness to try. ‘Expressing himself/herself in creative ways, knowing his/her rights and those of others, or how he/she reacts in hardship. Those aims are achieved mostly, but I do not think his/her reactions are enough. In some situations, children do not express their reactions, thoughts and emotions. I added aims and an indication for their rights during the game. Not for human rights or children rights but their rights in the game. I think events related to Ataturk should be placed in the cognitive field. If it's about sense of citizenship and sense of nationalism, it does not work. Ataturk themes should be under cognitive improvement. Also, there is a lack in terms of assessment guidelines as well. There is no diagram or schedule or exact documents that the teachers can use in practice. SED is far behind the other fields in the syllabus. Other fields are clearer. For example, it is hard to create activities for the element ‘child can tell the emotions of others’. I always think a lot about creating events and mostly get stuck. That is why we always add it to the games as a side aim or extra goal.”

It appears that Irmak found that the curriculum does not sufficiently support her in her daily practice of children’s SELD.

5.3.4.2. Curriculum changes/requests

Irmak commented on some ways that the curriculum can be improved to incorporate more focus on SELD. She suggested: “Ataturk-based themes should be under cognitive development.” This is because Ataturk education is related to history, rather than social-emotional aspects of learning. Furthermore, she mentioned that she thinks it would be beneficial for preschool teachers if there were a specific training programme to educate them on SELD. She stated:

“We need it mostly at the beginning of the semester- a guideline on what we should focus on in SED, what kind of activities we can organise or how we can adapt the existing programme to allow for cultural or individual differences. I think that there must be updates, renewals, improvements- much more emphasis on SED and SEL in the curriculum.”

5.3.4.3. Plays/activities

Irmak expressed some of her ideas about her practices and her experiences about children's play that "I think that children start playing the moment they are born". She stated that children realise and learn many things when they play, and play can also come in many forms. Children can learn self-respect, how to regulate and understand their own emotions and of others, how to be a member of a team, and many other SED skills can be learnt easily through play. Children feel at ease when they have the freedom in their own play. Every activity includes SED in some way, especially if an adult or an older child can extend the learning. Because she believes that SED is embedded in every developmental area, she mentioned that she does not plan specific activities to target SED. Noticeably, however, after watching the videos, she decided to place much more emphasis on SELD. Deste highlighted that there are so many opportunities to promote children's SELD in play or any activity. She believes that when children feel free and comfortable during their free play, they can reveal a lot about themselves and their inner world. A positive play atmosphere can make children more aware of their self-conception and their self-competence.

From this point, it appears that she thinks that play is the most effective way to support children's SELD- both planned and free play.

5.3.4.4. Educators' Roles

Irmak pointed out that teachers can provide materials or alerts for taking children's attention to the learning centres. She plans activities, but there are significantly less SED-specific activities. She thinks that teacher guidance is important as well. She said: "our manager cares a lot and this created a great awareness in all of us". She felt like she was studying at the university again when she first arrived at this school- she was learning a lot about SELD. Their school manager always pays more attention to SED- that is why the point of view of the school manager is important in creating an effective early years setting.

5.3.4.5. Teacher's Reflection

Irmak reflected that another important factor for children's SED besides play, is the parent-child relationship. She thinks that children need to have a stable, warm and supportive family environment so as to progress in their SELD. She stated:

“Perfectionist families place unnecessary pressures on children and children feel unhappy and have low self-esteem. Instead of this, families should let their children play without pressure, so that their self-esteem will improve.”

Irmak believes that adults’ and parental attitudes that a child is surrounded by can support or regress a child’s SELD.

5.3.4.6. Impact of research and video recording

Irmak discussed some ideas that this research brought about for her practice and personal development as a teacher. She stated:

“I became more aware of SELD through this project with you. Firstly, watching the videos made me aware of my practice and attitudes towards SELD. I saw for myself how I gave directions, and how the children reacted to my actions and words too. These are really important as I had a chance to evaluate my role in the activities and to see how I can change or improve in the future. I think this can be a really useful assessment tool not only for the children’s SELD, but also for a teacher to assess herself.”

Before watching videos, she emphasised that she was practicing effective observations of the children, but the videotapes made her realise that there are many things that she missed out in the situation. After recordings and video stimulated interviews she thought that she needs to be more attentive during observations of children’s play.

Irmak thought while SED is related to life skills, SEL is the ability to learn social skills and manage one’s and others’ emotions. She observed the children almost every day, but sometimes due to a lack of time, she finds that in a week, she can only conduct observations on three days. She supports sustaining and extending children’s play in their free play time through the provision of additional materials or asking encouraging questions like: “What else can we build here?” She was very keen on observing and interacting with the children during free play times. Also, she believed that children’s sustained play was helpful in supporting their SELD. She normally uses organised

games or play activities to promote SELD, and considers children's SED targets when planning the activities. Irmak found the curriculum problematic as it has unclear points on SED; the points are often very intangible. She stated that she assessed children's SELD through observation.

5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, two teachers' understandings about SEL and SED in pedagogic perspectives have been discussed. Both the teachers' answers have been presented in-depth with related examples provided from the data. There are many ideas about SEL and SED, along with many curriculum and practice issues that were discussed. The findings also showed that the third and the fourth teachers were more confident in explaining and commenting on SEL and SED than the first two teachers. The next chapter will discuss the findings in the pedagogical perspective within relevant references.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. Introduction

This section aims to reflect on the findings demonstrated in the previous chapters. I will examine the findings in the light of research and professional knowledge and will reflect on the results of the research. The focus of this chapter is on revealing teachers' knowledge, theories and understanding of SELD in the context of children's free and planned play. This chapter will include two sections. Firstly, I will address each of the research questions in related key areas, which emerged from the themes. These related key areas are shown in the below table: challenges of understanding, challenges of planning, practice and curriculum, and challenges of assessment and teachers' roles. SELD is quite a complex and broad topic and thus, in light of my theoretical framework, I decided to use "challenges" in order to ensure an effective position. There are a number of challenges in terms of representing their assumed meanings. The word "challenges" here is not used in a negative sense, but rather to include positive challenges or learning points as well. Because these challenges are building on what the teachers were already doing in their practice, they are not presented as negative, but as opportunities for learning and future development for ECE policy in Turkey. At this point, the word "challenges" helped me to figure out an efficient method for data interpretation and for the resulting conceptual framework. Later in this chapter, I will examine the potential impact and implications of this research.

Research Questions	Discussed in perspective of key areas
How do pre-school teachers understand SELD in the context of play? Challenges of understanding	SEL and SED, Children's skills, knowledge and understanding.
How do they plan for play in their settings, to incorporate SELD experiences? Challenges of planning and curriculum Challenges of playful pedagogy	Play/activities, Curriculum. (Free and planned play) Playful pedagogy
How do they interpret SELD through their assessment practices? Challenges of assessment and teachers' roles	Curriculum, Teachers' Roles, Assessment.

Table 42: Research questions addressed to key areas

The table above shows the research questions in the line with the six key areas which are derived from the Findings; SEL and SED, children's skills, knowledge and understanding, play/activities, teachers' roles, curriculum, playful pedagogy and assessment. These six key areas will be discussed within the relevant literature under the highlighted sub-headings of challenges of understanding, challenges of planning and curriculum, and challenges of assessment and teachers' roles.

Overall, it was found that the current curriculum policies regarding SELD in Turkey are not helpful to the teachers as it is inadequate, lacks detail and is unclear in its aims. Therefore, the teachers are finding their own ways in their personal practice to support children's SELD. Also, interestingly, it was found that perceptions and practices are not consistent between the Ankara teachers and Osmaniye teachers in this study.

6.2. Challenges of Understanding

The teachers across the two settings have different understandings about SEL and SED. First of all, the teachers talked about the term SELD as an expression of their ideas about the Turkish pre-school curriculum. All of them explained to varying degrees about SEL and SED when asked to do so in interviews, and were able to describe their various pedagogical approaches. I explained in greater depth about the teachers' understandings and awareness of their pedagogical perspectives in the Literature Review chapter. In considering the theoretical framework, the teachers' understandings of SELD will be discussed in relation to SED and SEL and the key areas of children's skills.

In this study, the findings indicate that the teachers lack confidence in SEL and SED in their early years settings. This lack of confidence, it was revealed, was due to the teachers' concerns about giving the wrong answers to the interview questions. They also said repeatedly that they were not quite sure how to discuss SELD. In accordance with this, in this research, mostly, they emphasised before replying to the questions stating, "I am not sure, but..." or after replying to the questions they remarked "I think..., but I am not certain". They expressed and showed their lack of confidence. Also, they thought that there should be some endorsements for their practice in relation to SELD. Firstly, none of the teachers used the term SELD as an expression of their ideas. SEL and SED are used as separate terms in this study, which reflects the usage of these terms in the Turkish pre-school curriculum. All teachers made reference to the curriculum when they were explaining their ideas about SED, but all displayed their own understanding while explaining SEL. Furthermore, there is no clear evidence that they are able to explain their conceptual understandings of SEL and SED, since only two of them were able to give very clear definitions. In contrast, all teachers were able to explain their pedagogical approaches at a more practical level. However, the evidence is not consistent across the two sets of teachers (Ankara and Osmaniye) in terms of explaining their conceptual understanding of SEL and SED. Two teachers from Ankara were able to give clear definitions. Overall, the teachers have ideas about SEL as follows:

- It is necessary for school readiness and emotional readiness,
- It can be achieved by learning activities that cover emotional experiences, planned social and emotional activities,

- It is interwoven with the play and other activities,
- It relates to emotional intelligence,
- It builds a bridge to real life experiences,
- The practice of SED helps to develop children in positive ways in other developmental areas.

SEL is clearly a dominant element in education systems in many countries as discussed in the Literature Review, however this research reflects upon how this is integrated into ECE provision and practice in Turkey. It is evident that there is a gap between the Turkish pre-school curriculum framework and the teachers' conceptual understanding of SEL, where the teachers think about SED in the context of the Turkish Early Years Programme. The teachers indicated that the curriculum is problematic in the SED area, because it is too limited and does not fully cover the teachers' expectations of the children. SED makes sense to the teachers through determining children's attitudes and behaviours, developing positive social behaviours, gaining life skills, adapting to changes in their environment, and making connections with children's inner worlds and their social environments. The teachers in this study attempted to explain some of the children's skills that they observed and their own knowledge and understandings about SELD. However, there is no specific usage of these terms in the Turkish curriculum, and therefore, the teachers show hesitation and uncertainty when discussing these specific terms. Also, the teachers are not supported by any documentation or any in-service education about SELD. All of them have developed their own theories and understandings about SELD in their practice. Nolan and Kilderry (2010) believed that

“Early years educators need to be prepared and rethink their practices, and to explore the origins of the attitudes that have sustained these practices over the course of their careers; that will be important for teachers to have opportunities to chart how their attitudes and practices are linked to the construction and perpetuation of traditional notions of best practice in relation to particular theoretical perspectives” (p. 118).

This perspective is pertinent in light of the shortcomings of the Turkish pre-school curriculum, and the need for teachers to develop their own approaches to SELD. In line with this argument, the next diagram shows the connections between the key themes

that have emerged from this research, and wider theories and the shifts in how these relate to each other. I will discuss these shifts within the relevant literature later on.

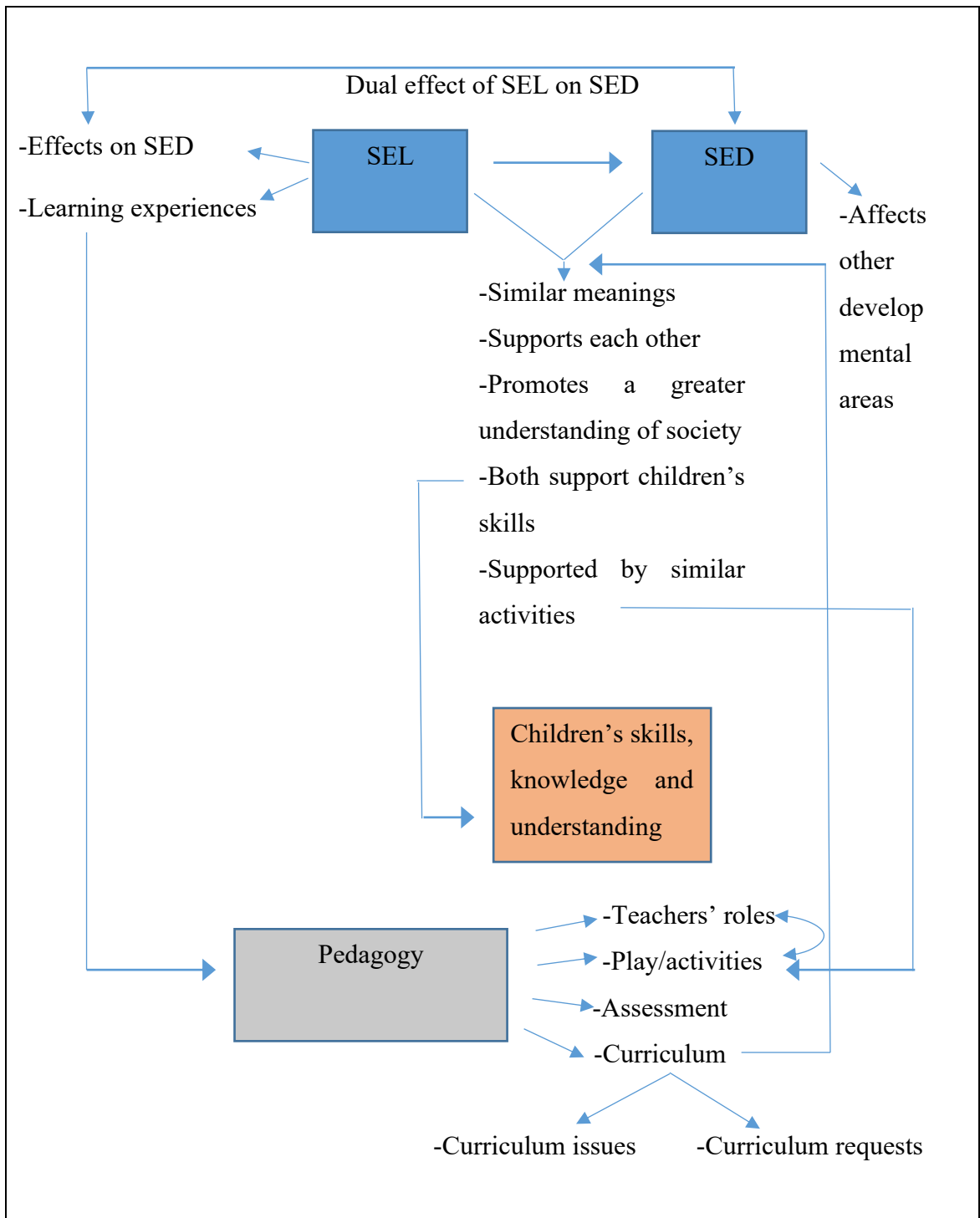


Figure 13: Connections between the themes and key areas

The connections between the themes and key areas can be seen from Figure 13. SEL is linked to intentional teaching and learning experiences. In other words, SEL is a form of intentional teaching. This research has revealed that SEL and SED interact with and

influence each other in different ways. SEL helps to create real life experiences in learning activities that consider children's emotional expression, communication, adaptation to their peers and their attitudes in times of crisis. In contrast, the purpose of SED is to build a bridge between the social and intuitive worlds of children. On the one hand, SED affects other developmental areas such as the cognitive development of children who will learn numbers, the alphabet or shapes, as the teachers in the study discussed. For instance, Irmak described a notable observation on Ayse, one of her students, who displayed cognitive, physical and social skills while she was planning free play with her friends. This finding aligns with Wood's argument that children play not only with toys or equipment but also, they can use their emotions, understandings, mimicry, and relationships in their play; and these represent sophisticated capabilities (Wood, 2013). The data revealed that teacher can understand that a child can practice his/her sophisticated skills both socio-emotional and cognitive skills through play. This result is in accordance with the aim of this research as play used here foreground of SELD. McClelland et al (2017) described three essential elements "of SEL skills: emotional processes, social/interpersonal skills, and cognitive regulation" (p. 34). Denham et al (2003) stated that SEL skills are linked to cognitive abilities. In this example, Ayse showed that her transformation involved sophisticated levels of thinking and action as she communicated with friends and planned play for all of them. The teacher commented that SED becomes active naturally within social interactions and these interactions are provided through planning for structured and free play activities. According to the teachers, SELD creates a framework for all areas of development and children's skills, understanding and knowledge about social and emotional competence, which is considered by the teachers to be important.

Although teachers have responsibilities to teach students SED skills (Cefai and Valeria, 2014), it appears that a few research studies have been done on teachers' understandings about SEL, and so this study aimed to research how teachers' understandings relate to their practices. The findings of this particular study show that even though teachers shared certain fundamental understandings on SELD, they experienced some difficulties and constraints in their practice. It has been emphasised that they have unclear perceptions on SEL in ECE. Teachers expressed a lack of confidence to develop children's SEL because of the constraints, which include pressures from the wider society and from parents to focus on academics, limited observations of SELD during

play (communication, attitudes in crisis and emotional expressions), limited time for managing and interacting with children in the planned activities, and low confidence in planning SELD activities.

Moreover, in the context of pre-school education in Turkey, Ataturk-based activities (as mentioned in the Literature Review, section 2.6.1), which are meant to target cultural and citizenship development, make it complicated for teachers to support SELD. This is because the curriculum emphasises cognitive development and knowledge acquisition, and ideas related to school readiness. In the Turkish curriculum, Ataturk-related activities are aimed at developing children's awareness of Turkish citizenship in the SED areas. However, the teachers interpret this as needing to teach and prepare activities for children regarding Ataturk's life events and his importance in Turkish History. It can be seen clearly in the related section of Literature Review Chapter that there are no specific goals in the curriculum about citizenship, citizenship duties or being a conscious citizen. The area of SED in the Turkish Pre-school Programme that needs to be addressed is how the Ataturk-based target is often used in academic terms as SED-based activities, which is the part of the children's education that is intended to prepare them for citizenship skills in daily life. At this point, it is substantial to highlight the limitations of this approach

"...if schools' preparation for the future citizenry comes down to the production of docile bodies, where children are taught socially acceptable codes for behaving instead of having the opportunity to experience expressing themselves..." (Bartholdsson, et al., 2014, p. 210).

However, the Turkish preschool education programme does not provide opportunities for children to express themselves as good citizens or display good citizen responsibilities, other than those related to Ataturk activities. This reflects the analysis by Bartholdsson, et al., (2014) who illustrated "that the socially competent child is shaped and cultivated through self-regulating techniques aiming at creating a docile body, a body that will be a good citizen, a pliant member of the social order" (p. 202). Even though citizenship is not directly addressed in the Turkish early years curriculum, it can be argued that it can be targeted through developing their SELD in a broader sense. As Dowling (2010) highlighted, "If children can learn to be at ease with others and start to develop a social responsibility for them, then clearly this will affect their

personal well-being, but will also better prepare them to contribute in a larger social world” (p. 46).

As seen in the findings, there seemed to be a difficulty with recognising children’s SELD across all the teachers. The teachers commented that although the children seemed happy and that they were having fun, the teachers were not sure whether their SELD was improving. In the games, the children displayed their positive and negative feelings freely, and so the teachers felt that the curriculum goal regarding “showing emotions” was fulfilled. According to the teachers, this showed that SED indicators were seen in the play. However, the teachers said that children experienced displaying their feelings of having fun and being happy, but the teachers doubted whether this is SEL. In England, according to Early Years Foundation Stage National Strategies (2009), “having fun” is one of the key elements for supporting children’s learning (p. 9). Similarly, the teachers in this study were concerned with whether the children were having fun in the games or not.

Considering all these challenges, there were also opportunities for change and development in teachers’ practice, as well as in the Turkish pre-school curriculum. The teachers shared some of their ideas on how to change their practice, such as additional SEL programmes or SELD activities within the curriculum, and for parents and school managers to take an active role in facilitating children’s SELD. Also, the teachers have many suggestions to make the goals better, clearer and more realistic in order to support children’s learning. Accordingly, the findings show that SEL and SED have similarities in that both inform and are related to each other, both are necessary for children’s positive development in society and in the pre-school, and both can be improved by similar activities in that some of them are teacher-led while others child-led. This is consistent with contemporary recommendations about the mix of pedagogical approaches in ECE settings, including children’s freely chosen activities, alongside activities that are planned and led by practitioners (Wood, 2010). During the freely chosen play activities in this study, Zara realised that Erman tolerated his friend’s anger and his rude behaviour as shown in the findings chapter. Zara commented that in this situation, Erman displayed his grasp of SED, and that he had learnt some social skills. In this line, as Zara highlighted, friendship collaboration allows children to develop positive social emotions. According to the International Bureau of Education (IBE)

reports (Pekrun, 2014), the teacher should also consider students' negative emotions to fully support their learning in productive ways. All of the teachers in this study took note of both positive and negative emotions displayed by the children.

SEL is the thread that binds children's skills, knowledge and understandings about the world around them. All teachers' beliefs support the view that SEL is an integrated and progressive process to improve children's social-emotional skills, understandings and knowledge during various activities, and it must be supported and improved through the curriculum. From this, it can be argued that the development of social-emotional competence needs a programme which is effective and appropriate, that is "in sync with norms of the different domains of competence for the age groups in question, and designed in a such way that the content unfolds in line with typical developmental patterns" (Humphrey, 2013; p. 23). This position raises questions about what are 'typical developmental patterns' in that the children in this study showed a wide range of development in their social and emotional learning. Therefore, any curriculum framework needs to reflect culturally appropriate ways of framing the goals for learning and development.

The teachers commented on the repertoire of children's skills about SEL, and it can be seen in the Findings chapters that these include motivation, solving problems, obeying rules, showing emotions, fulfilling responsibilities, self-confidence, and waiting their turn, all of which are stated in the Turkish curriculum. In the Turkish preschool curriculum, the SEL area includes only basic acquisitions, as can be seen in the Literature Review chapter. In addition, the teachers also observed and highlighted that collaboration, leadership skills, self-criticism, self-control, kindness, eye contact-based communication, determination, and assertiveness are considerable competences in SEL. These higher-level skills, however, are not explicitly stated in the curriculum. Therefore, it can be argued that more definition needs to be given to this area in the Turkish pre-school curriculum. As a result of this finding, it shows that the restrictions or limitations of the curriculum affect the teachers' understanding. The curriculum therefore can pose a challenge to teachers' practices due to the mentioned reasons.

According to the teachers' understandings of SEL, many of the children's skills and knowledge can be easily observed in their free and chosen play, because children's

complex and original ideas are revealed during these times. However, as the teachers stated, they are unable to find these aspects in the curriculum to support or provide guidelines for children's SELD in activities. In line with this point, my findings show that there is a need for a SEL-specific programme: as Durlak et al. (2011) demonstrated from their empirical meta-analysis, SEL programmes had a positive effect on SEL-programme based schools. It is essential for stakeholders and the government to promote "healthy development of children by supporting the incorporation of evidence-based SEL programming into standard educational practice" (p. 2). Other examples include CASEL (2006) in the USA, which focuses on "self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making" (<http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning>) in early years programmes, and SEAL in England, which considers "self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills" (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, p. 45). Unfortunately, in this research, the teachers experience a lack of SEL programme or guidance, and also less effective and unclear SED goals in the current curriculum. Research indicates that SED becomes active within social interactions and also involves awareness of feelings that reflect self-control, knowing relationships between feelings and reactions; decision-making that involves awareness of any problem, planning and considering consequences; characteristics such as honesty, motivation or persistence; management of feelings that include self-calming and anger management; self-concepts such as feeling likeable or having self-confidence; communication skills that include listening, following directions; group dynamics that include peer resistance, leadership skills; and relationship skills that understand others' feelings and respect them (Elias et al, 1997).

Moyle (2005) has identified five main strands of social-emotional skills as follows: "self-awareness, empathy, managing one's emotions, social skills, motivation" (p. 2). On the other hand, Humphrey (2013) stated that "emotional competence skills include self-awareness, self-regulation and social awareness; social skills cover relationship skills and responsible decision making" (p. 22). However, the teachers in this study showed that communication, interaction and displays of emotion are skills inseparable from social emotional competence. It also can be seen in the Literature Review that many countries emphasise the importance of inclusion and the need to provide targeted activities for SED in their curriculum. They also give guidance on how to achieve the

SELD goals by paying attention to children's well-being, creativity and critical thinking skills. However, the Turkish preschool programme does not include any of these targets or learning goals and this makes the early years practitioner all the more unclear about SELD related areas, specifically, SED. The teachers in this study theorised that SEL is a core element for academic success, and that children who are socially and emotionally capable are more likely to be successful in other skills such as mathematics, reading or writing. These findings are congruent with the study of Triliva and Poulou (2006), which explored Greek teachers' thoughts and beliefs on social emotional competences and how the competencies can be improved in the practice. Therefore, the teachers in this study suggested that SELD must be supported by the curriculum, and that there needs to be more guidance for practice and planning for activities. In addition, there needs to be more guidance on play to improve their understanding about SELD and play.

6.3. Challenges of Playful Pedagogy

This research has examined the context in which teachers use play to support children's SELD in early years settings in a small sample of preschools in Turkey. As such, the research contributes to theoretical understanding of the concepts associated with playful pedagogical approaches, and the extent to which these are facilitated or constrained within preschool contexts. The research literature concurs that playful pedagogy is desirable to support children's learning (Hunter and Walsh, 2014; Fung and Cheng, 2012), and this was found in the context of SELD when the teachers in this study showed their reflections on their approaches. It is clear that there is a continuum of play in the teachers' practice ranging from child-led and freely chosen to adult-led and structured play. However, the data seems to indicate that there is more adult-led play than free play. This finding is consistent with research in other countries where policy frameworks are pushing a more structured or adult-led approach to play (Wood, 2014a) as a means of achieving specific learning goals. This calls into question whether the benefits of child-led and freely-chosen play are being realised. As the literature concurs, play helps the development of children's intentional learning, such as motivation, self-esteem, self-determination, self-confidence abilities; hence it can be seen that play provides children with many opportunities to master skills in learning (Wood, 2013). Play also allows children to gain benefits in their physical and mental health, emotional wellbeing, and in socialising with their peers (Wood, 2010). At this point, children are

gaining various benefits from play such as self-regulation, socialisation, cooperation or collaboration or emotional competences (Nutbrown et al., 2008; Merrel and Gueldner, 2010; Gunter et al., 2012; Kington et al., 2013; Kirk and Jay, 2018). Even though a continuum of play can assist teachers in meeting some particular requirements by developing their provision and acting on their knowledge and understanding of the relationships between play and learning, this research revealed that the controversial and problematic aspects of play is consistent with the international literature (Hunter and Walsh, 2014; Fung and Cheng, 2012; McInnes et al., 2011). Thus, there are key tensions for the teachers in this study. On the one hand, this study supports other research studies which show that play is an important concept for the teachers in relation to SELD (Woolf, 2012; Jennings, 2011; Szalavitz and Perry, 2010). Even though teachers are hesitant to apply playful approach in early years setting (Rogers, 2010) not only supporting SELD but also supporting other developmental areas, all teachers in my study thought that SELD could be supported through playful pedagogy, and agreed that play-based learning is important. On the other hand, research has found that there are inconsistencies between teachers' practice using playful pedagogy in supporting children's SELD, and this was the case in my study. For example, Deste and Irmak placed much more emphasis on SED in the children's play as can be seen in the Findings chapter. However, Zara and Umay did not give much attention to SED and SEL processes in children's play, even though play has a strong validation by researchers as the primary mode for supporting SELD. The teachers in this study express similar perspectives; specifically, that children's play activities have a significant role in their development.

Although the teachers recognised the importance of play for children's SELD, the evidence indicates that they were unable consistently to implement effective playful pedagogy in their early years classrooms which is consistent with the international literature that indicates inconsistencies between teachers' theories and practice in their provision for play. For example, while one of the teachers in Ankara indicated that she writes her own goals for SED to support children's SEL that are additional to her own daily planning; one of the teachers in Osmaniye had quite a limited understanding of play and pedagogy that is not consistent with the international literature regarding teachers providing direct support for play, and enabling child-initiated activities. I presented the teachers' practice and understanding gap in the Findings chapters.

However, this study revealed that the perspectives of the teachers in the play context and current curriculum are problematic. Despite this, the data supported that teachers' thoughts and practices are inseparable as proven by Triliva and Poulou (2006) that teachers' active involvement in the process is important to support children's SELD in the classroom. All the teachers in my study had positive thoughts about playful pedagogy and they planned structured play to build on SELD skills for children. They also thought planning for play is a form of participation in the process. Even though they had positive thoughts about playful pedagogy, they experienced some challenges in their practices, such as organising the curriculum goals into the play, time-management, or suitable planning for supporting children's SELD.

These findings suggest that it is not just a matter of the dislocation between rhetoric and reality but that policy frameworks have an intervening effect in how teachers frame their provision for play. The teachers in this study feared that there will be an imbalance with too much teacher-led play activities and the children will lose their flexibility, creativity or ability to choose their own play. So, the teachers were committed to ensuring that the children learn through freely chosen play. This means that the teachers still plan and allow children to make choices and children can get chances to make mistakes without the risk of failure. Children's SELD can be influenced and supported to varying degrees in early years settings and in ways that transform their learning. This is consistent with the research by Tzuo (2007) who asserted that teachers' authority and children's flexibility can be adjusted and do not need to be in tension. Therefore, these tensions reflect wider debates about the harmony or balance between child-initiated and adult-led play, and how much adult involvement should occur in children's freely chosen play, or after teachers have observed specific events and activities. In her work about assessment and planning Smidt (2005) showed that

“If the fort collapses the child can start again or abandon it or call for help. In self-chosen activities, children are allowed to take risks, which is an important part of learning. Of course, adults need to be alert to what children are doing in their play and need to offer objects, advice or physical help to enable the child to move forward. Adults might want to get involved in a genuine dialogue with the child about what the child is doing,

but asking questions to test the child sometimes destroys the play and learning” (p. 38).

In line with this, the teachers in my study believe strongly that they need a source of consistent instructions or at least further guidance regarding the meaning of an SELD programme or guidance which can be integrated with playful activities and the rules that frame these activities. This finding reinforces the point that policy frameworks have significant influence on teachers’ thinking and practice. Walsh et al. (2017) pointed out (in considering Northern Ireland ECE curriculum) that it is an important role of early years teachers to foster children’s knowledge and skills by considering children’s interests and using different pedagogical plans with the cooperation of children. However, the teachers in my study were unsure about their responsibilities, how they can manage, monitor, engage or extend children’s learning in children’s play, which are all similar issues in the global literature on play and pedagogy (McInnes, et al. 2011; Fung and Cheng, 2012; Hunter and Walsh, 2014). Therefore, it would be helpful for teachers’ to develop their understanding of playful pedagogy and their practice to support children’s SELD, but with the support of clear guidance in policy documents in Turkish ECE. Even though the inadequacy of SELD programmes in Turkey can cause problems in practice and teachers’ theories, the teachers thought that the power of relationships between children and teachers are important to create a supportive element for children’s SELD. This finding corresponds with Grieshaber and McArdle (2010) who assert that social interaction between adults and children is a guideline on how to think, feel, act, and to express personal ideas in different social environments. Social interaction can be supported in classroom environment. Because, according to Hedges and Cullen (2012)’s theory that children bring their knowledge from daily life outside of school activities, and their everyday experiences can be developed by the teachers as part of their curriculum planning.

A further tension for the teachers in this study is how much time they spend on developing cognitive skills and teaching academic skills, even though many researchers suggested that successful SELD skills are efficient and effective ways to enhance academic skills and their school readiness (Hamre et al., 2012; Konold and Pianta, 2005; Raver, 2002; Ladd, Birch, and Buhs, 1999; Ladd, Kochenderfer, and Coleman, 1997), Zara and Umay, the teachers from Osmaniye, concentrate on the academic skills

in children's play and activities. This is because they believe that there must be some focus on reading and writing skills, and that pre-school is a preparation for primary school. Hence, they feel the need to spend much more time on cognitive skills in children's activities rather than SELD. Also, there is societal pressure from parents who want their children to learn counting, the four operations of numbers, and other academic skills in preschool. Even though parents' expectations are important for Zara and Umay (Osmaniye teachers) when considering their pedagogy, they struggle to fulfil these expectations because of time constraints and external pressures, as discussed previously. The teachers commented that parents and professionals expect the teachers to teach children academic skills instead of giving opportunities for play. It can also be said that the teachers thought conscientiously when fulfilling curriculum goals and targeted academic success to satisfy parents and professionals desires. In accordance, Wood and Bennett (1997) maintained that, "in the current educational climate, play is susceptible to criticism because teachers and other educators have to provide evidence of learning and attainment which can be recorded and reported to parents and professionals" (p. 22). This is a similar point to Brooker's (2002) discussion that practitioners experience pressures from parents to teach children academic skills in their practice, and that parents may be disappointed if their educational expectations for children are not fulfilled. This pressure was discovered in my research results and this may help to explain why teachers cannot spend sufficient time focusing on SELD, and using play-based pedagogical approaches. It is also arguable that there is no exact way to know how much time a teacher might spend for SELD in their daily routines or whether they can blend SELD activities with other activities. Therefore, there also needs to be formal evidence of children's learning to inform policy frameworks in Turkey through additional guidance documents.

In response to debates about teaching and play, they can be seen as two polarisations, extreme and fundamental notions (Fisher et al, 2010; Hyvonen, 2011; Pramling-Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson, 2008). However, it is teachers who must address these notions in their practice. The teachers in my study created their own playful pedagogic methods and they agreed that there must be duties for children while preparing play such as helping the teacher to prepare the materials and area, or other pre-play and warm-up activities. These duties might be supportive for children's SELD in multi-purpose ways such as learning to take responsibilities and helping teachers with

time management. So, this research contributed to ongoing debates in the international literature, in terms of the range of activities that teachers plan within the broad scope of playful pedagogy to engage children in the processes of planning and preparing play. Nevertheless, there remain qualitative differences between child-led and freely-chosen play, and play that is adult-led. As Rogers (2010) argued, play also creates opportunities for children to show their autonomy from teachers to their friends, reveal boundaries for being included and excluded from shifting groups and to experience control and power; the development of friendship and all these characteristics are sustained by play. The teachers in my study enabled children's freedom to choose within the limited and controlled zone in the classroom, especially in their freely chosen activities that give chances for children's SELD through supportive interactions with others. To support SELD in stronger and more effective ways, the teachers made children aware of learning centres in free play time, and used visual and verbal objects which are related to the learning areas. They also provided peaceful and comfortable atmospheres as the children seemed to be happy and enjoying the interactions with their peers. The teachers laid down rules about the objects and for playing with each other constructively. However, the teachers in this study understand SELD skills as not being the same as teaching children facts or concepts. Even though Russo (2012) pointed out that finding a balance between academic teaching and creating a learning environment is part of a teachers' role, the teachers in my study showed that it is hard to adjust their role about teaching academic goals or creating learning zones, at the same time as using play to support learning.

However, it is important to explore the reasons why making links between teachers' beliefs and their practices was difficult for the teachers in this study. Even though some research studies identified that chaotic and messy play supports children's SELD skills, such as aggression control, becoming social or problem solving skills (Ramani and Bownell, 2013; Whitebread et al., 2012; Corsaro and Schwarz, 1991), one of the teachers, Zara, thinks that the inherent chaos of children's free play means that she is unable to concentrate on observations regarding children's development. This point is paralleled by Wood (2010), who argues that free play is often problematic in the classroom because it may be associated with mess, lack of teacher's control, and unclear outcomes, none of which are consistent with the pedagogies described in many policy documents. Thus, it is difficult for teachers to align their beliefs with their pedagogical

perspectives about what play looks like in practice, and what potential play holds for children's learning and development. My findings overlap with Moyles, Adams and Musgrove's (2002) research on pedagogical effectiveness that "it became obvious that much of what practitioners reported as effective practice and what was observed on the video, was often quite dissonant particularly in relation to playful approaches to learning" (p. 477). What this translates to in my research is that the teachers' perceptions, which were gathered from the pre-video interviews, and their reflections after watching the videos were not aligned in terms of what constitutes effective practice. Again, this is not a case of blaming the teachers in my study for the problems, but of looking critically at the effects of policy frameworks, and whether these adequately support teachers in their pedagogical approaches.

Practitioners need to exercise discretion and attempt to understand the context of children's play before making judgements as to whether they are being aggressive, or simply playing aggressively. Following this, there was evidence that two of the children in Zara's classroom were playing loudly and aggressively. Zara thought that they were fighting about block toys. However, when she moved close to the play area and listened to their dialogue, she understood that one of the children was actually showing another how to make his own car with the blocks. It is significant to note this instance where it is clear to see how children help each other, cooperate and share their ideas, even in what might seem like chaos or aggression during play activities. As Brooker (2002) suggested:

"One easy way to determine whether children are playing with aggressive behaviour, or actually being aggressive, is to observe non-judgementally and resist any desire to intervene. If all children are smiling and not crying, moving in-and-out of pretending, and not seeking adult help, they are likely to be enjoying pretend play rather than actually being aggressive. By looking more closely, an observer can notice how players continually signal to each other that they are playing" (p. 175).

In line with this, as discussed in the Literature Review, peer interaction in a face to face conflict in early years children can help to solve the problem that Medina and

colleagues (2001) stressed: “children must learn to cooperate and resolve possible peer conflicts” (p. 155). Also, Ditchburn (1988) pointed out from the pedagogical perspective that conflict resolution is a significant competence that enables learning activities to proceed. In contrast, from a social developmental perspective, “SEL interventions should include elements designed to increase opportunities for children to be involved in pro-social activities and to be effectively rewarded for that participation, in addition to teaching social and emotional competence” (Hawkins et al, 2004; p. 135). It can be seen in this study that there are some inconsistencies about how conflict can impact on children’s SELD competences in educational settings, including whether or not children are involved in conflict or everyday quarrels as a part of their development process. However, the influential philosopher John Locke thought differently. He reviewed that it can be seen how children “gradually come to have more ideas, which they do only by acquiring ideas that are furnished by experience and the observation of things” (cited in Bennet, 2017; p.14). In other words, children need experience to develop their skills, concepts and behaviours. It can be seen from the data that experiencing conflict in educational settings could help children to develop their SELD, again within supportive environments and a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

Throughout my study, the issues of flexibility and responsiveness have recurred in the findings, sometimes in tension with structure and direct teaching of academic skills. There is a concept of spontaneous learnable and teachable moments that provides a teacher with opportunities to support children’s learning within the context of real-life experiences in educational settings. This can mean providing situations for the children to display self-control, exhibit feelings or find solutions to problems (Elias et al. 1997). In this study, it was apparent that one of the teachers was aware of using this term in her discussions about SELD that she combined from her undergraduate education and work experiences. Zara uses these spontaneous moments to support children’s development, as she believes that these have long-term effects. She noted that some children enjoy and thrive on discovering and learning things spontaneously. For instance, in the vignette where Erman and Muhammed were arguing during free play, the teacher catches the opportunity to support their SELD (see page 120). At this point, the teacher believes that it is important for her to give the right directions to help children follow their interests and ideas. The teacher does not intervene, depending, in part, on who is

quarrelling and under what circumstances, but generally, she allows them to carry on with their dispute. This is because conflict is natural for children at this stage and it is good for them to have the experience of how they feel in argument (Tobin et al, 1989). The teachers in this study have diverse understandings about the teachers' roles to support children's SELD in both freely chosen and planned play activities. SELD provides wider development in the society where teachers sometimes make interventions to support SELD, and sometimes this comes from children's freely chosen activities. However, Wood and Bennett (1997) highlighted that:

“Play is notoriously difficult to evaluate because of its spontaneous and unpredictable nature. There is an emphasis on learning through socialisation with peers, rather than through adult involvement. This militates against the kinds of interactions which would enable skilled educators to support and assess children's learning to inform future provision” (p. 22).

In accordance with this point, teachers in my study are able to show their pedagogical support for children's play. In free play, the teachers prefer to interfere only when there is a conflict or a crisis, if necessary, otherwise they let the children overcome hurdles on their own. This is a kind of assessment and observation of children's SED through free play spontaneously. It is sometimes possible to see some crisis during the children's play because of their lack of skills of compromise, cooperation or problem solving (Wood, 2013). The teachers in my study include additional materials for quality learning activities into the learning centres so that the children can find these familiar and interesting. In accordance with this, Norris (2003) suggested that “of critical importance among the many roles that teachers play is that of creating a positive, supportive classroom environment based on a clear and well-organized management plan” (p. 315). This study revealed that play must be fun and age appropriate for children if it is planned play by teachers, otherwise, the teachers feel a lack of confidence in their planning and pedagogical approaches. This is a significant point found in this study in relation to how the teacher can support children's SELD. This is because when children are having fun and the play is suitable, the children feel happy and positive, and - as one of the teachers noted - the teachers then also feel more confident in planning effective play activities for the children in future.

Regarding my point in the Findings Section 2 (see page 172) that Irmak does not plan specific activities regularly: there was one instance where she planned an activity and it did not work. Irmak's second planned play activity in the first term is a notable example of this. The play did not work effectively to integrate the intended SELD targets for the children. While she was watching the recorded video and answering my questions, Irmak felt upset and was self-critical about her role in the planning of play, which was reported in the previous chapter in-depth. She thought that the play was not enjoyable for children and so they did not experience learning socially and emotionally as she had planned. In line with this, Wood and Bennett (1997) highlighted that

“The teachers also confronted the difficult problem that children's choices and agendas for play do not always fit in with other classroom activities and routines, which was in direct conflict with the dominant theories about promoting independence, control and autonomy” (p. 26).

In relation to this, International Bureau of Education (IBE) highlighted that the experience of enjoyment is important in learning when the learning material is perceived as interesting and valuable (Pekrun, 2014). The learning material of Irmak's planned play and play materials was, in her view, boring and uninteresting; she reflected critically that children's enjoyment in this play activity was really important to achieve the goals. In this episode, the children chose what to do with the materials and made the activity fun through their own interactions. In this regard, Irmak said that she struggles to manage children's SELD through planned play activities because incidents like these happen sometimes during SELD targeted activities. In regard to this point, Wood and Bennett (1997) found in their research that “the teachers conceptualised their role at a theoretical level was not always consistent with their management and organisation” (p. 26). Irmak added that even though she struggles with SELD provision in the classroom, in the activities around the school or in the outdoors, she feels more confident because of the collaboration with other teachers. This perspective is in accordance with Walsh et al.'s study in 2017 that teachers who embrace appropriate participatory approaches put an emphasis on inside and outside of school activities such as supporting children's learning at home with their parents. Children also bring their everyday experiences from

outside of school and teachers need to understand these experiences in order to support and encourage children's learning (Hedges and Cullen, 2012). However, in my study, there is an interesting point that the teachers thought outside of school activities are important, because they support what children gained as SELD skills in the preschool setting, and children can practice and reinforce their learning in their home social environment. However, none of them mentioned that children bring their everyday knowledge into the classroom and teachers shape their everyday experiences based on children's interests and funds of knowledge, as recommended Hedges and Cullen (2012) and Walsh et al (2017).

As McClelland et al (2017) discussed, age-appropriate play-based pedagogy contributes to children success in SELD programs. The teachers in this study integrate playful pedagogy to varying degrees in their practice, even though they feel a lack of confidence about inadequate theoretical SELD knowledge. Their theories about playfulness in educational settings indicate that the teachers think that planned play rules should be flexible during play, allowing the breaking of rules as necessary, and also that setting of boundaries is important to prevent any misunderstanding or interruption of play. All the teachers prefer to plan dramatic play, which children can easily use as role-play and be enabled to display their emotions. In this way, the children gain understanding of others' perspectives through taking or assigning roles so that they can understand how other people behave and integrate in a community (Wood, 2013). Also, Hedges and Cullen (2012) pointed out that socio-dramatic play creates an influential atmosphere where children find opportunity to imitate others, represent their actions and to display empathetic skills towards others in expressive way. Vygotsky (1978) viewed play, especially socio-dramatic play, as a fountain of learning. He regarded imaginative and symbolic play as a method to help children understand the nature of their daily lives, and to support learning. In light of psychological and pedagogical theories, and in considering the power of socio-dramatic play, teachers in my study mostly tend to use it in their planning to support children's SELD in their practice.

All the teachers in this study placed importance on "fun" in children's play to take children's attention as a first step of learning stage. Even though play works successfully in promoting children's communication, shared control, peer group

identity, and self-efficiency, they have struggled to use play as a pedagogic approach in practice as they mostly focused on play management and the aims of the play in their planned play practices. They believed that if children are happy and have fun, they learn from an activity. In the Turkish ECE framework, there is an imbalance between the teachers' beliefs and their practices about SELD and play, as well as their lack of confidence to translate effective playful pedagogies into practice to support SELD. However, this is not just a problem of the teachers' practices, but of the policy framework itself.

6.4. Challenges of Planning and Curriculum

This section puts a reflective emphasis on the inter-relationship between the challenges of planning and curriculum as key themes that emerged from the analysis, again positioning those challenges as opportunities. There are many SELD programmes that might inform the development of the pre-school curriculum in Turkey. However, their starting points and focus groups are different. *KidsMatter* is an initiative that has indicated positive influences only for pupils who started the research with clinically established mental health difficulties (Slee et al, 2009). The Norway's curriculum, *Second Step*, displayed much greater progress in outcomes for children who come from lower socio-economic context than their peers (Holsen et al, 2009). However, there is a big gap in the area of SELD in the Turkish curriculum that the teachers have described as a limitation to their provision and practice not only in lower socio-economic areas but also in the high socio-economic areas. According to the data, even though the teachers in the higher socio-economic areas have clearer ideas about SELD, there must be a separate programme about SELD to support their understandings. Also, all teachers in this research have shown some confusion about what kind of programme would be helpful and realistic to ensure that SED and SEL are interwoven. In this line, Humphrey (2013) suggests that a qualitative programme exhibits the following important characteristics:

“-Sequenced- the application of a planned set of activities to develop skills sequentially in a step-by-step approach. This principle applies to both the general sequencing of implementation across different levels within the school (e.g. staff training, work with parents, policy development) and the more detailed sequencing of different activities within a skills-

focused curriculum to ensure developmental appropriateness for pupils of different ages.

-Active- the use of active forms of learning such as role play. This applies equally to explicit opportunities for teaching and learning with students and training with staff. In either scenario, it is proposed that key social and emotional skills cannot be absorbed passively.

-Focused- the devotion of sufficient time exclusively to the development of social and emotional skills. This means ensuring that the taught element of an intervention has its place in the school day, and that staff training and professional development time is planned and delivered regularly and consistently.

-Explicit- the targeting of specific social and emotional skills. Changes in the school culture/environment alone are not sufficient to produce lasting change and there needs to be a strong curriculum-based element that provides pupils with explicit opportunities to develop skills such as empathy in a safe environment.” (p. 125).

According to Humphrey’s suggestion, another important point is that the teachers have many roles to play in helping children develop SELD skills. Unfortunately, the present study revealed, as Kaufmann and Wischmann (1999) also highlighted, that many early years educators do not feel ready to fulfil the requirements of children who have major social-emotional challenging or problematic behaviour. The point here is that in my study, the teachers described their lack of confidence to meet children’s SELD, which is affected by the inadequate curriculum framework and the teachers’ unclear perceptions. There is some evidence in the research literature about children who have social emotional problems. However, as can be seen in the findings one of Deste’s students, one of Zara’s students and one child from Irmak’s class seemed to have such problems. However, none of the teachers touched upon the fact that they struggled to overcome these behaviours. All of the teachers said that there is no specific programme to educate these children socially and emotionally. They do their best to find a solution such as giving them more care, giving them extra responsibilities or directing them to the different activities. They often feel that they are insufficiently educated and inadequately equipped to develop children’s SELD skills. They clearly explained that they need a SELD-blended curriculum that is clear, realistic and understandable to support all children. In this regard, the Swedish programme, *Social Emotional Training – Important for Life (SET)* offers five constructed domains:

“-Self-knowledge (to know what one feels and to use one’s feelings when one makes a decision; to have a realistic conception of one’s own abilities and to have sound self-confidence).

-To manage one’s own feelings (to know why one feels a certain way and how one should manage one’s feelings so they, instead of being destructive, help one to solve the challenge one is facing; to be able to control one’s feelings and to be able to postpone the reward in order to achieve a goal).

-Empathy (to understand how other people feel and to be able to see things from their perspective as well as be able to manage and understand differences).

-Motivation (to use an inner motor to achieve one’s goals; to learn how to take initiative and strive for improvement; to manage setbacks and frustrations while striving for a goal and understand that the reward will come later).

-Social competence (to be able to handle feelings in relation to other people; to be able to manage relationships, read social situations, and be able to fit into different social environments, which, among other things, means that one can use one’s feelings when cooperating with others, in negotiations, in conflict resolutions, and when managing other people’s feelings; to be able to use different tools to solve situations with conflicts and problems.” (Bartholdsson et al, 2014; p. 204-205).

These characteristics indicate that there needs to be more than a simple programme for SELD for teachers in Turkey; there should also be clear guidance for teachers to enable them to overcome the challenges that they face in this area of the curriculum. Some of the specific difficulties that this study has revealed could be addressed through more attention to SELD in policy, in practice and in training programmes. There is a programme known as *I Can Problem Solve (ICPS)* that works as a kind of SELD improvement tool which predominantly considers “problem solving skills that indicated how a person views and handles personal needs or interpersonal situation” (Shure, 2001, p. 4). Shure (1993) highlighted in her study that:

“When teachers applied ICPS training, we learned that after only three months' time, overly impulsive children in normal inner-city preschools and kindergartens displayed less impatience, over emotion, and aggression. Overly inhibited children became more socially outgoing, became better liked by their peers, and showed more awareness of others' feelings” (Shure, 1993; p. 57).

The teachers in my study identified a significant gap, namely that SEL competence targets are too abstract and are not clear, as the gains and indicators are limited and intangible. Although the comparison of the first term and the second term shows that there is no regression in children's skills and competences, the teachers were unsure about whether there was any lasting SEL effects. Along these lines, Norris (2003) stated that "SEL is an ongoing process; it is not a goal that can be completely achieved" (p: 317).

When I asked the teachers how they would overcome the issues in the curriculum, all of them displayed similar perspectives and all had ideas to improve on it. Early years specialists can create their own personal knowledge about the different methods in which "play-based curriculum and pedagogies are conceptualized and enacted" (Wood, 2010: p. 22). This perspective shows us that SEL goals in the curriculum must be realistic and clear to support the teachers' understanding, specifically how to support SEL through play-based pedagogy. This is significant because there is agreement in the international literature that play provides valuable contexts for children's SEL. For instance, Vygotsky's Tools of the Mind theory-based curriculum supports playful learning and interaction within the child's social environment (Bodrova and Leong, 2007). The teachers in this study proposed a curriculum shaped with SEL, supporting play as the activity which leads to competence-development for young children, and which emphasises the teacher's duty in supporting the SEL through integrated approaches. Although Wilson and Farran (2012) showed that Tools of the Mind does not develop SEL competences and even has some negative impacts, McClelland et al (2017) presented some evidence that Tools of the Mind is related to the improvement of SEL skills. It can be said that this curriculum framework may be effective in different contexts, depending on how it is used.

It was found that when the teachers tried to meet academic educational aspirations, there was not enough time to focus on SEL and SEL. There can be a solution in the form of an SEL integrated programme enriched with academic skills, which could be helpful for teachers' practice. As Elias and Mocerri (2012) highlighted,

“...it makes sense that students who increase their social-emotional competencies will become more self-aware and

develop better academic self-efficacy as they see a better correlation between effort and outcome; this sets up a reinforcing cycle in which students who try harder, motivate themselves, set goals, effectively manage their stress, make possible decisions about approaching and engaging in their school work [...] and use sound decision-making to build and keep positive adult and peer relationships and overcome setbacks will indeed accomplish more academically, socially and emotionally” (p. 426).

This argument states that when children are confident in their SELD skills, it puts them in a better position to be more successful academically. In addition to this, when parents or caregivers undertake SEL activities in collaboration with teachers, “such interventions are more likely to be effective in promoting” children’s SEL (Cefai and Valeria, 2014, p. 121). It is clear that practitioners and caregivers should work together to support a child’s SELD to give them the best possible outcomes. Therefore, it can be concluded here that more work needs to be done in Turkey in order to develop an effective programme that suits the goals of the pre-school curriculum, and which pays attention to SELD with parental partnership, combined with academic skill achievements.

All the teachers were asked about the role of outdoor activities in supporting children’s SELD. All of them agreed that the outdoors is an important pedagogical approach for SELD and that these activities must be based on communication and interaction activities such as going to a nursing home, invitation of grandparents to the school, field trips, and the many examples that have been reported in the previous chapter. All the teachers in this study hold the same view that effective SELD should be supported, not only in classrooms but also outdoors as children really like to be outside and this is again related to the experience of enjoyment as stated in the IBE Report in 2014. Similarly, Price (2016) highlighted: “...knowing the young people enjoyed the physical challenges of outdoor learning suggested the approach could form the basis of an interventional strategy with the purpose of improving social and emotional learning (SEL) skills” (p: 210). Even though this is an important point, unfortunately the teachers in this study did not devote more time for outdoors, but they did advocate that there should be more emphasis in the curriculum on SELD within outdoor activities.

Zara argues that a separate SELD programme makes the curriculum more complicated because SELD activities cannot be distinguished from other developmental and learning areas as it covers a spectrum of learning processes. Therefore, she plans SELD focused play every so often. However, the other teachers think the opposite. Umay and Irmak think differently from Zara about the place of SELD in the curriculum, although they plan play every so often too. Deste plans SELD activities even though she lacks confidence about doing so in place of the curriculum. These different perspectives raise the question of what be effective ways to support teachers' practices and planning and in this regard. McClelland et al. (2017) highlighted that "...many effective SEL interventions include training or professional development for early childhood teachers; some also emphasize building teachers' own SEL skills, in addition to children's" (p: 41). If the curriculum included more realistic and practical goals, this may help the teachers achieve more of their own goals. As a result, they would feel more confident emotionally and this would have a positive effect on their practice. Accordingly, Sutton and Wheatley (2003) highlighted that "teachers who experienced more positive emotions may generate more teaching ideas and strategies" (p. 338).

Teachers' knowledge based on their experiences of playful pedagogy as discussed in the previous sub-section could be considered in designing a new and effective SELD programme. As Bartholdsson et al (2014) discussed in their Swedish study, "a chain of expertise, from programme designers to teachers, promotes an understanding of children as a special social category in need of guidance as one of the main obstacles that are handled in the SET programme" (p. 210). In a similar line, the data put forward in this study indicates that improvements need to be made to SELD in the Turkish ECE context. The recommendations from Bartholdsson et al (2014) might be one way to find a basis for a first step towards improving the SELD programme, based on teachers' existing practices and plans. The impact of teachers' theories and understandings is strong on their teaching approaches and interaction with children (Perry et al., 1979; Alvirez and Weinstein, 1999; Donahue et al., 2000). Therefore, policy makers must take into account teachers' beliefs about their practice and knowledge of SELD in developing ECE policies and frameworks.

6.5. Challenges of Assessment and Teachers' Roles

The forth area where challenges have been identified is assessment and teachers' roles in the context of the current curriculum. What is evident from this research is that all the teachers have identified the need for a supportive programme and specific in-service education to build their self-confidence in regard to SELD. Elias and colleagues (1997) stressed that having a specific SEL programme provides “unity aspect of school life and frees practitioners to focus their creative energies on special projects and adaptations that enrich any programme” (p: 73). In terms of assessment strategies, the teachers in this research use observation only, but it is preliminary and does not seem to be linked systematically to their planning for SELD. There are alternative approaches to assessment such as “direct behavioural observation, rating scales, interviewing techniques and projective-expressive assessment” (Humphrey, 2013; p. 69) that teachers can consider. This brings to light the importance of a practitioner's role in children's play. In addition, other countries, such as New Zealand, use narrative-based approaches (Learning Stories and documentation) to develop a well-rounded/holistic view of children's development and learning in relation to the curriculum goals (Lee and Carr, 2006). However, in this study, although the teachers planned teacher-led and child-initiated play, it was not easy for them to assess children's learning outcomes, even though they observed SED and SEL during different types of play activities.

Assessment of SELD is an area of weakness for the teachers in this study. Research indicates that teachers apply class meetings or talking circles as core elements for social understanding, as these activities give opportunities for children to express their ideas and speak freely without interruption (Elias et al, 1997). However, in this study, the teachers in Ankara placed importance on the assessment process in children's play, even though they were unclear of how to go about this in circle time or talking circles. They found their own methods to assess children such as asking them questions about their feelings, likes or dislikes about play, and their feedback on play episodes/activities. The second teacher in Osmaniye, Umay, discovered during the data collection process that video recording of play activities and watching these with children are valuable strategies for discussing their perspectives and experiences of play, and how she might develop her provision. All teachers in this research were too busy to manage or regulate the structured play activities; therefore, they were unable to assess children during the game. This point is paralleled with Wood and Bennett (1997)'s research that the

teachers in their research “tended to rely on a high degree of intuition in assessing play, but in reality, the emphasis was more on management and monitoring” (p. 25). The teachers in Ankara also took regular notes about the children’s answers, any different kinds of play dialogues or their social and emotional interactions that were not specifically planned as an assessment. This was part of their everyday practice, and, as Figure 14 indicates, there were varying degrees of links between their assessment and planning.

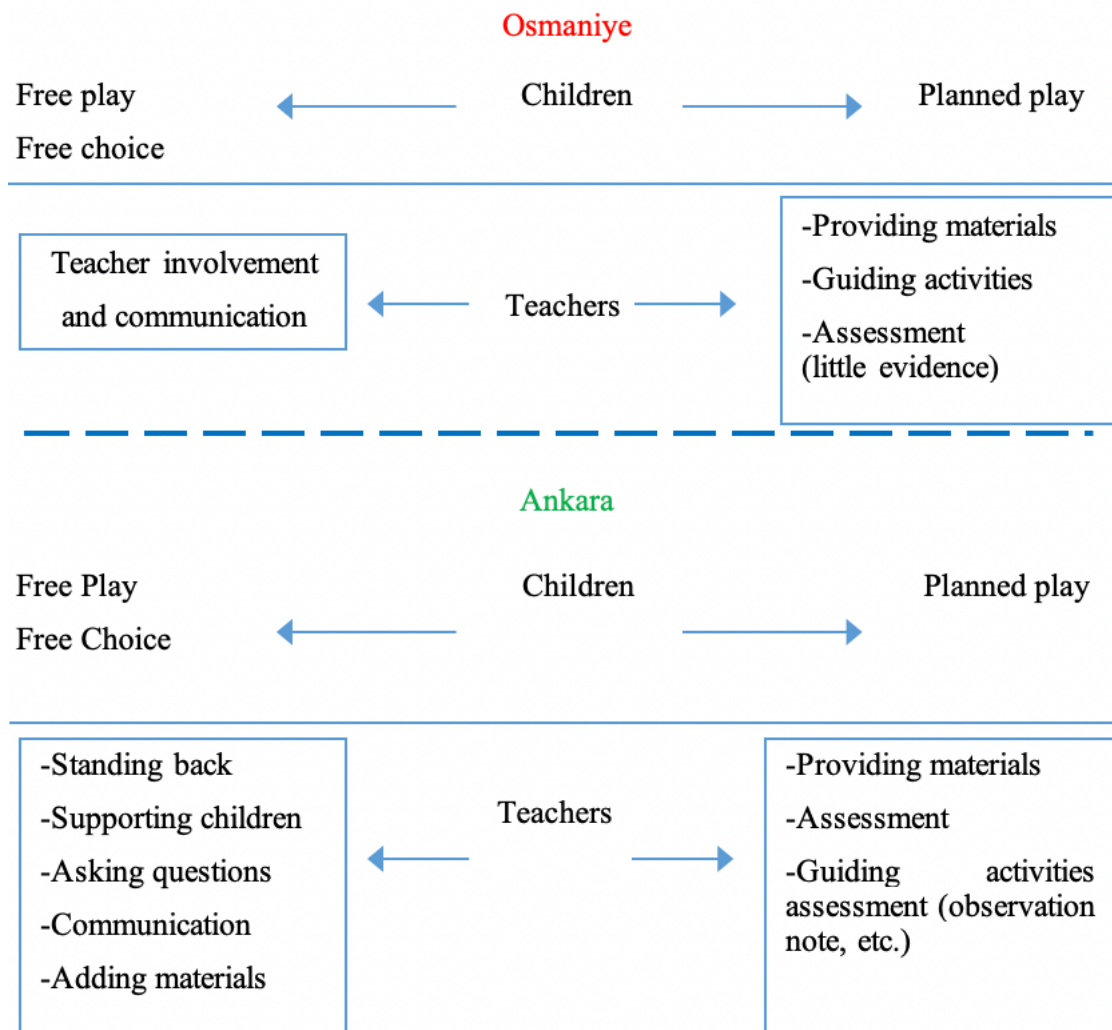


Figure 14: Comparing teachers’ roles and assessment in two different cities

The figure shows the teachers’ pedagogical approaches in children’s play, and their approaches to assessment. The teachers in Ankara paid attention to SELD in free play, especially through communicating with children, observing, adding extra materials,

asking questions, and joining them if necessary. Conversely, the teachers in Osmaniye preferred to stay passive and just observe the children in their free play. Only Zara mentioned that if there were a serious conflict, she would intervene. In planned play, all the teachers provide materials and guiding activities. Additionally, the teachers in Osmaniye have little evidence of SELD assessment as they use only purposeful observations that check whether pre-play expectations are fulfilled. In contrast, the teachers in Ankara displayed more evidence of SELD assessment and thus appear to place more importance on it than the Osmaniye teachers. In both cases, all the teachers use a formative assessment that “is used on a daily and weekly basis, by the practitioner, to inform what is planned for the learning environment and for children’s individual needs” (Fisher, 2013; p. 186). The teachers create a talking circle at the end of play to ask children reflective questions about their play, what their emotions and feelings were, or what they would add to make the play better. This is an essential assessment tool of play and the teachers in Ankara take notes in both free and planned play. They put the notes in children’s portfolios or discuss the notes with parents at parent-teacher meetings. This is also an effective way to keep communication lines open with parents, and to ensure consistency in terms of teaching strategies amongst caregivers and teachers.

The teachers in Ankara also believe that SELD should be supported, not only by the school but also by the parents. As Elias recommended, schools must use parent partnership and the surrounding community collaboration to support children’s social emotional education (Elias et al., 1997). Fisher (2013) described “summative assessment” as using assessment to inform others about children such as their families or other professionals that is a kind of “sum up” of the children’s progress (p. 186). Therefore, they arrange parent-teacher meetings to share observation notes and assessment records in order to get feedback. In this way, it may be possible to see assessment cues about children’s SELD skills.

The findings from this study suggest that teachers’ pedagogical framing needs to be both conceptual and contextual, in line with recommendations by Fleer (2010). In her study, the teachers used particular materials for specific purposes, and they observed the children being more focused on the learning activities. My findings also overlap with research by Wong and Wong (1998) highlighted: “Classroom management refers to all

of the things that a teacher does to organize students, space, time, and materials so that instruction in content and student learning can take place” (p. 84). In Ankara, if children are playing in sensitive and emotionally supportive ways, and if the teachers realise this, they give them extra time for free play. The important point is that these teachers pay attention to SELD during children’s free play. They added that free play is an easy way to observe children’s skills, understanding and knowledge in relation to SELD. The teachers in this study emphasised that play pedagogy is an effective way when they are teaching children’s SELD skills, like being social, especially through playing together. Children have an opportunity for conversation that would not be possible in other social backgrounds, within the structure of identities in play, acceptance of their friends and group membership. Along these lines, Rogers (2010) stated that “...play allows for such social interactions and pretence (which enables the exploration of pretend identities) that children are able to act and speak in ways that would not be possible in other social contexts” (p. 161). Moreover, studies have shown that making sense of community is an inseparable part of creating a learning atmosphere (Evertson et al., 2003; Good and Brophy, 1997). These are considered to be effective ways of integrating SEL into the classroom environment.

Norris (2003) stated that “a skill is performance based; it is an iterative process that requires practice with feedback and the opportunity to make adjustments followed by more practice” (p. 315). It seems clear that the teachers in this study lack confidence in how to assess these skills, as they are not supported by any documentation or specific training. Understanding students’ SELD skills for them is a more discrete process. The teachers in this study intervene in necessary situations when a child plays alone or has trouble joining group play, or if there are disputes that the children cannot solve.

Moreover, the teachers in Osmaniye give children space to get know each other at the beginning of academic term in their free time. They sometimes estimate the potential problems and stimulate children or manipulate the process using ‘learnable/teachable moments’ so that children also gain social skills, such as during arguments. In these ways, the teachers utilise opportunities to support SELD, not only in indoor activities but also in the outdoors. Mirrahimi et al (2011) discussed that outdoor activities in the nature

“have a potential to promote for learning education, personal and social development where student can experience to learn sharing, communication, team working, self-awareness, self-confidence, self-regulation, self-discipline, improved solving problem in classroom, inspiration towards learning, social skills...” (p. 395).

Palmberg and Kuru (2000) has concluded that outdoors activities give students great possibilities for building a bridge of empathy between nature and children. The teachers in this study were aware of importance of outdoors play when I asked them. Nevertheless, Norris (2003) emphasised that “teachers do not create the school environment alone, it would also be important to have SEL skills become a part of the preparation of school supervisors and administrators” (p. 318). In Ankara, the school manager is in charge of organising the various outdoor activities and some examples of these can be seen in the Findings chapter. In Osmaniye, the teachers think outdoor activities are a good way to support SELD through opportunities for children to be social with others, but this is not a preferred way in practice. This is due to the fact that outdoor activities are difficult to organise and take up long periods of time, as the teachers discussed. Also, the school manager does not support outdoor activities, as the teachers in Osmaniye do not value this in practice. It can be clearly seen that the support of the school manager is necessary in order to provide an optimal environment for the development of children’s SELD skills.

Despite the above-mentioned differences, all the teachers think that play, both in the outdoors and indoors is valuable and through play, it is easy to observe whether children are progressing in their SELD. However, “play should not be viewed simply as a vehicle for delivering the curriculum, under the guise of play-based learning” (Rogers, 2010; p. 163). Even though it was observed that the teachers in Ankara put their own methods into practice, because of the gaps and requirements of the Turkish pre-school curriculum, there is still a need to ensure that the goals are met. Studies have shown that SEL skills can be taught and evaluated, that they help to build up positive development and decrease problematic behaviours, and that they assist in a basis for children’s academic achievements, citizenships and health-related behaviours (Durlak et al, 2015; Schonert-Reichl and Weissberg, 2014). Thus, the teachers use a range of pedagogical strategies, which combine some structure with children’s freely chosen activities to

promote children's SEL skills. The teachers in this study believe that it is possible to implement the teacher's duties in planned play to support children's SEL as follows:

- Making a well-structured plan,
- Focusing on play's expectations,
- Checking that aims are fulfilled,
- Making effective observations (Awareness of children's developmental processes, see Findings Part 2),
- Asking and preparing questions for children – reflections on learning,
- Encouraging them during free play,
- Providing rich a classroom environment.

Also, the teachers developed their own theories that were constructed with consequential points that would support children's SEL effectively through play:

- The promotion of communication, interaction and eye-contact based play.
- Classroom management and time management should be considered to prevent children's unwanted behaviours during the activities such as misbehaviour, not following rules.
- No win /lose games (two teachers).
- Competition in the games ("It makes children ambitious.") (Two teachers).
- Considering SED aims from the curriculum (such as to understand obeying rules, respecting others' rights, following the play and motivation). If the curriculum does not cover the aims, consider additional points (such as collaboration skills, paying attention and leadership skills, as described in the findings chapter).
- Enjoyable and exciting play.
- Social studies activities (as discussed in-depth in the Findings chapter, Deste and Irmak use ideas like "Nothing Day", "Peace Corner", or "Labour Project" activities; see page 125).

As Schonert-Reichl (2017) emphasised in her work which examines US teacher training programmes, "teachers are the engine that drives SEL programs and practices in schools and classrooms...yet until recently, their role in promoting SEL, and their own social and emotional competence and wellbeing have received scant attention" (p. 138). Moreover, the teachers realised that they were able to evaluate themselves and children

through video recordings and they strongly emphasised that they need an educational programme to promote children's SELD skills professionally. Similarly, a nationally representative survey conducted with more than 600 American teachers by Bridgeland et al. (2013) found that:

“Educators should be provided professional development on teaching social and emotional skills during both pre-service and in-service (professional development) ... This additional education should include coursework on SEL best practices and instruction on climate, relationships, school culture, parenting support, and behavioural management. Professional development should focus on teaching educators how to integrate SEL into all areas of the curricula and create opportunities for student to apply social and emotional skills throughout the day” (p. 39).

This illustrates the importance of supporting teachers in their role in children's SELD. Furthermore, Hamre and Pianta (2005) showed that teachers can encourage positive teacher-student relationships and create a fostering and supportive classroom atmosphere, and that when they implement an efficient SEL programmes into practice, their pupils have better outcomes. The video recordings enabled the teachers to see for themselves how their decisions and actions helped to promote children's SELD. They also recommended that the video recordings could be used in some specific activities or sometimes as an assessment tools. In the next section, I will discuss the effects of using video recording as a research method, based on the teachers' reflections.

6.6. Video Recording Process and Teachers' Reflections

In this section, I will reflect on the methodology and methods used in this research, particularly my role and how this influenced the research process. Then, I will discuss the teachers' reflections after the data collection process. The video recording provoked a high level of reflection in the teachers' SELD assessments. Their contributions to the video recordings meant that they saw this as a potential assessment tool and associated this in ways that led them to enhance their practice and reconsider their beliefs about their own presence and roles in the classroom. Also, the teachers in this study stated that observation is necessary during children's play, but it is hard to do it in planned play, as the teachers themselves are involved in the game, having to run and manage the activity. This overlaps with Bennett et al (1997)'s work as they highlighted that “although

teachers claimed to observe children at play as the basis of their assessment, in reality these observations were often brief and irregular, rather than sustained. For some teachers, therefore, the video material was a rare opportunity for them to observe closely, and without interruption, children's responses to a range of play context" (p. 29). Some of the teachers became aware that there were unpredictable situations that affected the game. The second teacher, Umay saw that the children were trying to solve their friend's problem, and some other teachers realised that videotaping might be useful as an assessment tool. The video material allowed the teachers to view their practice without interruption, and analyse specific episodes of play. Through the process of discussion with the teachers after watching video episodes, it was found that their reflections made an important contribution to this study.

All of them agreed that it is hard to use video recordings in the classroom, as it is time consuming and distracting for the children. However, they stated that it was valuable to watch themselves in the videos. It enabled them to evaluate and reflect on themselves and their practices, and consequently become more aware of their own roles in the classroom. They also became aware of how their conceptual and practical perspectives about SEL and SED are linked, including children's social emotional well-being, and their developmental processes. As discussed in the Literature Review, SEL is a process that also considers teachers' development. The recordings allowed the teachers to be conscious about their own development in practice. The research project of Fisher (2012) observed and video-recorded interactions between practitioners and children in their setting. Fisher (2013) stated that:

“While other research methods were used –such as the keeping of practitioner journals detailing thinking over time- it was DVD footage that practitioners said had a greatest impact on their practice. Not many educators have the opportunities to see themselves ‘in action’ in a work situation. It is daunting at first but, in time, practitioners find it reveals invaluable examples of habitual actions, mannerisms, tone of voice, approach a style that they would probably never have known about any other way” (p. 215).

It must be stated that my involvement in this study affected the teachers during the data collection process, as knowing that I was recording them, they might have altered their behaviour subconsciously. However, all of the teachers agreed that watching the video

and commenting on it would be a useful way for self-evaluation. This is a note-worthy point, as watching taped episodes of themselves provides teachers with easy opportunities to observe and evaluate themselves and their practices. This point was an unintended but welcome outcome of the research, during which the teachers reflected critically on how their practice might be improved. Cherrington and Loveridge (2014) stated “video recordings of teachers' pedagogical practices have been used to foster professional dialogue and reflection” (p. 43). After an initial period of criticising themselves, all of them thought that they should place much more emphasis on social emotional learning in their planned play. The teachers in Osmaniye realised that they are less aware of children’s problematic behaviours during play. In relation to this, Schonert-Reichl stated (2017) that, “we know less about the teacher’s role when it comes to mental illness and social, emotional, and behavioural problems among students. Teachers are uniquely situated to recognize significant adjustment problems or identify common disruptive behaviours” (p. 147). Similarly, in this study, all the teachers think that real life, or close to real life experiences should be used commonly in both planned and freely-chosen play activities to observe and support children’s SELD.

This study revealed that another challenge teachers face is their reflections on personal practices. The teachers had a greater awareness of their own skills such as being open-minded about improving themselves in regard to this area. Also they reflected about their own knowledge of SELD during the data collection process. Indeed, they had never come across a research process like that, because never before had teacher preparation and quality standards in regard to SELD been under such scrutiny in the context of Turkey. In a similar vein, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) highlighted “that socially and emotionally competent teachers have high self-awareness. They recognize their emotions, emotional patterns, and tendencies and know how to generate and use emotions such as joy and enthusiasm to motivate learning in themselves and others” (p. 495). However, none of the teachers to master in this research touched upon the SELD skills that teachers need in order to support children’s SELD. In other words, none of them mentioned the importance of a teacher’s personal, social and emotional states in their provision of SELD for the children. In this regard, Schonert-Reichl (2017) emphasised that “teachers with higher social-emotional competence organize their classrooms and provide emotional and instructional support in ways that are associated with a high-quality classroom climate” (p. 143). Jennings and Greenberg (2009)

suggested that effective SEL implications consider a teacher's own SEL skills and wellbeing to support them in implementing SEL successfully.

Moreover, while watching the video recordings the teachers reflected on their own knowledge, practices and their playful pedagogical approaches from their backgrounds. The teachers also mentioned that their undergraduate education was insufficient in teach them how to develop children's SELD skills. In relation to this, Schonert-Reichl (2017) described how the SEL programmes work at the university stage:

“At the University of British Columbia, where I work, the Faculty of Education has explicitly integrated SEL into a post baccalaureate 12-month teacher preparation program. One of the nine options available to our approximately 400 elementary preserve teacher education students is an SEL cohort that comprises about 36 students each year. In this program, teacher candidates follow the general outline of the regular education program but with an added emphasis on SEL. They don't just learn about SEL research and theory in their coursework; during their student-teaching practicum, they also learn how to implement evidence based SEL programs and SEL practices in the classroom. Teacher candidates can review a wide variety of SEL programs in our SEL program library and integrate the strategies they learn into their coursework and student teaching.” (p. 149).

The above quote demonstrates the importance of adequately supporting teacher trainees' undergraduate education to make them proficient in their SELD practice. In line with creating an effectively structured SELD programme for the teachers' education, Hemmeter and Santos (2008) suggested that

“information on social competence might be taught in a child development course, information on strategies for teaching social skills and promoting emotional development might be taught in a curriculum or methods course, and strategies for addressing challenging behaviour might be taught in a behaviour management course” (p. 322).

This should be considered as teachers implement SELD programmes in the future, so as to enable them to feel that they are in a stronger position to support children's SELD. However, in this study, even though the teacher's backgrounds are same, there are inconsistencies in the SELD theories. Therefore, Wood and Bennett's (2000) suggestion could be considered that teacher education programmes need to be designed with a

theoretical underpinning for the professional development of teachers. In addition, the contemporary policy context for ECE needs to reflect the research and knowledge base in ECE in order to support teachers in their approaches.

The teachers mostly focused on children's SELD in the context of play, which is expected and appropriate for this study. However, SELD is more than that which the teachers commented on. Even though they made self-criticisms whilst watching the videotapes and during reflective discussions, their talk revolved much more around the practice and the programme. None of them touched upon how they can also make it better for themselves. On this point, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) highlighted that:

“socially and emotionally competent teachers set the tone of the classroom by developing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students, designing lessons that build on student strengths and abilities, establishing and implementing behavioural guidelines in ways that promote intrinsic motivation, coaching students through conflict situations, encouraging cooperation among students, and acting as a role model for respectful and appropriate communication and exhibitions of pro-social behaviour. These teacher behaviours are associated with optimal social and emotional classroom climate and desired student outcomes” (p. 492).

From this point, video recordings and teachers' reflection harmonised in this study to help to teachers understand SELD more in-depth.

6.7. Conclusion

This research highlighted a number of issues regarding the use of the term SELD in the line of teachers' understandings. In this research, it has been proven that the teachers have displayed a lack of SELD understanding and awareness in the process of curriculum, planning and assessment, and in their pedagogical interactions with children. Understanding the teachers' perspectives and belief systems can help us to find a more effective way to support children's SELD. However, Schonert-Reichl (2017) asserted “that if we don't accurately understand teachers' own wellbeing and how teachers influence students' SEL, we can never fully know whether and how to promote SEL in the classroom” (p. 138). It can be seen that there is a large issue not only with regards to the curriculum, but also in teachers' perspectives and

understandings. According to the teachers in this research, effective communication abilities, clear expression of thoughts and feelings, respect for others and obeying the rules, are all necessary for SELD skills. Even though the existing curriculum places some emphasis on several of the same core elements, it does not provide enough support to the teachers pedagogically and practically. Therefore, the curriculum does not meet the teachers' expectations and is certainly lacking in the aforementioned ways.

The distinction of SEL and SED is problematic in theory and practice as seen from this study. In particular, teachers in Ankara commented on SELD in more sophisticated ways and they also observe children's play purposefully. However, in practice the distinction is not clear and there were links, which showed that play can provide evidence to observe children's SED skills. However, they, especially Zara as she repeated many times, were not sure whether those skills are emerging from social emotional learning or the children had already known the skills.

Three reasons for this problem have emerged from this study. Firstly, the Turkish pre-school curriculum does not cover all the elements that the teachers want because it is quite basic. For example, the curriculum only addresses children's very basic skills. One example is this: "Target One: the child says his/her home address or the child says their parents' contact number." None of the teachers ever worried about this target and other similar ones (as can be seen in Literature Review chapter) while planning an activity or during their observations. The teachers in this study had a deeper and more holistic understanding about children's SED skills. Furthermore, they all had their own personal opinions about SEL even though it is not given much importance in the curriculum. They were critical of and made constructive suggestions about the Turkish Preschool Programme, which adds to the value and interest of this study. The second reason is that the curriculum goals of SED are fairly intangible, which causes the teachers difficulties in their practice and assessments. It must be underlined, however, that there is no specific assessment tool for SED skills.

The third reason is that the teachers do not have enough background and education with regard to SEL, so they lack confidence in their skills. Because the teachers do not have confidence in their abilities to cover this subject, and as a result of some negative feelings due to the obstacles they face, it leads them to set less motivated goals despite

their best efforts. This is consistent with Locke and Latham’s goal-setting theory (1990) that mood impacts the personal choice of aims - with positive mood leading to the choice of more enthusiastic aims. Also, Schonert-Reichl (2017) highlighted that “... to successfully promote SEL, it’s not enough to enhance teachers’ knowledge of SEL alone. Teachers’ own social and emotional competence and wellbeing appear to play a crucial role” (142). Thus, the teachers may need to develop strong self-efficacy to set more ambitions and inspiring goals for their teaching. There are many different perspectives on how the curriculum might be improved and how the teachers can cope with and overcome the difficulties in their practices. With regard to this, Poulou (2017) suggested that “researchers, practitioners and policy makers who are invested in educating the whole child could be especially interested in assessing teachers’ perceptions and the way they are integrated seamlessly into teaching practice” (p: 9).

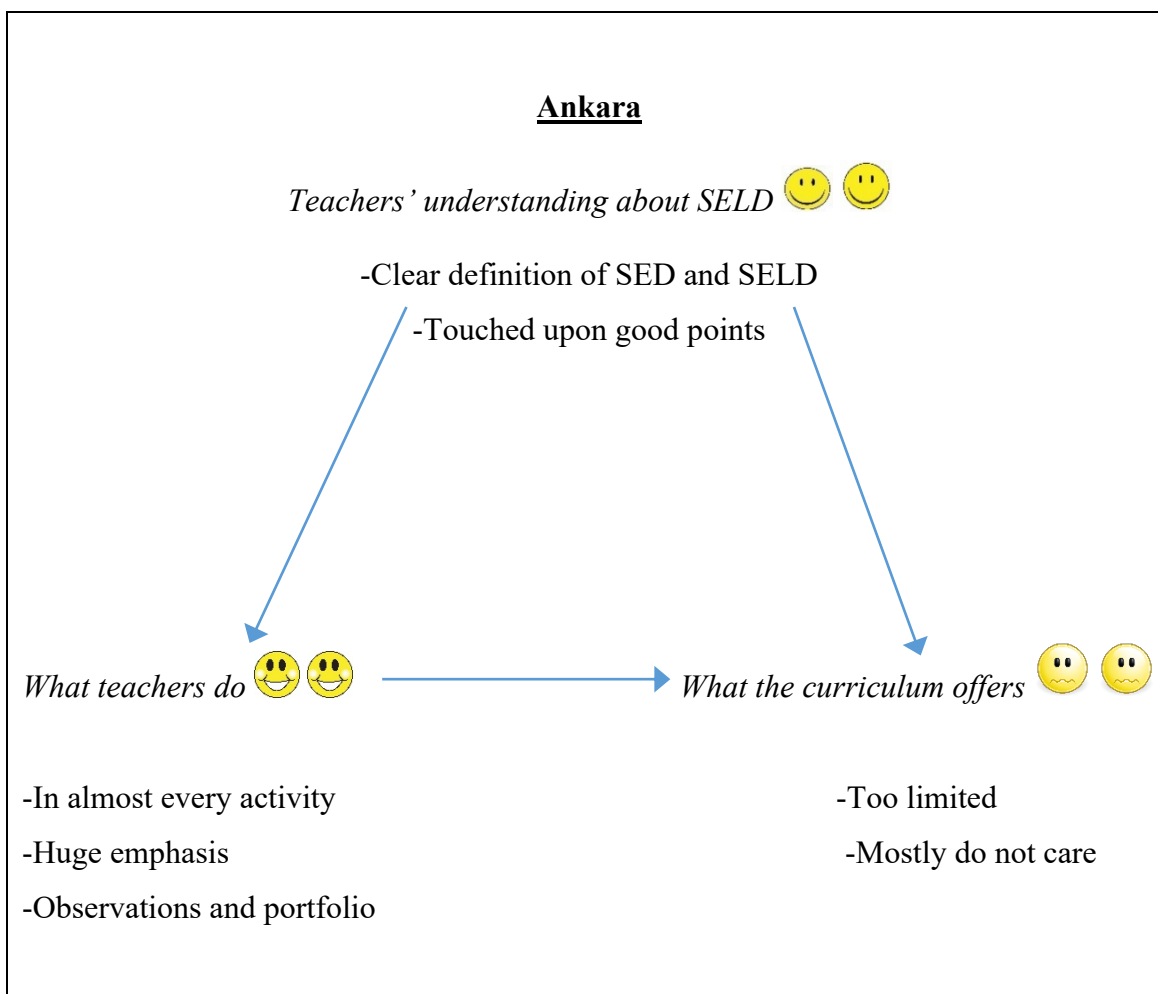


Figure 15: The teachers’ concepts of SELD in Ankara

Figure 15 presents a brief outline of what the teachers in Ankara in this study think about SELD in practice and in the curriculum. The teachers have an explicit understanding of SEL and SED, they made some good points and connections, and they displayed a good understanding of the terms in their pedagogical perspectives. The teachers were consistent in their theories, beliefs, and practices; but thought that current educational policies are not helpful enough in supporting them. The teachers believe that SELD is a life skill for children (such as being social, problem solving, empathy skills, communication, and self-regulation) and it is much more important than academic skills. They display a great deal of care and attention towards children's SELD in their activities, and put significant emphasis on it. Even though they lack confidence because of not having any support from the curriculum, I observed that this study revealed that they did their best to bring children on in SELD and they did use SELD targets not only in play but also in other activities like daily routines, circle time or art activities. The curriculum does not meet the teachers' SELD expectations for them so this means that the teachers do not take it into account while they are planning their activities. Both teachers improve their own extra targets about SELD at the beginning of the semester and they consistently use those targets throughout the academic terms. They use observation notes and portfolios as assessment tools.

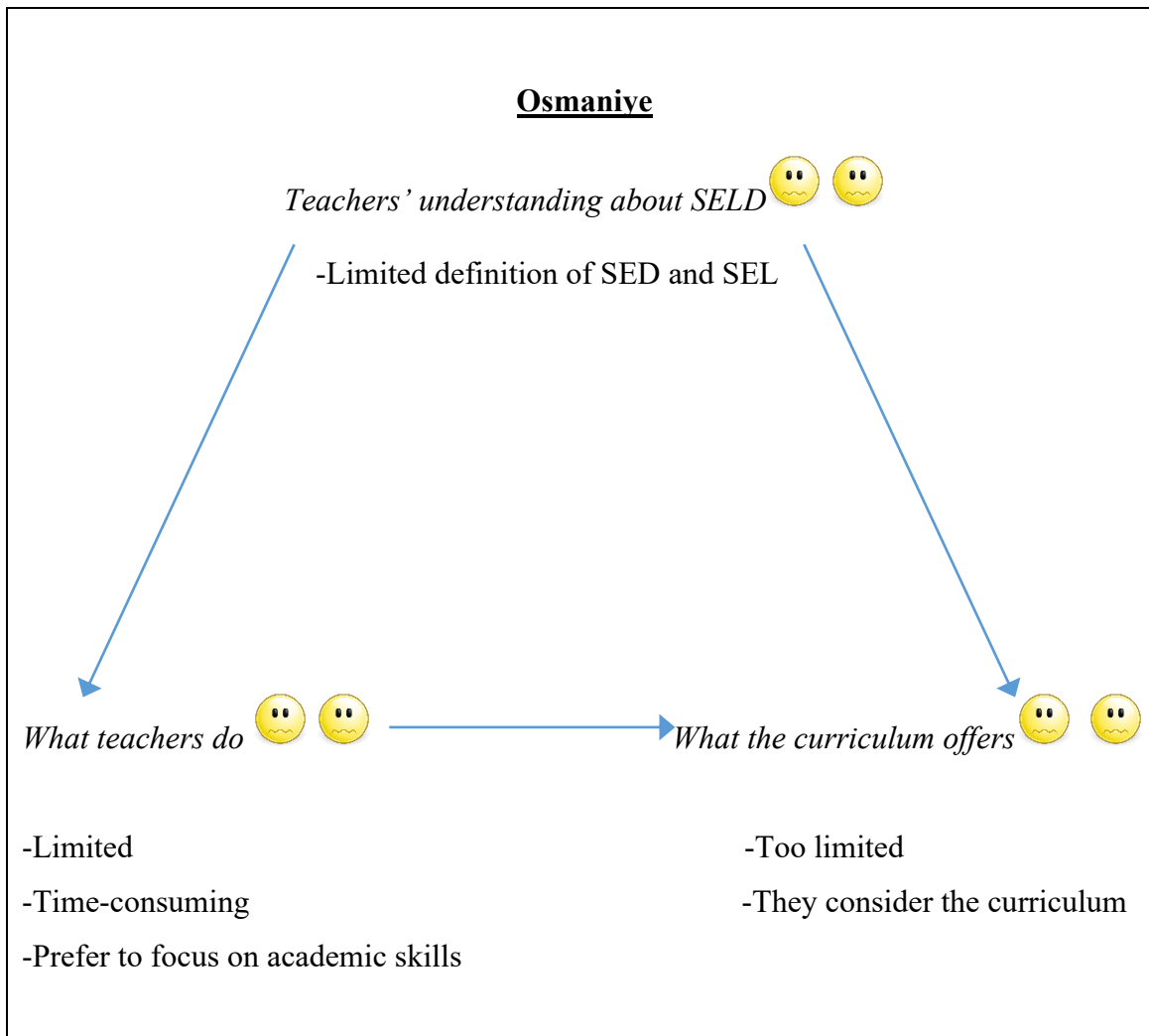


Figure 16: The teachers' concepts of SELD in Osmaniye

Figure 16 is a summary of the teachers' views of SELD in Osmaniye. The teachers have limited understandings about SED and SEL. The teachers were found to be inconsistent in their theories, beliefs and practices with regards to SELD; but they also agree that current educational policy is not helpful. Notwithstanding, the teachers emphasised that SELD is important for children and declared that it is much more important than academic skills. However, unfortunately, they prefer to allocate any extra time towards the development of children's academic skills rather than SELD skills. They believe that spending time on SELD is time-consuming and eats into the time they have for academic skills. They are inconvenienced by the curriculum as it is too limited, but they mostly consider what it offers for SELD. The teachers do not specifically carry out observations in children's play and they do not have any assessment tool except informal observations.

In conclusion, in this study, the teachers' theories and practices in relation to SELD were revealed by children's free and structured play. All teachers agreed that playful pedagogy is fundamental in supporting children's SELD. This is their personal practice to help children in their SELD skills. Even though SELD is barely supported by the curriculum, the teachers built upon their own theories of SELD through their own practice and personal beliefs.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Introduction

This thesis presented a multiple case study implemented in two different Turkish early years pre-school settings with four teachers in total. The research sought to explore how the teachers understand children's social emotional learning and development in the context of play, examining their conceptual rhetoric and practices with regards to the Turkish early years curriculum. The study is underpinned by interpretivist approaches of pedagogical theories in early years (Wood and Bennett, 1997, 2000; Rogers 2010; Broadhead et al, 2010) where play is seen as a core element to “the process of children's development, development being embedded in the context of social relationships and sociocultural tools and practices” (Rogoff, 1990, p. 8).

Through the multiple case study, I undertook to explore an understanding of the connection between teachers' practices and theories about SELD and play in early years settings. I collected the data through semi-structured video stimulated interviews. The interviews were analysed through a thematic coding system. The finalised themes were reiterated in the Finding Sections Part 1 and 2 Chapters with further elaborations in the Discussion Chapter. The discussion continued relevant international arguments and research to present issues of SEL and SED in ECE of Turkey, using the concepts of teachers' understanding and their practices as a means for understanding demands and tensions. From careful analysis of data process, it was revealed that the teachers shared their positive values about SELD in their theories, but at the same time, they also face challenges in their practices. Though the teachers in this study concluded there to be a strong relation between SELD and play, the data indicated that this relation was not as strong as they perceived in their practice. The following issues in the figure were identified that may contribute to this disconnection. This final chapter will bring together the contribution of research to the main theories and methods I worked with, and reflect the international debates that I have discusses in the Literature Review. Finally, the chapter will also make suggestions on the area and intention for parallel studies in ECE, and reflection of this video-stimulated based research.

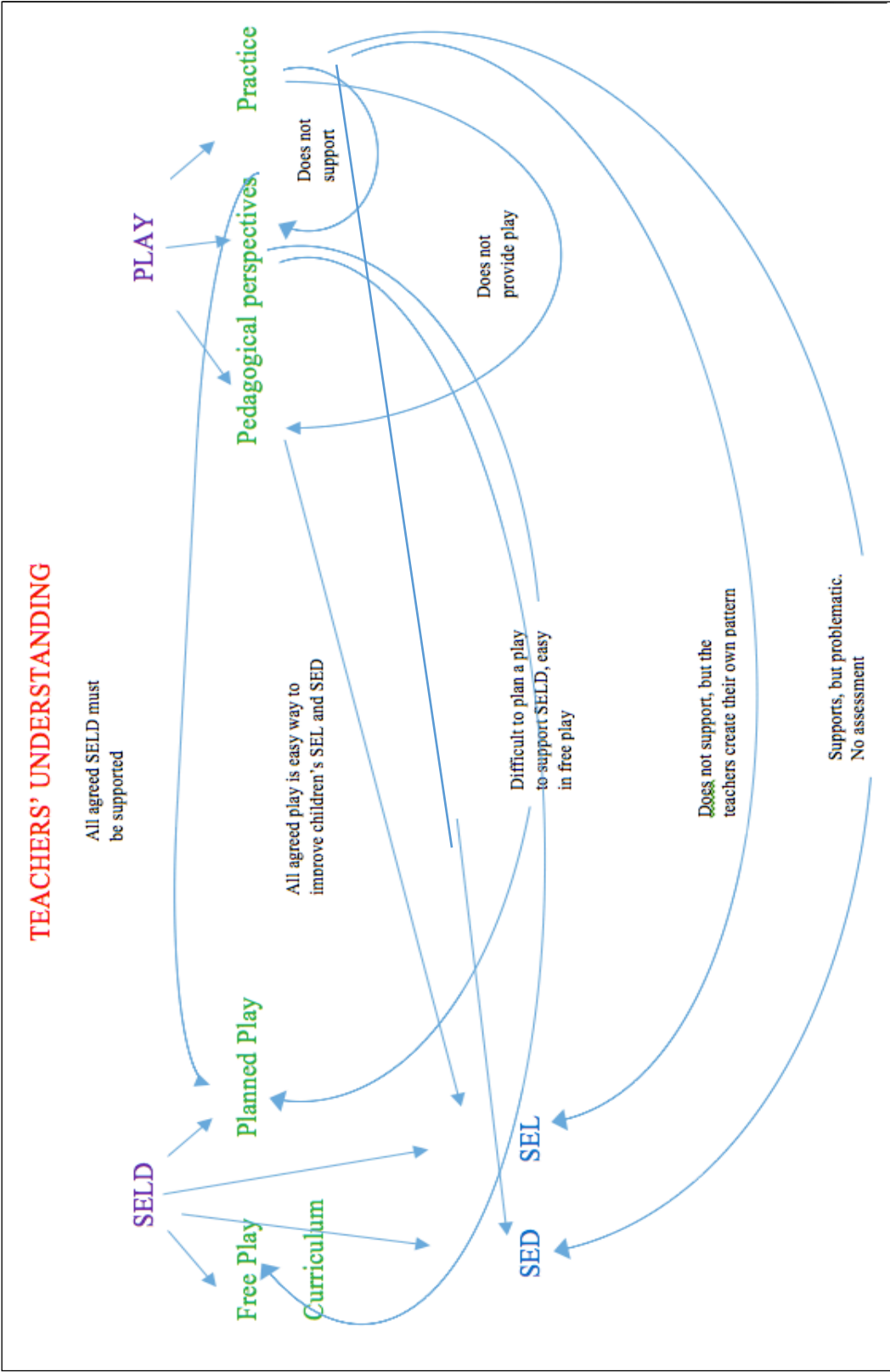


Figure 17: Hypothesised relationship between SELD and Play

Figure 17 above indicates the networks of conceptual understanding of the teachers' perspectives about SELD and play. In the Literature Review chapter, I stated the purpose of this study was to reveal meanings of the terms of SEL and SED in the ECE context in international literature. However, in Findings chapters, I defined the aspects of SED and SEL in Turkish ECE through participant perceptions. It can be seen that the main findings have been connected to each other in different ways and I discussed them in the relevant literature in the Discussion chapter.

7.2. Categories of the Main Theories

The second chapter comprised the Literature Review, which provided a general understanding of SELD and why it is important in a child's early years. Both terms, SEL and SED, are integrated and interwoven, as this section explained in-depth. Learning is the process of developing skills, and therefore, SEL and SED cannot be considered separately in this research. However, the teachers identified them separately, and commented on them as a whole while watching the videos.

SELD: SEL and SED were investigated through the teachers' understandings and their contributions. The term SELD is described as intertwined and combined in this study because according to the data, the teachers believe that SED content activities provide SEL outcomes.

In Ankara, the teachers gave examples and explained the importance of SED in early years clearly. They also mentioned that they try to target SED in every learning activity. They had clear ideas about how they reflect on and utilise SEL in their practice. The teachers in Ankara placed some importance on SED as seen in the way they prioritised SED in children's daily activities; the teachers first considered social-emotional development in all of the children's daily activities. In contrast, the teachers in Osmaniye were not confident or intentional in their provision of SELD opportunities.

In Osmaniye, the teachers described SED with regard to curriculum targets. However, their understanding was not clear and they did not pay specific attention to SED in their practice.

They agreed that their activities include SED goals, however, they did not prioritise SED in their learning activities. Only Zara said that the SED related activities should be incorporated into daily activities instead of having separate activities in order to target the entire learning and developmental spectrum of a child. However, after an evaluation of her classroom practice, she reflected that her practice failed to align with her personal theories and beliefs.

It can be said that the teachers believed that development leads to learning in play activities. Hence, it was an important outcome of this research that the teachers' theories regarding this point overlap with the international literature. However, unfortunately, the curriculum does not support SEL as the SED goals in the curriculum have been found to be problematic by the teachers. In this purpose, this research creates a structure around the central idea of juxtaposing local and global perspectives about SELD, with the intention of clarifying understanding and practicing of SELD in play activities, in the context of unclear policy and inadequate curriculum in ECE in Turkey. The participants think that the goals were unclear and too simplistic for 5 year old children. Also, the teachers found the Turkish pre-school curriculum very abstract in relation to SELD. Therefore, it was difficult to assess children's SELD given the lack of curriculum support and guidance. At this point the study strongly suggests that there must be more in-depth research to improve the SELD area in the ECE curriculum in Turkey. This is because the national curriculum document does not give clear guidelines on SED and its assessment process and so the teachers had to rely on their individual pedagogy both in assessment and practice.

Ankara's teachers also prepare portfolios for each child to track their development and learning processes over the term. The teachers include observation notes, photos and videos of each child, and any relevant material such as their worksheets or art and craft projects. In contrast, the teachers from Osmaniye used only semi-structured and informal observations of the children during their play times. They also did not take notes during the observations as according to them, they observe not to assess children's SELD, but to maintain peaceful and effective play in the classroom. All the teachers across both settings had the practice of conducting evaluations post-play. Their purpose was to find out if the children enjoyed

themselves, and also to evaluate their own planning and execution of the activity. Overall, the teachers expressed a lack of confidence about structuring a game or activity to support children's SEL, but they do their best with the resources and knowledge they have. Even though all teachers believe that there is a very positive and strong connection between play and learning in theory, they often commented on the lack of confidence to translate this into practice.

The teachers think that the curriculum is not supportive enough in terms of guiding practitioners on how to support SELD in the classroom. As a result, all teachers agreed there should be clearer understanding and assessment considerations for SELD. Firstly, the teachers suggested that there should make some improvements on SED targets that are age appropriate and are clear in instructions. Likewise, the curriculum must support the teachers in their practice through including some planned play examples to allow the teachers some guidelines to improve on their own activities while considering the curriculum. According to the data, it might be useful to consider a consistent relation between teachers' practice on SELD and the curriculum. To sum up, all the teachers from the two different socio-economic contexts stated that they need more guidance on SELD from the Turkish early years industry. This study shows that Turkey is in a particular stage of its policy development for ECE and is responding to global drivers to improve provision through a single curriculum framework. However, it would appear that further policy development is needed to support teachers in their provision.

Playful pedagogy: Psychological theorists (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978; Corsaro and Schwarz, 1991; Howes, 1992; Howes and Matheson, 1992; Raver, 2002; Singer and Singer, 2005; Singer et al., 2006) have found that play in the early years makes children sociable, and that friendship-based learning activities can support children's SELD in an ideal way, as I discussed in the Literature Review (Chapter 2). All of the teachers in this study concurred with these views and they explained their own understanding with examples such as observing that children who have more friends tend to show more respect and cooperation with others. From a pedagogical perspective (Ekman, 1973; Ganchow et al., 1983; Izard et

al., 1980; Haviland and Lelwica, 1987), which was discussed in the Literature Review (Chapter 2), the Social and Emotional Training (SET) programme;

“... protect[s] children from the risks posed by their family lives and peer groups, as well as the surrounding society. The framing of the risk factors in the programme rests on a rationalisation in which the programme’s designer refers to recent, unnamed reports claiming that an increasing number of young people suffer from mental illness, to the extent that it is labelled as an alarming public health problem” (Bartholdsson, 2014; p. 204).

However, the teachers in my study did not mention a lack of resources for addressing the psychological issues that Bartholdsson (2014) refers to. As was previously pointed out, the reason for this is that there has been a substantial problem implementing the current SED section in the curriculum. The pedagogical perspective formed the basis of this study. The participating teachers were found to use a playful pedagogy to varying degrees with children to understand and support their SELD during school activities.

The teachers all agreed that playful pedagogy is the most useful method to target SELD. They used play activities not only for SED but also other areas, especially cognitive and physical development. All the teachers said it is easy to observe children in their free play, but not in their planned play activities. This is due to the fact that the teachers had active roles during the planned play. It was also revealed that there were inconsistencies in their practice of planned play. All the teachers stated that it is difficult to insert SELD specific activities into planned play, as children inevitably gain social and emotional skills during the play. However, the teachers in Ankara were more aware in their practice even though it was difficult to insert play in activities; but Osmaniye’s teachers only agreed rhetorically, not practically. The teachers considered only SED targets in the curriculum. Data analysis revealed several barriers to implementing SELD in the context of play by the participants. The barrier most commonly identified was the issue of the curriculum, and Osmaniye’s teachers also added that the pressure of parents to focus on academics served as another significant barrier to the provision of SELD in their early years settings. Gathered evidence in this research did indeed show a lack of clear understanding between the teachers’ beliefs

of SELD and their playful practice, though the teachers do not appear to perceive or be aware of this disconnection. However, the teachers tie up this issue to the curriculum because it does not support practice, and does not provide clear instructions on social emotional developmental areas. As a result, the teachers face difficulties in planning activities for SELD through play.

The psychological and pedagogical concepts all contribute to the importance of SELD from different perspectives. These perspectives form the foundation of this research. The SED skills targeted in Turkish pre-school curriculum were presented, and gaps in the curriculum and practice were discussed. It is evident that there is a lack of connection between teachers' understanding the SEL and SED implications, theories and practices. The participants highlighted many times about the curriculum issue and lack of programmes to support SELD. The sample programmes from other countries (namely the USA, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, and England) were described in order to ascertain how SELD is supported in ECE. As a researcher, it was crucial and valuable for me to understand other countries SELD programmes in ECE contexts, to compare them to the Turkish context. The study indicated that a similar SELD based programme would be vital to address the gaps in the curriculum, and to support teachers' practice, including their pedagogy and assessment. Such a programme would need to be but suitable in the Turkish early years culture. This led me to speculate whether the issues identified in this research could provide a reflective view on curriculum in order to improve the quality of provision in the longer term.

7.3. Limitations

This study has its limitations as with any study. The first amongst the limitations is language, while the second is time constraints. To prevent data loss, the analysis was conducted in Turkish and subsequently translated into English. Despite my best efforts, this inevitably resulted in the loss of some data due to the limiting factor of language. The second limitation, time, can be attributed to the period of time allotted for the completion of a PhD process. Travelling to Turkey from the United Kingdom for data collection on two separate occasions required substantial amounts of time. The collection of consent forms from the parents of the preschool children was also time-consuming, and carrying out the

data analysis in my native language followed by translation of the raw data took up a substantial amount of time.

This study was conducted in only two different cities with a small number of participants. This makes the findings of this study difficult to generalise. There is a lack of a standard policy about licencing regulations and measures in the early years industry in Turkey. However, the 2015/2016 revamp of the curriculum saw an increase in programme quality and the teachers' experiences address some of these limitations. In accordance with this, another important issue is the inconsistent Turkish ECE policy as there is not a stable system and the government changes the policy without any longitudinal research or reports. The changes made were found to be problematic and unclear by the participants. Especially, Osmaniye's teachers mentioned that they have not been informed about the latest changes. On the other hand, Ankara's teachers did not concern themselves too much about the policy. Instead, they created their own plans and practices to support children's development. Therefore, the findings indicate inconsistent application of policy for these four teachers. This is a relevant point internationally as more countries adopt central policies to improve the quality of ECE. It seems that policies may not be understood or applied in the same ways by teachers, and that some aspects of policy are either missing or inadequately framed.

7.4. Implications of the Study for Turkish ECE Policy

This study has many implications for future activity in ECE in Turkey particularly but also internationally in terms of academic understanding between SELD and play. In addition, there are implications for teacher education programmes in terms of effective SELD playful pedagogies. A significant challenge arising from this research is to increase teachers' knowledge and confidence and about SELD, and how this can be supported through a range of pedagogical approaches. In the current ECE context in Turkey, this challenge must be addressed through clear policy guidance and appropriate curriculum content in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes and in continuing professional development. The data suggested that the teachers needed a programme not only about play pedagogy but also SELD. Currently, the Turkish EC teacher education departments include content about

“child development theories” which place little emphasis on theories of play and its role in early learning and development. In addition, there is no teaching to the pre-service teachers on how play can be used as a pedagogical approach in the early years in ways that integrate child-led and adult-led activities. Therefore, a recommendation from this study is for sessions on teacher education programmes about how playful pedagogy can be used in early years settings, and the importance of SELD and how it could be supported by playful pedagogical approaches. This is a significant gap that this study has identified, based on the teachers clearly expressing their pedagogical implications, especially regarding SELD practice. All the teachers in this study agreed there must be related sessions in the undergraduate ITE programmes about SELD and play to understand their importance in the early years, and how their practice needs to develop. The sessions should aim to develop teachers’ transferable skills, increase their knowledge about SELD and play, and enhance their practice in early years settings.

There are implications for policymakers in terms of curriculum development and professional development. This study could help policymakers understand the teachers’ expectations and issues they face in their practice. This research supplies further evidence that global curricula aimed to enhance children’s social emotional competence may be effective at developing the types of classroom practices practitioners feel are most significant to children’s long-term school success. Yet, it has been suggested by Elias et al. (2000) and Hamre et al. (2012) that guidelines and educators have concerns and questions about why SEL curricula are essential and whether teaching SEL goals need separate time from academic teaching. These issues are generally of less concern in early years context because SELD is considered to be woven throughout provision. However, concerns about SELD have come to the fore in the Turkish ECE context as pre-school teachers are expected to make children ready for elementary school, with a focus on academic areas of learning (such as literacy and numeracy). Similar trends can be seen in other countries where emphasis is being placed on academic outcomes as indicators of school readiness (Kay, 2018). It is important for the field to continue to document the ways in which investments in SEL curriculum have real and demonstrable impact on children’s SEL and academic outcomes. This implies that attention needs to be given to the policy framework

for ECE in Turkey to address the gaps and lack of adequate guidance for teachers. Even though the Turkish ECE curriculum stated the programme has been created in consideration of international early years programmes and perspectives, there must be clear indication about the rationale and theoretical background of the curriculum. The data indicated that the current policy framework creates questions for teachers' understanding about the curriculum and the implications for supporting children's developmental areas, especially the SELD area. In light of contemporary pedagogical perspectives, there is a need to develop children's SELD skills and to develop effective pedagogical approaches to support teachers' provision and practice. The data clearly showed that the teachers struggled with interpreting the ECE goals because some of them are very basic for 5-year-old children, and some of them are very difficult to achieve and demonstrate as outcomes. So, it can be argued that Turkish ECE policy makers should consider children's learning and developmental stages and the need to update the curriculum goals and guidance for teachers. In the early years stage, it should be considered by the stakeholders that supporting children's SELD in appropriate ways helps children to develop their skills in life and supports their academic development. Therefore, SELD should be seen as integral to the ECE curriculum, and to children's learning and development.

The curriculum document in itself may not be sufficient to provide the support that teachers need. The findings have implications for the development and dissemination of SELD in the curriculum and the provision of effective support for teachers in implementing the curriculum. Consequently, the policy makers should consider preparing guidance for supporting children's SELD and guidance for playful pedagogy in early years, drawing on international perspectives and models. The curriculum needs to make clear that SELD for young children is an effective use of time and resources for schools. Clear and supportive guidance may be useful for early years teachers to develop themselves in their practice and to develop their confidence in using a range of pedagogical approaches. Also, the findings suggested that it would be useful if the policy makers can provide ongoing in-service training about SELD which provides a theoretical background and recommends to teachers SELD activities, especially blended with play activities. Therefore, additional guidance materials are needed to show how SELD can be integrated into the curriculum through

child-initiated play and adult-led activities. Examples of play, activities and materials which are suitable for early years can be provided with the guidance. It would be useful to give some clear guidance to teachers about their role in children's play to prevent imbalance with too much adult-led play in the classroom, and enabling them to identify the valuable SELD learning that occurs during child-initiated play.

7.5. Recommendations for Further Studies

This study assessed teachers' understanding of SELD at one point in time; studies with repeated waves of data gathering over a longer time scale might be needed to explore how their perceptions change over time as the policy is changing inconsistently. This inconsistent ECE policy does not provide the teachers with clear understanding. An effective SELD programme in Turkey would be useful to inform teachers' roles and their understanding. If there had been an SELD programme in Turkey, it would have been useful to inform the challenges of curriculum, the challenges of assessment and the challenges of understanding. This study provides preliminary evidence that the Turkish preschool education programme lacks a focus on social-emotional competencies, which could be effective at increasing SELD in early years. The study recommends that the guidance that exists in other countries might inform the basis for quality SELD for teachers' practices and plans.

Furthermore, teacher training is an important issue in fostering children's SELD. More studies should thus be carried out to investigate SELD programmes at universities. Hemmeter and Santos (2008) stated that:

“to prepare students to address the social-emotional needs of all young children in preschool settings, faculty members in pre-service preparation programs should address content and provide practicum experiences that reflect a comprehensive approach to promoting social-emotional development, preventing challenging behaviour, and implementing interventions for children with persistent and severe challenging behaviour” (p. 322).

This point has been also discussed in Chapter 6, Discussion. The researchers highlighted that the teacher education system is important to provide teachers with more sophisticated perceptions about SELD.

Also, future studies could offer fresh insights into teachers' understanding of SEL and SED or their practices in teaching SEL in the long term, ultimately leading to new approaches or support for teaching practices and school improvement. There is much more to be done, and teaching theories could be developed into practice and curriculum. In addition, it needs to be understood whether intervention leading to gains in SELD skills then transfers to other skills, such as academic success (McClelland et al., 2017). There are many studies from around the world about this perception, but unfortunately, it is hard to ascertain in the context of Turkey. As shown in the Literature Review Chapter, only very superficial studies have been carried out so far. There is thus no information about the effects of boosts in children's SELD skills from any specific SELD programmes in Turkey.

7.6. Reflection

Reflecting upon the main findings, it seems evident that using qualitative methods, observation notes, specifically video-recording, pre-video interviews and post-video interviews worked effectively to reveal teachers' understandings about SELD in the context of play. The videotaped episodes revealed examples of a disconnection between teachers' understandings and their practice, and raised concerns about the curriculum issues, and its relationship to supporting SELD. The study also argues that the ECE development policies by the governments around the world are clearly consistent as shown in the literature (England, Switzerland or Australia). Therefore, this study offers a way for stakeholders to see more clearly the teachers' beliefs and practices about SELD and engage with issues and concerns that the participants in this study discussed. This study reveals a small portion of practice in two different settings within the Turkish ECE system. The research focused on children's SELD in play and the curriculum, and attempted to illustrate this from the perspective of practitioners, using video-recordings as discussion points during interview sessions.

Moreover, it was discovered through this research that using video recording is a useful way to gather data as it helped the teachers to remember the practice during the play in the classrooms. Another original aspect of the study is that this is the first-time video stimulated interviews have been implemented in Turkish ECE contexts. This study is also a substantiation of how the teachers found video stimulated interviews very useful for discussing their practices and understandings.

In conclusion, this thesis suggests that programmes for SEL could, from a pedagogical perspective, be considered and presented as curriculum guidance in which clear, realistic and understandable targets are set in order to create opportunities for children to become socially and emotionally competent. Also, early years educators need to improve the curriculum in order to justify SELD's place in the early years of children's lives. Attention to, and understanding of early years educators' beliefs and values, the importance of implementing playful pedagogy, and how these impact on their practice, are central to this process.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical approval confirmation

Appendix 2: Consent form for children

Appendix 3: Information leaflet for children

Appendix 4: Information leaflet for Provincial Director

Appendix 5: Consent form for parents

Appendix 6: Information leaflet for parents

Appendix 7: Consent form for teachers

Appendix 8: Information leaflet for teachers

Appendix 9: Pre-video day interview questions

Appendix 10: Pre-video day interview questions (Turkish version)

Appendix 11: Video-day interview questions

Appendix 12: Video-day interview questions (Turkish version)

Appendix 13: Post-video interview questions

Appendix 14: Post-video interview questions (Turkish version)

Appendix 15: Reflection interview questions

Appendix 16: Reflection interview questions (Turkish version)

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval Letter



Downloaded: 22/08/2015

Approved: 26/06/2015

Sevim Karaoglu

Registration number: 130249861

School of Education

Programme: PhD

Dear Sevim

PROJECT TITLE: TURKISH PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF PLAY

APPLICATION: Reference Number 003353

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 26/06/2015 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

University research ethics application form 003353 (dated 25/03/2015).

Participant information sheet 1006771 version 2 (25/03/2015).

Participant information sheet 1006757 version 2 (25/03/2015).

Participant information sheet 1006667 version 1 (19/03/2015).

Participant information sheet 1006665 version 2 (25/03/2015).

Participant consent form 1006770 version 1 (24/03/2015).

Participant consent form 1006670 version 1 (19/03/2015).

Participant consent form 1006669 version 1 (19/03/2015).

Participant consent form 1006668 version 1 (19/03/2015)

The following optional amendments were suggested:

1. The consent form for children should include a space for an adult who has witnessed the process to sign. 2. Details about what will happen to the findings on all information sheets should be extended so it is clear that a copy of the thesis will be held by the Library and accessible to Sheffield students and staff. 3. The information sheet for parents could perhaps be made a little more concise. 4. There is a typographical error in two information sheets, where they read "pair" instead of "part"

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

Professor Daniel Goodley

Ethics Administrator

School of Education

Appendix 2: Consent Form for Children



Would you like to allow me have a seat and put my camera in the class, when you are playing with your friends?

Yes



No



Appendix 3: Information Leaflet for Children



Children Information Speech

- Before a day start to ask whether they want to take part in the observation, I will introduce myself and my study:

- I am Sevim, a research student in the UK. Today, I am going to have a seat in the classroom to observe you and I will take notes on my paper, when you are playing with your friends. During your play time free play area and structured play areas will be recording by a video camera. This process takes a month, whenever you would not like to join my work, let me know. This is my homework which was given me by my teacher at the university. So, I need your lovely help, would you like to allow me have a seat in the class and watch you? There will not be any disruption or interference. If you allow me for the observation and video recording could you please paint the smile face? If you feel uncomfortable with this situation, you can paint the sad face and I will not watch you in the class. If you have any question you can ask me (I will wait a few minutes for questions. If they ask me, I will reply them. And then I will dispatch the consent form to each child. Following this, I will check the consent forms. After collect and check the consent form, I will thank them and have a seat in the class to start my observation. Before leave the class after observation I will thank them again and say bye).

Appendix 4: Information Leaflet for Provincial Director



Information leaflet for Provincial Directorate of National Education

“Turkish Pre-School Teachers’ Understanding of Social Emotional Development and Learning in the Context of Play”

Local early years education settings are being invited to take part in a study that explores teachers’ views of the social and emotional development and learning of children through play. Before the authorization agrees to allow it, it is important why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please feel free to contact me should you have any concerns, questions or require further information.

Study Aims

The purpose of the study is to explore children’s emotional and social development and learning through play. This will involve finding out about what teachers understand by children’s social and emotional development and learning in their play and what how they think they can influence this development.

Who will be taking part in the study?

Six pre-school classes setting of up to 20 children and six practitioners in the pre-school who have been invited to take part.

What will be happen during the study?

1. Pre-video interview with teachers

Teachers will take part in interviews during which they will be asked to reflect upon their ideas about children's social and emotional development through play, will be asked about putting the video camera during the data collection process. They will also be asked about how they see their role in facilitating this. The interviews will be recorded by audio tape with the practitioners' permission.

2. Video recording and observation of children's play

In small place in the classroom will be observed and there will not be any disruption or interference in their play. At the same time, the children's play behaviours will be recorded through handwritten notes.

3. Post-video interview with teachers

The post-video interview will be employed whilst the teacher watching the videotape. They will be asked their reflections as the teacher and considering their curriculum implementations. The audio tape will be used for interviews.

4. Reflection Interview

The reflection interviews will be implemented on the last stage of data collection. This interview designed to gather in-dept data about the research impact of teachers' practices and their reflections about SELD in early years settings.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

All recordings and notes will be locked away in a safe place or stored on a password protected computer. I will not include your name, any defining details or the name of the school in my final report. That way, video and audio records, the participants and their

views will be kept completely anonymous. All data collected will be destroyed when I have finished writing up my study.

What will happen to the findings of the study?

The study will be written up as a thesis as part of the requirements of the PhD in Education and a copy will be held at the School of Education, University of Sheffield. A summary of findings will be available to the schools if requested.

Thank you for taking time to consider the study. Please feel free to contact me on the following email address should you have any concerns, questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Sevim KARAOGLU

skaraoglu1@sheffield.ac.uk

+447751173043

Supervisor details: Professor Elizabeth Wood. e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

The University of Sheffield.

Appendix 5: Consent Form for Parents



Parent Consent Form

Please read the following carefully and initial the box by the side of each statement to show that you consent	Consent
a. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet provided for the above study.	
b. I understand that my child will be given an opportunity to withdraw at any point during the study.	
c. I understand that responses will be anonymised so that no names are included in the study.	
d. I agree to my child being observed during their play in the class.	

Please sign this form below and return to the class teacher as soon as possible.

Name.....Date.....

Signature.....

Appendix 6: Information Leaflet for Parents



Parent Information Leaflet

“Turkish Pre-School Teachers’ Understanding of Social Emotional Development and Learning in the Context of Play”

Dear Parent,

My name is Sevim Karaoglu and I am a post graduate student reading a PhD in Education at the School of Education, University of Sheffield. As a part of the degree requirements I need to carry out a research project which will be written up as a thesis. Your child will be invited to be part of this study. Before giving permission for your child to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and please spend some time with your child talking about what it involves. Should you and your child decide that you would like to be part of the study, please could you complete the attached consent form and return it to the school? If either you or your child decides either before or during the study that you no longer want to take part, you can drop out at any point.

Study Aims

The purpose of the study is to explore children’s emotional and social development and learning through play. This will involve finding out about what teachers understand by

children's social and emotional development and learning in their play and what how they think they can influence this development. The data collection for this research will take a month for each collection. The researcher will collect the data twice, at the beginning and at the end of academic year.

Who will be taking part in the study?

Six pre-school classes setting of up to 20 children and six practitioners in the pre-school who have been invited to take part.

What will be happen during the study?

1. Video Recording and observation of children's play

In small place in the classroom will be observed and there will not be any disruption or interference in their play. At the same time, the children's play behaviours will be recorded through video and handwritten notes.

2. Interviews with practitioners

Practitioners will take part in short interviews before and after video recording where they will be asked to reflect upon their ideas of social and emotional development through children's play in the classroom.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

All tape recordings of teachers and observation sheets and notes will be locked away in a safe place or stored on a password protected computer. I will not include your child's name, any details that could identify a child or the name of the school in my final report. That

way, the participants and their views, video records will be kept completely anonymous. All data collected will be destroyed when I have finished writing up my study.

Does my child have to take part?

There is no obligation for your child to take part. Even if they choose to take part at the start, they can withdraw from the study at any time. If you agree to your child taking part in the group observation, please complete and return the consent form which is added at the end of the information leaflet through your child. If at any point they do not wish to continue participating in the study, they are free to withdraw their consent with absolutely no consequence.

What will happen to the findings of the study?

The study will be written up as part of the PhD degree in Education. The study will be written up and bound as a thesis which will be reviewed by my tutor and other staff at the School of Education, University of Sheffield. A summary of findings will be available for the school and participations who interest in the study.

Thank you for taking time to consider the study. Please feel free to contact me on the following email address should you have any concerns, questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Sevim KARAOGLU

skaraoglu1@sheffield.ac.uk - +447751173043

Supervisor details: Professor Elizabeth Wood. e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

The University of Sheffield

Appendix 7: Consent Form for Teachers



Teacher Consent Form

Please read the following carefully and initial the box by the side of each statement to show that you consent	
a. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet provided for the above study and had opportunity to ask the researcher any questions I might have.	
b. I understand that I will be given an opportunity to withdraw at any point during the study.	
c. I understand that responses will be anonymized so that no names included in the study.	
d. I agree to my interview with the researcher being recorded	
e. I agree to take part in the project	

Name.....Date.....

Signature.....

This form will be collected by the researcher before conduct the interview.

Appendix 8: Information Leaflet for Teachers



Teacher Information Leaflet

“Turkish Pre-School Teachers’ Understanding of Social Emotional Development and Learning in the Context of Play”

You are being invited to take part in a study that explores teachers’ views of the social and emotional development and learning of children through play. Before you agree to take part, it is important that you understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Should you decide that you would like to be part of the study, please complete and return the enclosed consent form. You can drop out of the study at my point if you so wish. Please feel free to contact me should you have any concerns, questions or require further information.

Study Aims

The purpose of the study is to explore children’s emotional and social development and learning through play. This will involve finding out about what teachers understand by children’s social and emotional development and learning in their play and what how they think they can influence this development. The data collection for this research will take a month for each collection. The researcher will collect the data twice, at the beginning and at the end of academic year.

Who will be taking part in the study?

Six pre-school classes setting of up to 20 children and six practitioners in the pre-school who have been invited to take part.

What will be happening during the study?

1. Pre-video interview with teachers

Teachers will take part in interviews during which they will be asked to reflect upon their ideas about children's social and emotional development through play, will be asked about putting the video camera during the data collection process. They will also be asked about how they see their role in facilitating this. The interviews will be recorded by audio tape with the practitioners' permission.

2. Video recording and observation of children's play

In small place in the classroom will be observed and there will not be any disruption or interference in their play. At the same time, the children's play behaviours will be recorded through handwritten notes.

3. Post-video interview with teachers

The post-video interview will be employed whilst the teacher watching the videotape. They will be asked their reflections as the teacher and considering their curriculum implementations. The audio tape will be used for interviews.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

All recordings and notes will be locked away in a safe place or stored on a password protected computer. I will not include your name, any defining details or the name of the school in my final report. That way, video and audio records, the participants and their

views will be kept completely anonymous. All data collected will be destroyed when I have finished writing up my study.

What will happen to the findings of the study?

The study will be written up as a thesis as part of the requirements of the PhD in Education and a copy will be held at the School of Education, University of Sheffield. A summary of findings will be available to the schools if requested.

Thank you for taking time to consider the study. Please feel free to contact me on the following email address should you have any concerns, questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Sevim KARAOGLU

skaraoglu1@sheffield.ac.uk - +447751173043

Supervisor details: Professor Elizabeth Wood. e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

The University of Sheffield

Appendix 9: Pre-video Interview Questions

Pre-video Interviews

- 1- Years of experience
- 2- Old/ gender
- 3- What do you think about SED? Can you describe your beliefs about SED?
- 4- What do you think about SEL? Can you describe your beliefs about SEL?
- 5- Do you observe children's SEL/SED in their play? How and how often? Can you give me an example of how play supports SED/SEL?
- 6- What kinds of activities do you provide to further promote children's SELD inside and outside of classroom?
- 7- Do you plan any specific activity for SED or SEL?

Appendix 10: Pre-video Day Interview Questions (Turkish)

Video Kaydi Öncesi Sorular

- 1- Kaç yıllık öğretmensiniz?
- 2- Yaş/ cinsiyet:
- 3- Sosyal duygusal gelişim sizin için ne ifade etmektedir? Düşünce/ tanım/ dikkat çeken nokta?
- 4- “Sosyal duygusal öğrenme” kavramı sizin için ne ifade etmektedir? Düşünce/ tanım/ dikkat çeken nokta?
- 5- Çocukların sosyal duygusal gelişimlerini oyunlarında nasıl ve ne sıklıkla gözlemlersiniz? Gözlemlediklerinizden sosyal duygusal gelişim ve öğrenmeyi desteklediğini düşündüğünüz bir örnek verebilir misiniz?
- 6- Sizce sosyal duygusal gelişim ve öğrenmeyi daha fazla destekleyecek sınıf içi ve sınıf dışı aktivite neler olabilir?
- 7- Spesifik olarak sosyal duygusal gelişim ve sosyal duygusal öğrenme için aktivite planlar mısınız?

Appendix 11: Video Day Interview Questions

Video Day Interviews

- 1- What activities have you planned today to support SED and SEL?
- 2- What do you hope the outcomes will be for the children?
- 3- How will you know whether these outcomes have been achieved? Do you assess children's learning and development? And. If so, how?
- 4- Where do you recommend I should put my camera so that I can get good recordings?

Appendix 12: Video Day Interview Questions (Turkish)

Video Günü Sorulacak Sorular

- 1- Bugün sosyal duygusal gelişim ve öğrenmeyi desteklemek için herhangi bir aktivite planladınız mı? Neler?
- 2- Bu aktivitelerden beklediğiniz sonuçlar (çıktılar) nelerdir?
- 3- Beklediğiniz sonuçların (çıktıların) başarılıp başarılmayacağını nasıl biliyorsunuz?
Çocukların sosyal duygusal gelişim ve öğrenmelerini değerlendiriyor musunuz? Nasıl?
- 4- kamerayı nereye yerleştirmemi önerirsiniz?

Appendix 13: Post-video Interview Questions

POST- VIDEO INTERVIEWS

- 1- What aspect of SED can you identify in these episodes? (If yes, why do you think, contributions/ examples) what kind of SED engaged behaviours have you noticed in children's play? (Why do you think that?)
- 2- Do you think children's SED is evident in their play? (Why/ do you have any extra point to remark?) Can you give examples?
- 3- Do you think supporting children's SED and children's SEL is the same thing? What do you think?
- 4- What do you think/ do you have any thought about supporting children's SELD?
- 5- Can you identify any of TPEP aims/ outcomes in this episode?
- 6- After watching these episodes how easy or difficult is it to evaluate children SEL/ SED?

Appendix 14: Post-video Interview Questions (Turkish)

Video Kaydi Sonrasi Sorular

- 1- Bu bölümde, çocukların oyunlarında sosyal duygusal gelişim ile ilgili davranışlar gözlemleyebiliyor musunuz? Hangileri olduğuna dair örnekler verebilir misiniz? Bu bölümde sosyal duygusal gelişim ya da öğrenme ile ilgili dikkatinizi çeken bir şey oldu mu? Olduysa örnek verebilir misiniz?
- 2- Sizce çocukların sosyal duygusal gelişimlerini izleme için oyunları bir delil olabilir mi? Biraz örneklendirebilir misiniz? Eklemek istediğiniz, dikkatinizi çeken başka bir şey var mı?
- 3- Sizce çocukların sosyal duygusal gelişimlerini desteklemek ile sosyal duygusal öğrenmelerini desteklemek aynı şey midir? Ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- 4- Çocukların bu gelişim ve öğrenmelerini desteklemek için dikkate alınması gereken kriterler ne olmalıdır/ düşünceleriniz nelerdir?
- 5- Bu bölümdeki okul öncesi müfredatındaki amaçları/ hedefleri tanımlayabilir misiniz? neler söylediniz?
- 6- Bu bölümü izledikten sonra çocukların sosyal duygusal gelişimlerini ve öğrenmelerini değerlendirmenin zorluğu ve kolaylığı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

Appendix 15: Reflection Interview Questions

Reflection Interview Questions

- 1- To what extent and how do you think that children's SELD develop through play?
- 2- Do you think that there should be updates/renewals/ improvements/ much more emphasises in TPEP SED's aims? If you were a programme-maker how you could develop the TPEP to incorporate SELD outcomes?
- 3- Which ways could be used to support children's SED n early years? How?
- 4- How/ why do you think connection between play and SELD?
- 5- What do you think about teachers' roles in promoting SELD?
- 6- Have you ever planned any specific activity for SELD? If no, do you think you will emphasise on it?
- 7- You know that, generally, schools are turning towards cognitive development, physical or literacy development. Do you think your head teacher supports social- emotional development? Do you think TPEP is enough to support it?
- 8- Do you think that early social-emotional competencies could help deal with problems in the future?
- 9- How did this study effect on your practice? Can you explain it?

Appendix 16: Reflection Interview Questions (Turkish)

Değerlendirme Sorulari

- 1- Oyunun sosyal duygusal gelişim ve öğrenmeye etkisi olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz, nasıl?
- 2- Programdaki sosyal duygusal öğrenme hedeflerinin yenilenmesi/ geliştirilmesi/ değiştirilmesi/ daha çok vurgulanması gerektiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Nasıl tavsiyeler verirdiniz?
- 3- Sosyal duygusal gelişim ve öğrenme okul öncesinde nasıl/ hangi yollarla desteklenmelidir, niçin?
- 4- Oyun ile sosyal duygusal gelişim ve öğrenme arasında nasıl bir bağlantı olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz? Niçin?
- 5- Bu husustaki/ içerikteki öğretmen rolü sizce ne olmalıdır?
- 6- Bugüne kadar spesifik sosyal duygusal gelişim ve öğrenmeyi desteklemeye yönelik aktivite planlamış mıydınız? Eğer hayır ise, bundan sonra planlamayı düşünür müsünüz? Eğer evet ise, daha çok vurgulamayı, üzerinde durmayı düşünür müsünüz?
- 7- Sizin de bildiğiniz gibi okullar ve diğer meslektaşlarımız daha çok çocukların bilişsel, dil ya da fiziksel gelişim ve öğrenmelerine öncelik veriyor, bu tutumu nasıl karşılıyorsunuz/ ne düşünüyorsunuz? Bu konuda okul müdürlerinin yapabileceği bir şeyler olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Programın bu kısımda yeterli gelip gelmediğini düşünüyor musunuz?
- 8- Sizce erken yaşta geliştirilen sosyal duygusal yeterlilik, çocukların ileriki hayatlarında karşılaştacağı problemler ile baş etmesine yardımcı olabilir mi? Nasıl, biraz açıklayabilir misiniz?
- 9- Bu çalışma sizde nasıl bir algı oluşturdu, açıklayabilir misiniz?