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Literature Circle Method Practice with Preschool Teachers through Children's Books: An Action Research Example

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to increase the interaction between the educator and the book by discussing the picture storybooks used in the picture story reading activities carried out by the preschool educators through the literature circle methods. Since it aims to intervene in an educational situation and is carried out directly with preschool educators, this study was designed with action research, one of the qualitative research methods. The participants of the research are four preschool educators. As for the data collection, semi-structured interview form, participants' diaries, and researcher's diary were used. Content analysis technique was used in the analysis of the data. At the end of the research, it was concluded that the literature circle method affected the reading process in three different ways. These are (a) professional development, (b) relativity for the student, and (c) planning the teaching process. It was concluded that the reading circle method had a positive effect on the professional development of the participants, enabling the proper reading process for the student and effective planning of in-class practices. Hands-on workshops can be carried out that enable preschool educators to make use of picture storybooks in their schools through different reading methods.

Keywords: Literature circle, preschool educator, picture storybooks, reader response theory, reading skill.

Introduction

A literature circle is a discussion group that focuses on the development of the participants. The participants of the circle add their feelings and thoughts to the discussions because of their personal experiences and personal responses to the reading text (Kim, 2004). During the literature circle practice, the participants take notes about their reading process, share their reading roles, and discuss the text according to these roles. Meetings are held regularly in the literature circle, and roles change at each session. This method was first applied by Karen Smith in 1982, but it was first named by Kathy Short and Gloria Kaufman (Daniels, 2002). Literature circles promote participants' critical thinking and reflections on what they read and their reactions to the book. Collaboration is central to the approach. Participants shape meaning by adding their opinions about what they read together with other members (Campbell Hill, 2010).

Literature circle applications are based on Rosenblatt's reader response theory. Rosenblatt (1982, 2005) stated that reading is a process in which a relationship is established between the reader and text in a certain time and context. According to Rosenblatt (2005), meaning is not ready-made in the text. On the contrary, it emerges from the interaction between the reader and the text. Daniels (1994) delved into the reader response theory proposed by Rosenblatt and introduced the idea of reading groups for the first time. He thinks that the literature circle method is a powerful strategy to improve the reading, thinking and communication skills of the participants. He argued that this method supports students to interact with texts, use their critical thinking skills and develop a passion for reading. He thinks that discussions within the group enable students to understand the texts more deeply and enrich the reading experience. During the reading process, the interaction differs according to the aesthetic or informational reading of the text, selective attention to clues, and the purpose evoked by the reader (Connell, 2008). According to Rosenblatt (2005), readers make sense of texts by selecting and applying, rearranging, or expanding both private and social elements from their personal, linguistic and experiential knowledge. A story, poem, or narrative is just ink on paper until the reader reads, interacts with, and turns them into symbols (Rosenblatt, 2005). Meaning is constructed by combining the readers' personal responses with their experiences in this construction. The constructed meaning changes because of discussions and sharing with other individuals such as participants in the reading

circle. Thoughts organized within the framework of personal experiences are transformed into new ideas, information, and interactions through different individuals' stories, the points they are affected by, or their sharing (Connell, 1996; Demény, 2012). In reader response theory, this is the reader's dialogue with the text. Each reader provides the meaning that he has inferred from the text through his own experiences; he understands the text as much as the interaction he has in his own life. Literature circle practices allow readers to share their understanding, discuss different roles, and understand different perspectives. As a result, the text is understood differently, and readers are influenced by learning from each other.

The reading circle is a new activity where participants like to be more involved in their learning process (Liu, 2022). In this method, cooperation is made in groups, there is respect for each other's ideas and accepting responsibility. In this respect, it is clear that the participants of the reading circle support their cognitive and social development (Suci et al., 2022). Participants with different abilities change their roles in the literature circle and meet at designated periods to discuss stories or different parts of a book (Pierzga, 2007). They are active participants in this process, which is maintained through different roles or weekly changing roles (Wilfong, 2009). In the reading circle, there are small discussion groups formed by people who choose to read the same book. Group members take various notes as they read so that they can contribute to future discussions, and everyone comes to the group with ideas to discuss according to their role. After the group discussions, the participants divide into other small groups and start new discussions. Thus, a cycle that requires more reading and examination is started (Wati & Yanto, 2022). In the literature circle, there are certain roles, such as a connector that allows readers to make a connection between what they read and their own life experiences, interrogator that requires participants to make inquiries about what they read with questions at different levels from inquiring for knowledge to analysis, a reading illuminator/section specialist who helps to reveal the reading text in details, an artist, who expresses and explains the emotions with the branches of art, a summarizer who provides a brief summary of the reading text, a researcher who provides detailed and in-depth information about the reading text and provides the readers with extra information (places, geography, climate, occupations, etc.) that helps the text to be better understood, a word hunter who explains/attracts attention by identifying new words and different and interesting idioms and phrases in the text, a movement tracker who provides a detailed description of the places where the characters move and events take place, and a character master who describes the characters and their salient features (Daniels, 2002; Moeller & Moeller, 2007; Straits, 2007; Straits & Nichols, 2006; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). In the literature circle, participants examine the text according to their determined roles, come together, and carry out discussions with the facilitator. In this way, the interaction of a text with readers is increased, enhancing its intelligibility. The literature circle method also provides important contributions for educators and students in the pre-school period. It improves students' social skills (Dogan, & Kaya-Tosun, 2020). In addition, it gives students the opportunity to read and interpret complex and unknown texts in a reflective, critical and collaborative way (Martínez-Valdivia, Pegalajar-Palomino, & Higuera-Rodríguez, 2021). In this respect, it differs from the traditional method. In the traditional method of reading, the educator is in the center; in the literature circle, the student is at the center and the educator is the guide (Martínez-Valdivia, Pegalajar-Palomino, & Higuera-Rodríguez, 2021). Because of this feature, it redefined the roles of educator and student. In this method, students learned to be more active in the process and educators learned how to apply it (Jensen & Bennet, 2016). Based on these issues, this study aims to increase the interaction between educators and

books by discussing picture storybooks used in picture story reading activities performed by preschool educators through a literature circle. In line with the research purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the participants' experiences in the literature circle sessions?
2. What are the participants' views of the literature circle action research process?

Method

Research Design

The aim of this study was to increase the interaction between educators and books by discussing the picture storybooks used in picture story reading activities performed by preschool educators through a literature circle. Thus, we attempted to determine the contribution of the literature circle to educators' effectiveness in the reading process. As it aimed to intervene in an educational situation and was carried out directly with preschool educators, this study was designed as an action research study, which is a qualitative research method. Action research is also referred to as educator research, because it is widely used in education (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011; Pelton, 2010). The purposes of action research in education and school environments include teaching methods, learning strategies, assessment methods, attitudes and values, in-service development of educators, management and control, and management (Cohen & Manion, 1996, cited in Beyhan, 2013). In this study, action research was used to examine the teaching methods, learning strategies, and in-service development of preschool educators.

The Action Research Process

Action research, similar to all research designs, is based on specific procedures. Several studies have been conducted on action research (Branquinho and de Matos, 2019), and opinions reflecting almost the same perspective on the stages of the action research process are presented (Johnson, 2005; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006;). In this study, while determining the action plan of the literature circle method, the following steps were followed in parallel with the literature (Avcı et al., 2010 & Daniels, 2002).

1. Identifying the Books: Today, many publications and picture storybooks are used in the context of language activities in the preschool period. Within the scope of this study, educators who were willing to participate in the reading circle were trained on the qualities of current picture storybooks, how to choose a good-quality product in the preschool period, and the literary genres that can be used in the preschool period. Then, 2000 printed children's literature products published between 2015 and 2021 were presented to the educators, who were asked to choose those suitable for the reading circle and for reading in a preschool class. At this stage, the educators were given completely free rein and were allocated a period of time to examine the products; if necessary, they were allowed to bring additional products. All educators participating in the study chose three picture storybooks from among the products offered. We focused on the fact that these publishers are different and that all selected products differ in format, illustration, and content features.

2. Introducing the Technique to the Participants: To achieve the desired goals in the literature circle, participants must know how the process works. The participant educators were informed about how literature circles worked, the roles used in the circle, and the theoretical structure of the literature circle in the preparatory training before implementation. Information notes on this subject were

prepared and presented. The following week, a small circle was created and participants were allowed to try out the roles.

3. Introducing the Books: In this process, the participating educators gave information about the book they chose, why they chose it, and in which respects they found it valuable to be included in the circle. In addition, they shared the physical features of the book, such as the cover, illustration, and binding, with other educators. After each literature circle, the participating educator who chose that book introduced it for the next week, chose the appropriate roles, and distributed the parts to the other participants.

4. Formation of Groups: Daniels (2002) recommends 4–6 people in a literature circle. Within the scope of this study, four educators participated. Therefore, a single literature circle was created and 12 separate literature circle sessions were held.

5. Identifying and Sharing Roles: The participants do not do random readings in the literature circle. Each participant prepares for the discussion based on the roles determined by the book and participates in the process by paying attention to their positions. In this study, eight role options were presented. Worksheets developed by the researcher were prepared for these roles. Participating educators were asked to design functions that could be provided to other participating educators based on the contents of the books they chose. During the week of the selected text, the educator shared the parts for which the book was chosen with the participants. They were asked to complete the worksheets with short explanations of the given functions before the literature circle and, if necessary, to bring other supporters suitable for their parts, such as materials and video photographs, to the session. Accordingly, the educators attended sessions with supporters, including pictures, posters, research documents, and reference books. The participating educators were given a different role each week, and care was taken that all the educators attempted all the functions. It was ensured that each educator had only one part per week.

6. Planning the Time: A book was read every week. Literature circles continued with meetings held once a week (Friday), and literature circle practices were conducted with picture storybooks suitable for preschool periods with the participant Educators. educators' learning of the circles was terminated (12 weeks later) when they were no longer forced into the roles, became satisfied with the literature circle process, and could sustain themselves without a facilitator.

7. Group Projects: A project was conducted at the end of each source read in the literature circle. In this project, preschool educators were asked to prepare a detailed plan for the chosen book after reading each picture storybook. They were asked to design activities, project studies, and materials in various activity areas related to the selected text that could be used with the preschool children. They are expected to reflect on the book they were considering with all the details discussed in the literature circle in their plans. The prepared projects were shared and presented to all the educators.

8. Evaluation: Process evaluation was conducted as described previously. An assessment was made of the qualifications of the roles in the ring, and educators were asked to write diaries about the literature circle process and complete worksheets that were appropriate for their roles. It was ensured that the participants evaluated the literature circle process, participants, and emerging products. An outside observer was included in the process for one week, and his views were used for evaluation.

Participants

The participants were preschool educators. A criterion sampling technique was used to select participants, whereby the researcher identified participants according to criteria determined in line with the purpose of the study. (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The participants of the study were working in an independent kindergarten in Bolu, were willing to work in the literature circle, had not participated in any training on picture storybooks before, and had signed a cooperation protocol with Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University Preschool Application and Research Center. The team consisted of four preschool educators. It was determined that educators had 15–20 years of experience and had been working together in the same school for 8 years. All the study participants were undergraduates in preschool teaching and had various academic projects that they had carried out in their classrooms. After meeting the researcher and participants and exchanging information about the study, permission was obtained from kindergarten management and the Ministry of National Education.

Data Collection Tools

Semi-structured interview forms, researcher diaries, and participant diaries were used as data collection tools. Information on these data collection tools is presented below.

Table 1. *Distribution of data collection tools*

Research Question	Data Collection Tool
First research question	Participant Diary Researcher Diary
Second research question	Semi-structured interview form

Researcher diary: The source of this data collection tool was the researcher. The purpose of this data collection tool was to convey the participants' experiences in the literature circle process by researching them from a different perspective. As the researcher was also a practitioner, he recorded the participants' observations on the action research process on a daily basis. Thirteen diaries were collected during the research process.

Participant diary: The source of this data collection tool is preschool educators. This tool aims to determine the participants' experiences of each session during the action research process from their perspective. During the research, 53 participant diaries were collected.

Semi-structured interview form: The source of this data collection tool was preschool teachers. The form was developed to elicit the general views of the four preschool educators who participated in the action research process. Semi-structured interviews consisted of four questions designed to determine the effects of the literature circle on students' daily lives, the literature circle method on the teaching profession, the literature circle on the picture storybook reading process, and in-class practices. During the research process, a total of 9 semi-structured interviews were conducted over two weeks.

Data Analysis

In action research, data analysis processes are continuous. The data are analyzed as they are collected. Afterward, the researcher interprets the results, discusses them with the validity committee, and advances suggestions for research problems (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this study, the data were analyzed using content analysis in two stages. First, the data collected regularly every day were analyzed using the macro-analysis technique because qualitative data analysis was performed simultaneously

(Creswell, 2013). At the end of the study, all data were reanalyzed using the microanalysis technique. Analysis yielded 8 categories and 57 codes related to the first research question, and 3 categories, and 4 codes related to the second research question.

To increase the reliability of the research, another field expert analyzed the interview forms and diary data. The coding consistency between the researcher and field experts was determined to be 90% (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To ensure the validity of the research, the following tests were conducted for credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986):

Credibility: To ensure this dimension of validity, action research with a clear roadmap was chosen. Before the data collection process, the participants were prepared for the study, and the data collection process was conducted over a long period. Different data-collection tools obtained from other sources were used. The situations encountered in the reading circle based on the research findings were directly conveyed through positive and negative aspects. Researchers' diaries were included and data on the process were reflected.

Transferability: To ensure the transferability of the research, the participants and sample selection technique were explained in detail in the context of their knowledge and its relation to the research purpose. Limitations of this study and its data were demonstrated. Information on the data collection techniques was explained in line with the research purpose. In addition, explanations of the session information regarding the data collection process are presented.

Reliability: For this dimension of research validity, the findings section has been clearly reported. Accordingly, analysis tables are presented and the categories obtained from the content analysis are referred to along with the data obtained from the participants. Thus, interpretations were made for each class using direct references from the participants.

Confirmability: Participant and researcher diaries were collected simultaneously during each session to ensure the confirmability of the study. Therefore, diversification is based on different data sources regarding the process. Additionally, the data obtained from the participant diaries were re-audited using a semi-structured interview form during the last week of the implementation process. This increased the confirmability of the data that the participants included in the diaries throughout the process and in the semi-structured interview form towards the end of the process.

Limitations of the Research

The current research has some limitations owing to the schools where the participating educators worked. Since there were limited picture storybooks in the schools where the educators work, the researchers provided picture storybooks for use in the study. The researchers presented all documents and tools used in the study to the educators. This study was limited to picture storybooks examined with the preschool educators and the four participating educators. This study aimed to ensure that all teachers in a school participated in a survey to support sharing and cooperation among educators. Therefore, this study was limited to the schools that participated.

Ethical Permits of Research

In this study, all the rules specified to be followed within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were complied with. None of the actions specified under the heading "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, have been taken.

Ethics Committee Permission Information:

Name of the committee that made the ethical evaluation = Akdeniz University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee

Date of ethical review decision= 23.12.2020

Ethics assessment document issue number= 21/275

Findings

This section presents and interprets the findings based on the data obtained from the action research process. The action research process began with the educator training. Before starting the literature circle method, preschool educators were provided with training on the qualities of picture storybooks, types of picture storybooks, literature circle methods, how children's books are included in different approaches, philosophies for children, and questioning strategies. In the process that started on 09.10.2020 and ended on 12.11.2020, 45-60-minute training sessions were held with the participants every week, lasting one or two sessions. The action research process, which was conducted with the participation of the literature circle method, started on 26.11.2020. Table 2 presents the analysis of the data obtained from the researcher and educator diaries regarding the action research process.

Table 2. *Literature circle method action research process*

Theme	Category	Code	f
Literature circle method process	First session	Book selection criteria	1
		Associate with the activity	1
		The importance of words	1
		Attract attention	1
		Remembering past experiences	1
		To be able to see differently	1
		Enjoyable	1
		Reflective teaching	1
	Second session	Associating with daily life	3
		Changing perspective	2
		Effectiveness	1
		Strain	1
		Ability to analyze	1
	Third session	Enrich the dream world	2
		Family education	2
		Ability to analyze	1
		Associate with the activity	1
		Confidence	1
		Noticing the details	1
		Constructive discussion	1
	Fourth session	Converting books	2
		Message	1
		Adaptation	1
		To be able to see differently	1
		Responsibility	1
		Relative to the child	1
		Making book selection easy	1
		Noticing the details	1
		Transferring information	1
		Concretization	1
		Increasing interaction	1
		Questioning	1
		Fifth session	Positive group interaction
	Simplification		1
	Clarity supported by repetition		1
	Meaning and word harmony		1
Confusion at new information	1		
The transition from superficial to the deep structure	1		
Ability to predict the contribution	1		
Sixth session	Changing perspective	2	
	Book selection criteria	1	
	Connecting with the past	1	
	Spontaneous exchange of ideas	1	
Seventh session	Dominance	2	
	Ability to set criteria	1	
	Ability to suggest resources	1	
	Development	1	
	Self-satisfaction	1	
Eighth session	Ability to set criteria	2	
	Ability to perform an effective reading process	2	
	Changing perspective	2	
	Ability to transfer	1	
	Ensuring relativity to the child	1	
	Increasing effectiveness in the reading process	1	
	Development	1	
	Self-regulation	1	
	Positive attitude	1	

As shown in Table 2, eight sessions were held with educators. The analysis results of the first session revealed no prominent code. The opinions reflected in the participants' diaries were mostly limited to preliminary information. The frequency values of the codes began to change in the second session of the literature circle method. It can be said that the literature circle method action plan cycle had begun to be realized. In the second session, two codes stood out in terms of the frequency value. The first one is "changing perspective" ($f = 2$), and the other is "associating with daily life" ($f = 3$) code. The code of association with daily life was reflected in the diaries of Ö2, Ö4, and the researcher as follows:

"I was more impressed with this week's book about calling and its importance in your life" (Ö2, diary form, 03.12.2021).

"The first thing that the book provoked in me was the matching game. Because everything in the book has a match, every living thing in the book is with its partner, so I created a picture of all living things" (Ö4, diary form, 03.12.2021).

"Then, I asked the educators why they chose the rabbit, why the birds, why the king, why the people, and why the dragon, and what these characters in the book represent. I then explained the representations of the characters both in the book and in daily life." (Researcher, diary, 03.12.2021).

Looking at the expressions of the educators coded Ö2 and Ö4, it can be said that the literature circle method is effective in associating it with daily life. This situation is also reflected in the researcher's diary: Opinions about the change in point of view were reflected in the diary of the educator coded Ö2 and the researcher as follows:

"I had a negative review of the book before, but after hearing the comments, I think it's very nice" (Ö2, diary form, 03.12.2021).

"They all said they were amazed at how deep and important messages can be found in a children's book. However, I think it was very important to observe Ö2's perspective on book change" (Researcher, diary, 03.12.2021).

Ö2 stated that he changed his perspective on the book through the literature circle method. The point of view and observable changes in Ö2 were reflected in the researcher's diary. As shown in Table 1, different codes were activated in the third session. The most striking of these in terms of frequency value are "enriching the world of imagination" ($f = 2$) and "family education" ($f = 2$) codes. The data aimed at enriching the imaginary world were reflected in the participants' statements as follows:

"From the storybook *My Father's Blanket*, which was read, it was emphasized again that fathers play an important role in the world of children and the effect of the activities with the father on the child's imagination, and I understood it" (Ö2, diary form, 10.12.2021).

"Since this book describes the writings of the imaginary world and how the imaginary world can be enriched, we talked about what can be done to enrich children's imagination based on the book" (Ö4, diary form, 10.12.2020).

As we see from the expressions above, with the literature circle activity, the participants were able to see and express the effects of the books on their imaginations more concretely. The researcher's views on the importance of family education in relation to book reading are as follows:

“For this reason, T3 said that he took the book into his hands to examine it in detail, and at that time, he saw that the character of ‘father’ and especially the quality time spent by the father and children were emphasized in the book. S3 said, ‘I think that the father is clearly in the background in early childhood education. Mothers usually take care of the children and play games at home. Therefore, I believe that fathers and children do not bond enough. That’s why I loved how this book tells about father. I thought that seeing what a father could do for a child in the preschool period might attract the attention of their fathers” (Researcher, diary, 10.12.2020).

As seen in the researcher’s diary, the participants were able to make more detailed analyses of the role distribution of parents in the processes. This shows that thanks to the literature circle method, participants’ awareness of the roles of men and women in the family has increased.

Another striking finding in Table 2 is the “book selection criteria” code. In the first session regarding this code, only Ö1 made the following statement: “I think it is a useful activity regarding the criteria that can be taken into account in choosing a storybook” (Ö1, diary form, 26.11.2020). In the sixth and seventh sessions, concrete opinions on the contribution of the literature circle method to the book selection criteria were put forward. Especially in the eighth session, the book-selection criteria drew attention to the code with the highest frequency. Statements regarding the book selection criteria are as follows:

“She said he chose it primarily because he liked the cover and the quality look of the book. The fact that the book was a hard cover and that its content concerned animals was an important criterion for him. She said that he found details, such as printing, binding, and illustrations, suitable for the preschool period. Most importantly, she liked the subject of the book and its suitability for children after examining it in detail” (Researcher, diary, 31.12.2020).

She said that she chose this book because it has a short text, its illustrations are different and interesting, and it has thick and hard covers. Ö3 started by explaining that she found it important that the subject of the book was suitable for preschoolers, and that new and different words were included in its content (Researcher, diary, 07.01.2021).

“I think our literature circle method study has contributed to our understanding of the importance of examining the characteristics of storybooks from the very beginning to the present. To date, we have reviewed eight books. We saw that the criteria that we tried to realize in the first book had become much easier by the eighth book” (Ö1, daily form, 22.01.2020).

“She explained that the book is a hard cover, its illustrations are clear and understandable, and its pages are suitable for preschoolers. Ö1 said that she liked the relevance of the subject of this book, the writings, and illustrations in the text, which was why she chose the book” (Researcher, diary, 22.01.2021).

As seen above, participants could more clearly reveal the criteria for selecting the book at the end of the literature circle method process. As shown in Table 2, the effect of the literature circle method on the process of reading books is also manifested in the concretely revealed codes. Another noteworthy finding was that these effects were positive. Interviews with the participants at the end of the implementation process also supported the positive contribution of the literature circle method. Table 3 presents an analysis of the interviews with the participants.

Table 3. Analysis of the interviews with the participants

Theme	Category	Code	f
Reading circle	Contribution to teaching skills	Professional development	8
		Raising awareness	8
	Contribution to the development of children	Contribution to children's reading process	8
	Contribution to classroom practices	Planning	4

As shown in Table 3, three different categories were identified as a result of the analysis of participants' views on the literature circle method action research process: "contribution to teaching skills" (f = 16), "contribution to children's development" (f = 8), and "contribution to classroom practices" (f = 4). The opinions of the participants about "professional development" can be shown as follows:

"I think this application has contributed to our learning more about storybook selection. I think this makes us more sensitive about ensuring that the storybook complies with the criteria in the literature circle method" (Ö1, semi-structured interview form, 31.12.2020).

"With the literature circle method, the books were handled better, and while examining them, Ö2 contributed to how studies could be such as the place of the pictures, the reading tones, the placement of the texts, the place of reduplications on children, and the importance of tone of voice in reading" (Ö2, semi-structured interview form, 31.12.2020).

"The literature circle method developed my imagination. In the coming days, when face-to-face training opens, I want to put my way of reading stories, my method, and my activities into practice. I think it's a good experience" (Ö3, semi-structured interview form, 31.12.2020).

As can be understood from the participants' opinions, the literature circle method contributes to the teaching profession in terms of what to do and what to pay attention to. In addition, the educators improved their competencies and changed their perspectives on education. Therefore, another code that contributes to teaching skills is raising awareness (f = 8). Expressions of this code are as follows:

"Thanks to the reading circle, the importance of focusing on the features that should be considered in selecting picture storybooks has become more evident" (Ö1, semi-structured interview form: 07.01.2021).

"I realized that it would be more efficient if the messages that the pictures wanted to convey were selected according to the age and development characteristics of the children, and if the application was made by paying attention to tone and highlighting" (Ö2, semi-structured interview form, 07.01.2021).

"When I read picture storybooks before, I used to pay attention to the tone of voice and mimics, but now I try to pay attention to their covers, illustrations, and content" (Ö3, semi-structured interview form, 07.01.2021).

As seen in the explanations, the participants thought that the literature circle method made a professional contribution to recognizing important points in the reading process. In addition to these opinions of the participants about the contribution to their professional development, as seen in Table 3, the opinions about "contribution to children's reading process" (f = 8) under the category of contribution to children's development are given below:

“We cannot use it fully in distance education; I will use it in detail in face-to-face education; I already imagine what I will do, and I am happy. I read My Father’s Blanket with my niece and tried to implement its activities, and it was very nice” (Ö3, semi-structured interview form, 31.12.2020).

“We haven’t had a chance to practice it in the classroom yet, but our preparations continue. When we switch to face-to-face training, I will design what I will do and pay attention to it” (Ö4, semi-structured interview form, 31.12.2020).

“This study will be useful to me. The messages I want to convey to children will be clearer and more visually efficient” (Ö2, semi-structured interview form, 07.01.2021).

Considering the participants’ views of the development of children, the literature circle method can make the reading process more effective and concrete for children. The participants thought that the reading process would be better for children if they reflected on the literature circle method in their future classroom practices based on their previous experiences.

Finally, the views of the participants regarding the “planning” (f = 4) code under “contribution to classroom practices,” which is the lowest category in frequency, are as follows:

“I think that applying the literature circle method is useful in giving ideas for the direction, planning, and implementation of the activities we do with our students” (Ö1, semi-structured interview form, 31.12.2020).

“It has been beneficial for me to pay attention to the age group, illustrations, long-short writing studies, reduplications, emphasis, and tone of voice of the books. I understood the importance of being more careful while choosing the books and using the messages and activities better” (Ö2, semi-structured interview form, 31.12.2020).

“Yes, it is of great use to us. I think that the plans we implement will be very effective and efficient by using and feeding these methods” (Ö3, semi-structured interview form, 31.12.2020).

As can be understood from the statements above, the participants thought that the literature circle method was useful in making the necessary planning for a more effective book-reading process.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to increase the interaction between educators and books by discussing picture storybooks used in picture story reading activities carried out by preschool educators using the literature circle method. Thus, the contribution of the literature circle method to educators’ effectiveness in the reading process was examined by examining the literature on the subject, the introduction of the literature circle method (Avcı et al., 2010), the contribution of the literature circle method to the reading and comprehension process of secondary school students (Balantekin and Pilav, 2017; Sarı et al., 2017; Hatun and Kurtlu, 2019; Mete, 2020), the roles of educator candidates in the literature circle method (Çermik et al., 2019; Doğan et al., 2019; Özbay & Kaldirim, 2015; Yıldırım et al., 2019). However, no study was identified that directly examined the reading process of educators in the preschool period using the literature circle method. In this respect, this research differs from other studies in the literature and contributes to the literature. In addition, this study contributes to the literature with regard to making preschool educators re-examine picture storybooks, helping preschool

educators read picture storybooks in detail, helping them better understand them, and making sense of them with new perspectives.

Based on the findings for the research sessions, the participants were more involved in the process with their past experiences in the first session. The participants' expressions differed in each session. Based on the findings of this research, it is thought that this is a result of the interactions in the literature circle. Using the literature circle method, the participants presented different perspectives by associating their own experiences with the opinions of other participants. Studies have also reached similar findings about interpretation of meaning (Levy, 2019; Soares, 2016; Varita, 2017). In this context, it can be said that the literature circle method creates awareness of the contents of picture storybooks and the educators' perspectives on the book. Işıkoğlu et al., (2020) state that early childhood education educators prefer to read stories in their classrooms, but there are inconsistencies in their use of the book.

Ulutaş and Kıymaz (2012) also state that preschool educators obtain information about children's books within the scope of children's literature lessons. However, they cannot obtain sufficient information about the storybook content. Adak Özdemir and Özdemir Beceren (2020), in their study on the evaluation of children's books within the framework of preschool educators' opinions and book reviews, showed that preschool educators generally hesitate to include well-known classic books in their classrooms because they do not know the new content and books they use. Therefore, it is important to improve the awareness of preschool educators about picture storybooks. It is also known that the use of picture story books in early childhood supports children's language development (Grolig et al., 2019; Hagen, 2018). A literature review suggests that preschool educators do not have enough ideas on early childhood literature (Aral and Aktaş, 1997); that they need to develop their awareness in choosing books and evaluating them qualitatively (İpşiroğlu, 2007), and that they should get information by encountering qualified children's literature products more frequently (Sever, 2013; Yükselen et al., 2016). With this study, preschool educators were asked to think about books and examine picture storybooks in detail. It can be said that this helps to support their awareness. Research findings, especially on raising awareness about empathy, support this study (Johnson, 2022).

Participants were able to perform more detailed analyses of the role distribution of parents using the literature circle method, which increased their awareness of the roles of men and women in the family. Pensiero (2011), Adak Özdemir and Özdemir Beceren (2020), Brookshire et al., (2002), and Yazıcı Okuyan (2009) also showed how gender equality is included in children's books. They determined that the father's role is actively used in many books today, and a new understanding of role distribution has begun to develop in current books. Despite this, it is known that there are also books with a traditional point of view (Çatalcalı Soyer, 2009; Gümüšoğlu, 2008; Somer Ölmez & Değirmenci, 2015). Preschool educators' gender-based beliefs and classroom practices play an important role in students' perceptions of gender roles in the preschool period (Gansen, 2019). Therefore, it can be said that it is important for preschool educators to be conscious of their roles regarding gender equality. With this study, it can be said that educators have become conscious of this issue and have begun to pay attention to this criterion in the products they choose.

According to the findings, it was determined that at the end of the literature circle method, the participants were able to more clearly reveal their criteria for determining the book. Language development of children can be supported not only through picture story books but also through the

use of reading resources. For this reason, it is important to know and use resources that support early reading skills in the preschool period (Riad et al., 2023). The effect of the literature circle method on the process of reading books was also manifested in the concretely revealed codes. Another noteworthy finding was that these effects were positive. Various studies have demonstrated that it is important for preschool educators to choose quality books and to bring children together with these quality products during the picture storybook reading activities in their classrooms (Gönen et al., 2015; Yükselen et al., 2016). Another positive effect of the literature circle method was the increased awareness of the preschool educators participating in the study about the qualities of picture storybooks.

The research findings show that reading circles support the understanding of picture storybooks. It is known that the literature circle method support comprehension (Balantekin & Pilav, 2017; Briggs, 2010; Hinds, 2019; Kennedy, 2010; Pambianchi, 2017; Taboada, Tonks, Wiffield, & Guthrie, 2009; Thomas, 2013; Yıldırım et al., 2019). This study revealed that the literature circle method is useful in making the necessary planning for a more effective book-reading process. It can be said that the literature circle method is supportive in matters such as the use of methods and techniques, reinforcement and correct activity selection, age-related criteria, and activity implementation process. In this study, preschool educators stated that the literature circle method activities had positive effects on the reading processes they conducted with children after the study. Researchers (Balantekin and Pilav, 2017; Beach, 1993; Blum et al., 2002; Eeds and Peterson, 1991; Rich and Blake, 1994; Tomlinson and Strickland, 2005) have indicated that reading circles positively affect participants' reading processes. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that this continued throughout the process. In this context, it can be said that the findings of this study corroborate those of earlier research.

When the findings obtained from the researcher's diary and the participant diaries were examined, it was observed that the expressions of the participants in the first session about the reading process consisted of more abstract and general expressions. This is also related to the reading processes. This process before the literature circle method is applied is the pre-reading process. In the pre-reading process, the meaning related to the reading content is not concrete. The important thing at this stage is to activate the background of the reader (Laitinen et al., 2022). However, looking at the process from the second to the eighth session, it can be seen that the expressions of the participants changed from abstract to concrete, and general expressions to narrower ones. As can be seen from the participants' statements, this concreteness and clarity is the result of the participatory and interactive aspects of the literature circle method.

Based on the findings of the interviews regarding the entire literature circle method, the reading process is affected in three different ways: professional development, student orientation, and the planning of the teaching process. It was concluded that the literature circle method had a positive effect on the professional development of the participants, enabling a proper reading process for the student and effective planning of classroom practices. There are similar results in different studies on this contribution of the literary circle (Puzio, Colby, & Algeo-Nichols, 2020). The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study.

Recommendations

It is recommended that more studies be conducted to enable preschool educators to examine and understand picture storybooks in more detail. A literature circle method was used in this study.

However, it is recommended that studies be conducted with educators who use different strategies for differentiated instruction outside the literature circle method. In-service training activities are recommended for preschool educators to receive mental training that will enable them to think critically and make in-depth evaluations. Finally, it is recommended that practical workshops and academic studies be conducted to enable preschool educators to learn picture storybooks and benefit from these books by using different reading methods in their schools.

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Contribution Rate of Researchers

Author 1: 60%

Author 2: 40%

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Okul Öncesi Öğretmenleri ile Çocuk Kitapları Aracılığıyla Okuma Çemberi Uygulamaları: Bir Eylem Araştırması Örneği

Giriş

Okuma çemberi, birbirini tamamlayan rollerden oluşur. Okuma aydınlatıcısı, metnin ayrıntılarıyla ortaya konulmasına yardımcı olur; sanatçı, okunulan bölümün/öykünün kendisinde uyandırdığı duyguları sanat dallarıyla açıklar; özetleyici, okunan metinle ilgili kısa bir özet sunar; araştırmacı, okunulan metinle ilgili ayrıntılı ve derinlemesine bilgiler elde ederek okuyuculara ekstra bilgiler sunar; sözcük avcısı, metinde geçen yeni sözcükleri, farklı ve ilginç deyimleri, söz dizelerini belirleyerek açıklar; hareket izcisi, karakterlerin hareket ettiği ve olayların geçtiği yerlerin ayrıntılı betimlenmesini sağlar; karakter ustası, metinde geçen önemli karakterleri ve karakterlerin dikkat çeken özelliklerini açıklar (Daniels, 2002; Moeller & Moeller, 2007; Straits, 2007; Straits & Nichols, 2006; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Okuma çemberinde katılımcılar belirlenen rollere uygun olarak metni incelerler, ardından da bir araya gelerek kolaylaştırıcı eşliğinde tartışmalarını yürütürler. Böylelikle bir metnin okuyucu ile etkileşimi arttırılmış ve bu yolla da anlaşılabilirliği sağlanmış olur. Okuma çemberi yöntemi, okul öncesi dönemde de öğretmen ve öğrenciler için önemli katkılar sunar. Öğrencilerin, sosyal becerilerini geliştirir (Doğan & Kaya-Tosun, 2020). Bununla birlikte öğrenciler için karmaşık ve içeriği bilinmeyen metinleri yansıtıcı, eleştirel ve paylaşımcı bir şekilde okuma ve yorumlama fırsatı verir (Martínez-Valdivia, Pegalajar-Palomino, & Higuera-Rodríguez, 2021). Bu yönüyle de geleneksel yöntemden farklılık gösterir. Geleneksel okuma yönteminde, öğretmen merkezdedir; edebiyat halkasında ise öğrenci merkezde, öğretmen ise rehber konumundadır (Martínez-Valdivia, Pegalajar-Palomino, & Higuera-Rodríguez, 2021). Bu özelliğinden dolayı öğretmen ve öğrenci rollerini yeniden belirlemiştir. Bu yöntem sayesinde öğrenciler, süreçte daha aktif olur, öğretmenler de bunun nasıl uygulanabileceğini öğrenir (Jensen & Bennet, 2016). Buradan yola çıkılarak bu çalışmada okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin gerçekleştirdikleri resimli öykü okuma etkinliklerinde kullanılan resimli öykü

kitaplarının okuma çemberi aracılığıyla tartışılarak öğretmen -kitap arasındaki etkileşimin arttırılması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmanın amacı doğrultusunda aşağıdaki sorulara cevap aranmıştır:

1. Okuma çemberi oturumlarına yönelik katılımcıların deneyimleri nasıldır?
2. Okuma çemberi eylem araştırması sürecine yönelik katılımcıların görüşleri nelerdir?

Yöntem

Eğitimle ilgili bir duruma müdahale edilme amacı taşıdığından ve doğrudan okul öncesi öğretmenleriyle gerçekleştirildiğinden dolayı da bu çalışma, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden eylem araştırması ile desenlenmiştir. Araştırmanın katılımcılarını, 4 okul öncesi öğretmeni oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcıların seçiminde ölçüt örnekleme tekniği kullanılmış ve araştırmacı, araştırmanın amacı doğrultusunda belirlediği ölçütlere göre katılımcıları belirlemiştir. Bu çalışmada veri toplama aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu, araştırmacı günlüğü, katılımcı günlüğünden yararlanılmıştır. Bu araştırmanın verileri, içerik analizi tekniği ile çözümlenmiştir. Analiz sürecinin sonucunda birinci araştırma sorusuyla ilgili sekiz kategori, 57 koda; ikinci araştırma sorusuyla ilgili üç kategori, dört koda ulaşılmıştır.

Bulgular

Öğretmenlerle toplam sekiz oturum gerçekleştirilmiştir. Birinci oturumun analiz sonuçlarına bakıldığında öne çıkan bir kod olmadığı görülmektedir. Katılımcı günlüklerine yansıyan görüşler ise daha çok ön bilgilerle sınırlıdır. Okuma çemberinin ikinci oturumuyla birlikte kodların sıklık değerinin değişmeye başladığı görülmektedir. Okuma çemberi eylem planı döngüsünün kendini gerçekleştirmeye başladığı söylenebilir. Okuma çemberi etkinliği ile katılımcılar, kitapların hayal dünyası üzerindeki etkisini daha somut bir şekilde görebilmiş ve ifade edebilmiştir. Katılımcılar, okuma süreçlerinde ebeveynlerin rol dağılımları konusunda daha detaylı analizler yapabilmektedir. Bu durum, okuma çemberi sayesinde aile içinde kadın ve erkek rollerine yönelik katılımcıların farkındalığını arttırdığını göstermektedir. Altıncı ve yedinci oturumda okuma çemberinin kitap seçme kriterlerine katkıda bulunduğu ile ilgili görüşler somut olarak ortaya konulmuştur. Özellikle sekizinci oturumda kitap seçme kriteri sıklık değeri en yüksek kod olarak dikkat çekmektedir. Eylem araştırması sürecine yönelik görüşlerinin analizi sonucunda üç farklı kategoriye ulaşılmıştır. Bu kategoriler sıklık değeri açısından "öğretmenlik becerisine katkı" (f=16), "çocukların gelişimine katkı" (f=8) ve "sınıf içi uygulamalara katkı" (f=4) şeklindedir. Çocukların gelişimi ile ilgili katılımcı görüşlerine bakıldığında okuma çemberinin kitap okuma sürecini çocuklar için daha etkili ve somut hale getirebileceği anlaşılmaktadır. Katılımcılar, önceki deneyimlerine dayalı olarak okuma çemberini gelecekteki sınıf içi uygulamalarına yansıttıklarında okuma sürecinin çocuklar için daha iyi olacağını düşünmektedir.

Tartışma ve Sonuç

Araştırmanın oturumlarından elde edilen bulgulardan hareketle katılımcıların birinci oturumda daha çok geçmiş deneyimleri ile sürece dahil oldukları görülmektedir. Her bir oturumda katılımcıların ifadeleri farklılaşmaktadır. Araştırmanın bulgularından hareketle bu durumun okuma çemberi sürecindeki etkileşimin bir sonucu olduğu düşünülmektedir. Katılımcılar, okuma çemberi yönteminin etkisiyle kendi deneyimlerini, diğer katılımcıların görüşleri ile ilişkilendirerek daha farklı bakış açıları sunmaktadır. Araştırmacı günlüğü ve katılımcı günlüklerinden elde edilen bulgulara bakıldığında katılımcıların okuma sürecine yönelik birinci oturumdaki ifadelerinin daha soyut ve genel ifadelerden

oluştugu görülmektedir. İkinci oturumdan sekizinci oturuma kadar geçen sürece bakıldığında katılımcıların ifadelerinin soyuttan somut ve genel ifadelerden daha net ifadelere dönüştüğü görülmektedir. Katılımcı ifadelerinden anlaşılacağı üzere bu somutluk ve netlik, okuma çemberi sürecinin katılımcı ve etkileşimli yönünün sonucudur. Okuma çemberi sürecinin tamamını değerlendirmeye yönelik katılımcılarla yapılan görüşmelerin bulgularından hareketle okuma çemberi yöntemi, okuma sürecini üç farklı açıdan etkilemektedir. Bunlar; mesleki gelişim, öğrenciye görelilik ve öğretim sürecini planlamadır. Okuma çemberi yönteminin katılımcıların mesleki gelişimi olumlu yönde etkilediği, öğrenciye uygun okuma süreci gerçekleştirilebilmesini ve sınıf içi uygulamaların etkili bir şekilde planlanmasını sağladığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Öneriler

Okul öncesi eğitimcilerin resimli hikâye kitaplarını daha detaylı inceleyip anlamaları için daha fazla araştırma yapılması önerilmektedir. Bu çalışmada okuma çemberi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Ancak okuma çemberi yöntemi dışında farklılaştırılmış öğretim için farklı stratejiler kullanan eğitimcilerle araştırma yapılması önerilmektedir. Okul öncesi eğitimcilerin eleştirel düşüncelerini ve derinlemesine değerlendirmeler yapmalarını sağlayacak eğitim almaları için hizmet içi eğitim faaliyetleri önerilmektedir. Son olarak okul öncesi eğitimcilerin okullarında farklı okuma yöntemlerini kullanarak resimli hikâye kitaplarını öğrenmeleri ve bu kitaplardan yararlanmaları için uygulamalı atölye çalışmaları, akademik çalışmaların yapılması önerilmektedir.