

# A Common Language among Child, School and Parents: The Use of Pedagogical Documentation in the Parent Involvement Process\*

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examine the role of pedagogical documentation as a part of the school-parent collaboration from the perspectives of parents. In this study, which was conducted with the phenomenological design, data were collected using semi-structured interviews from 27 parents. The findings of the inductive analyzes were gathered under the themes of the visibility of learning, the parent-school bridge, and the child-parent-teacher collaboration. In line with the perceptions and experiences of parents, the findings showed that the pedagogical documentation increases the awareness of parents about their child's learning experiences at school, interactions, and reflections on these, provides guidance about parenting, improves the interaction between child and parents, supports the development of the child and learning at home, and contributes to school-parent collaboration. Given the contribution of parent involvement on child development and learning, it is believed that the findings obtained in this study will contribute to teachers, policymakers, and program developers in terms of utilizing pedagogical documentation as a tool for school-home collaboration.

**Keywords:** Pedagogical documentation, school-parent collaboration, parent involvement, early childhood education

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## Introduction

School, society, and parents are crucial stakeholders in the child's development and learning process. The role of collaboration between these stakeholders in supporting the development and learning of the child from an early age is widely known in the literature (Clifford & Goncu, 2019; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Einarsdottir & Gardarsdottir, 2009; Epstein, 1995, 2001; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen & Sekino, 2004). Children spend most of their day at home and school; this reveals the significance of the relationship between school and home, and thus, the value of parent involvement (Hakyemez, 2015; Henderson et al., 2007; Ward, 2009). The quality of collaboration with parents affects the education life of children both in early childhood and in later years (Barnes, Guin, Allen; & Jolly, 2016; Ihmeideh & Oliemat, 2015; McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, Reed & Wildenger, 2010). The context of the relationship with parents, school, culture and society from an early age should be critically examined while educating young children. Therefore, it is important for teachers to collaborate with parents while planning learning environments to support interaction.

The significance of parent involvement and communication for early childhood education learning environments has been emphasized with various studies (Bayraktar, Guven, & Temel 2016; Demircan, 2018; Desforjes & Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein, 2001, 2010; Toran & Ozgen, 2019). Despite the common acknowledgment of the benefits emphasized in studies on the involvement of parents in the education processes of their children, there are significant gaps between parent involvement practices highlighted in the literature and parent involvement practices in schools (Hornby, 2011). Various activities, such as providing voluntary aid for the children in the classroom, breakfast meetings, trips and show and tell activities, are organized for communication with parents at schools. However, it is crucial for parent involvement to highlight an effective partnership, such as effective parent-teacher meetings and two-way communication between schools and parents in addition to such activities (Grant & Ray, 2010; Hornby, 2011). Relationship between home and school should include dialogues that will improve the learning and development process of the child; in addition to this point of view, there is a need for practices beyond parent seminars and meetings held several times a year (Henderson et al., 2007; LaRocque, Kleiman & Darling, 2011).

Various theoretical frameworks, especially in the international literature, were suggested to indicate the nature of parent involvement with its various aspects. Within the scope of the model of Weiss, Caspe and Lopez (2006), parent involvement was evaluated under three topics: parenting, home-school relationships and responsibility for learning outcomes. Similarly, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) explain parent involvement under three topics as parent involvement in school activities (behavior), providing learning opportunities for the child at home (cognitive/intellectual), and following closely what the child does at

school and what he/she learns (personal). In another model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), it has been emphasized that there are three different variables that determine the level of parent involvement in their children's learning. These variables are listed as the belief that parent involvement in the learning experiences of their children is part of their responsibilities, the invitations and demands for involvement submitted to the parents by schools and teachers, and the demands for time and energy that may contradict the involvement activities of the families (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997). Another model that is frequently emphasized in the literature for family-school cooperation is the classification developed by Epstein (1995). In this model, the collaboration between parents and school is conceptualized as six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. If explained a little more in detail, these can be listed as follows: developing skills of parents in parenting and organizing a home environment that will support children as learners; establishing two-way communication channels between school and home; organizing programs to enable parents to voluntarily monitor the school performance of their children; providing parents with information and ideas on how to help their children at home; ensuring that parents are involved in school decisions as contributors; and developing a shared responsibility for children with the community to strengthen school programs (Epstein, 1995).

In Turkey, the need for practices to improve and develop parent involvement was stated in various reports (Education Reform Initiative [ERI], 2016; Mother-Child Education Foundation [MCEF], 2017). Within the scope of these improvement practices, the need to increase the quality of information flow and the quality of sharing information between parents and school was also emphasized (ERI, 2016). Studies examining family-school interaction in Turkey mostly focuses on parent involvement (Atakan, 2010; Gursimsek, 2010; Kotaman, 2008; Koksal-Egmez, 2008; Unuvar, 2010). From the perspective of parents, it can be seen that parents consider the critical role of parent involvement in their child's learning (Tezel-Sahin et al., 2011). According to the results of the study conducted by Atakan (2010), parent involvement activities include parents coming to the classroom for various events and planning out-of-school activities such as parent education conferences, activities at home, field trips with parents. In another study (Ozkan Yildiz & Yilmaz 2020), the parent involvement in the assessment process of their children was examined, and it was found that parents were tended to use face-to-face communication in this process and that they wanted to learn about the social-emotional development of children to prepare their children for primary school. In their study, Gunay Bilaloglu and Aktas Arnas (2019) have reported that parents do not know how to support their children's learning, and for that, parents state that they need the guidance of teachers.

## **Pedagogical Documentation and Parent Involvement**

Pedagogical documentation, which is practiced in various countries and especially emphasized by the Reggio Emilia approach, has become an important tool for schools to establish relationships and develop collaboration with parents (Edwards et al., 1998). Pedagogical documentation is a continuous, process-oriented learning, teaching and assessment method that includes keeping the records of interactions and learning experiences of children within their learning environment with their peers, teachers and parents, adding teacher's assessment in these records, analyzing these records and sharing the records through documentation tools (Buldu, 2010; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007; Rinaldi, 2001). In the pedagogical documentation process, teachers collect evidence of children's learning experiences. While recording children's interactions, teachers use multiple tools through systematic observation and active listening (Buldu, 2010; MacDonald, 2007). Photographs captured from recorded observations, children's expressions and outputs and analysis of teachers are shared with parents through documentation tools (panel, portfolio, newsletter). In this context, pedagogical documentation provides opportunities to collaborate and communicate with parents (Carr, 2001; Katz & Chard, 1996; Lewin-Benham, 2006; Rinaldi, 1998). As a result of the visibility provided by the documentation tools, parents become more aware of the development and learning processes of their children and they may support these processes at home (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Gandini, 1993; Rinaldi, 1998, 2006). Through this awareness, parents observe their children's development, follow the learning and teaching activities at school, and support their children's development and learning by sharing their observations they made at home about their children with teachers (Carr, 2001; Katz & Chard, 1996). It has been stated in recent studies that pedagogical documentation is being used for effective communication and partnership between home and school (Alasuutari, Markstrom, & Roth, 2014; Buldu, 2010; Hostyn et al., 2020; McLean, 2019; Reynolds & Duff, 2016). Brown-Dupaul et al. (2001) describe documentation panels as "a unique way to highlight classroom learning" and state that "teachers can use them to communicate with families about a myriad of concepts and issues" (p. 209).

Pedagogical documentation is a process that strengthens the bond between school and home for parents as well as for teachers (Buldu, 2010; Grieshaber & Hatch, 2003; Picchio, Giandomenico, & Musatti, 2014). "Visibility, legibility and shareability" provided by documentation tools (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 69) make the learning process and classroom experiences visible to parents. When the literature is reviewed, it can be seen that very few studies (e.g., Birbili & Tzioga, 2014; MacDonald, 2007; McLean, 2019; Reynolds & Duff, 2016; Rintakorpi et al., 2014) have examined the role of pedagogical documentation on parent involvement and school-parent collaboration. In these studies, it has been emphasized that parents participate in the assessment processes of their children as a result of the pedagogical documentation (Birbili & Tzioga, 2014) and that parents can communicate more with their children about their learning experiences with the

help of documentation tools (Reynolds & Duff, 2016). McLean (2019) conducted questionnaires with 45 parents on the views of parents about pedagogical documentation and collected data from seven parents through interviews, before and after the documentation process. According to the findings of the study, the views of the parents are as follows: pedagogical documentation raises parents' awareness of how their children learn and spend time in school; through documentation, the communication among the child, the parents and the teacher is being established, and the involvement of child and parents in school is also being supported. In this context, new studies are required to determine the implications of documentation on different environments and cultures. Especially in Turkey, where pedagogical documentation practices are merely new, studies with different sample groups are needed. The purpose of this study is to reveal the perceptions and experiences of families who have encountered pedagogical documentation practices for the first time, about how pedagogical documentation contributes to the collaboration between school and home, which is under-researched. Thus, this study aims to contribute to the literature. In this study, the parent involvement model of Weiss, Caspe and Lopez (2006), Epstein (2006), and Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) was used as a conceptual framework with an eclectic approach. The concepts of parenting, communication, learning at home used in these models were also used as a framework in this study to examine the relationship between pedagogical documentation and parent involvement.

In this regard, this study aims to examine pedagogical documentation as a part of school-parent cooperation and as a means of sharing information, in line with family perceptions and experiences. Research questions were as follows:

- What are the perceptions of parents about the use of pedagogical documentation to improve parent involvement and school-parent collaboration?
- What are the experiences of parents regarding the implementation of pedagogical documentation?

## Method

### Research Design

This study was conducted as part of a larger scaled research project and as qualitative phenomenology research. According to Merriam (2013), the purpose of phenomenology research is "to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 23). On the other hand, Creswell and Poth (2018) described phenomenology research as the researcher's description of the experiences in a way that everyone can understand by collecting data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. In line with these definitions, this study aims to examine the experiences of parents regarding the pedagogical

documentation and reveal perceptions on teacher-parent interaction and collaboration established through pedagogical documentation. The pedagogical documentation project was carried out in nine different early childhood education institutions in Ankara, including two private kindergartens, three non-affiliated public kindergartens, three kindergartens affiliated to an institution, and one public preschool, 24 teachers, 231 children and their parents took part in this research project. Purposeful sampling was used, 27 volunteers among 231 parents participated (Patton, 1990) to collect rich data in this study. Participants were selected to represent eight different schools to ensure maximum variety and the study group consisted of families whose children continue their education in schools where pedagogical documentation implementations were carried out within the scope of the project mentioned above. During the period of this study, the children of 10 parents were attending private kindergartens, while the children of 17 parents were attending public schools. There were 26 mothers and one father among the parents who directly interacted with pedagogical documentation tools and volunteered for this study.

### **Data Collection Tools and Procedure**

Within the scope of the pedagogical documentation project, pedagogical documentation implementations were carried out by teachers in their learning environments during the spring semester of 2014-2015. Documentation panels, bulletins and portfolios were prepared by teachers as a means of sharing information, which makes children's learning experiences visible and makes them possible to be shared. Documentation panels consisted of photographs reflecting children's learning experiences and interactions, children's expressions and teachers' comments, as well as products and drawings of children. Bulletins were published in monthly periods; they were prepared with content that includes informative news about the practices taking place in the learning environments as well as information about the plan of the next month. Portfolios were specifically prepared for each child; they were prepared using multiple and various observation and recording tools to reflect holistic development and learning processes of the child for one semester. Documentation panels were prepared weekly or biweekly, bulletins were sent to families every month, and portfolios were prepared for each child and shared with parents at the end of each semester. In this study, which examines the perceptions and experiences of parents on pedagogical documentation, the data were collected using semi-structured interviews conducted at the end of the spring semester. Interview is a means for participants to present their ideas, opinions, perceptions, and experiences about a topic (Saldana, 2011); it is also accepted as a form of communication in which the researcher tries to obtain detailed descriptions and interpretations about the lives of individuals (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Eleven questions were asked to the parents within the scope of the interviews. Some of the questions asked in the interviews are as follows: "Could you give information about your sharing with your child's teacher

regarding your child's experiences at school?", "What are your general thoughts about the pedagogical documentation used in your child's school/classroom?", "Could you give information about your sharing with your child regarding your child's experiences at school?" The semi-structured interview forms used in this study were prepared by the researchers during the project preparation phase, presented for expert opinions, and approved by the ethics committee. Volunteer parents were contacted through teachers. The interviews were conducted in indoor and quiet places suitable for the interviews in schools where the children of parents attend, and audio or video recordings were used during the interviews. The interviews lasted 271 minutes and the interviews were transcribed as a text of 140 pages with double spacing between lines.

During this project, teachers were trained by the project team on pedagogical documentation processes, tools and learning environments. Classrooms were observed and teachers were supported in their practice in the fall and spring semesters of 2014-2015. The project team was also involved in other interactions at schools to make observations periodically, inform families about the project process, answer their questions and communicate with families during portfolio sharing days. In this way, the researchers who conducted the interviews had been present at schools for a long time and established a reliable relationship with the stakeholders within the school environment.

The data were collected after the informed consent of the parents were obtained within the scope of the Ethics Committee approval (B.30.2.TED.0.12.00/30) and the implementation permit (2013/70297673/100/167068) of the Ministry of National Education General Directorate of Basic Education. The identities of the parents participating in this study were made anonymous and coded with the numbers given to teachers and parents to present the findings. For example, the first family that volunteered from the class of the 18th participant teacher was coded as T18-P1.

## **Data Analysis**

In this study, the inductive approach was used to analyze the data obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with parents. Merriam (2013) emphasizes that qualitative data analysis is inductive and comparative. Therefore, in this study, while creating inductive categories, descriptive coding and axial coding processes suggested by Saldana (2013) were used and data analysis was carried out in two stages. In the descriptive coding process, the subject in the text is expressed with one or more words. In axial coding, which is the second step of the coding process, categories and subcategories are associated with each other and each category's framework was defined. Before starting the coding process, the records of the interviews in which the families shared their experiences and perceptions about pedagogical documentation were transcribed verbatim and a text of analysis was created. In the first stage of the data coding process, this text was read separately

by each researcher, and the process of creating the descriptive codes was carried out separately by each one of them. Later, in the second stage, the coders met via the panel system, reviewed the codes together, reached a consensus on conflicted coding and made rearrangements.

## **Quality of the Study**

Various methods are used within the literature for the validity and reliability of data in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Whitemore et al., 2001). Regarding the data, interpretations and methods used to define the quality of this study, the four tenets of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were followed. Credibility is to establish the trust that the results are true and credible. In this context, for the first tenet, during the data collection process, the researchers communicated and interacted at schools through long-lasting observations and interviews. In addition, researchers frequently met to discuss the research process and exchanged views with each other. Another essential step for credibility is the validity and reliability of the data collection tool; the interview forms were evaluated by two early childhood education experts and the content of the interview forms was finalized in accordance with their feedback. Dependability includes the steps followed to replicate the findings of the qualitative study in the same context. In this study, certain protocols were used in interviews to achieve this, and informative documents were prepared for all stages of this study. The confirmability of a study is to establish the trust that the results of this study will also be supported by other studies. At this point, the triangulation strategy was used in both data collection and data analysis processes. Several researchers were involved in the data analysis process and shared codes were created. In addition, given that more than one researcher taking part in the data collection process of the research was another aspect of researcher triangulation. For the transferability of this study -in a broader sense for the results that were transferred to other contexts or settings- detailed information was introduced to the reader using rich descriptions during the presentation of the data obtained from families.

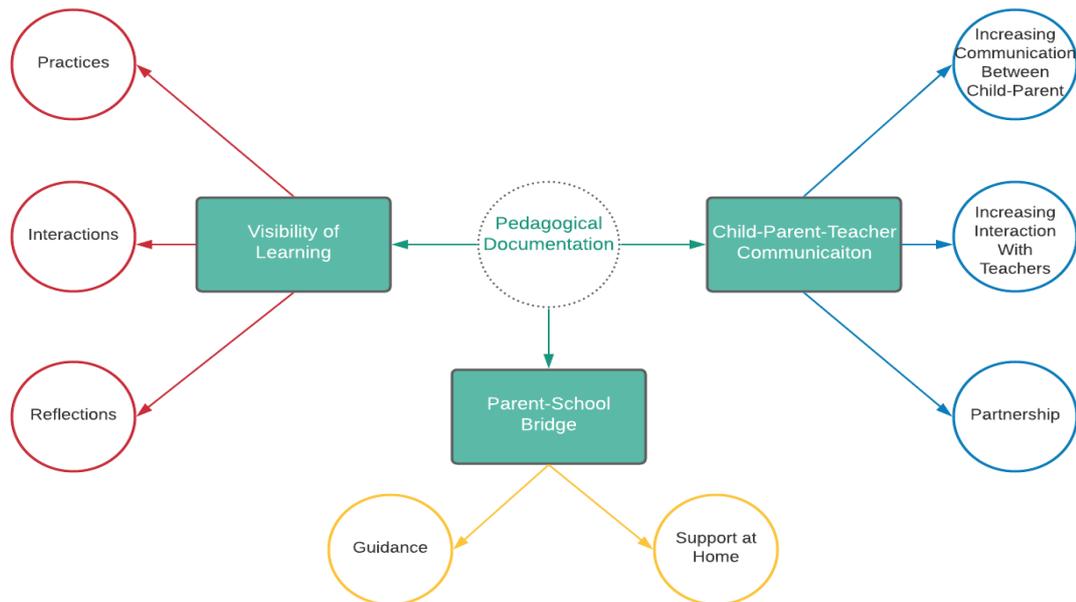
## **Findings**

The present study aims to investigate the perceptions and experiences of parents, who have encountered pedagogical documentation practices for the first time, about how pedagogical documentation contributes to the collaboration between school and family. The findings of this study showed that pedagogical documentation contributed positively to the involvement of parents in learning and teaching processes and that parents had positive experiences. The results of the analysis were gathered under three main themes. These were the visibility of

learning, the parent-school bridge and the child-parent-teacher collaboration. The themes and the categories related to each theme are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

*Themes and Related Categories*



## Visibility of Learning

The first notable finding concerning the contribution of the pedagogical documentation processes to the parents participating in this study is the increase in visibility of education activities through the pedagogical documentation process and the awareness of parents about school activities. Table 1 shows sample excerpts of perceptions and experiences related to the theme of visibility of learning.

Documentation tools were the most important output that provided visibility to all stakeholders of the pedagogical documentation applied in classrooms. One of the parents, who stated that children's learning was visible as a result of the panels, portfolios and bulletins within the scope of pedagogical documentation practices, expressed this situation as follows: "But as I said, when we came to school to take them home, thanks to our boards (panels), we always knew what they were painting that day and what materials they used." (T12-P1) One parent expressed her experience with bulletins, one of the pedagogical documentation tools as follows: "At least, there are weekly bulletins. Our teacher writes about what my child is doing for the week, day by day. We get the chance to follow what our child is doing, the way it is now much better." (T13-P1) As one of the pedagogical documentation tools, portfolios are important in terms of visibility of development

and learning, and they provide families with information about their children. Panels and bulletins were documentation tools that were shared with families periodically, while portfolios were shared with families at the end of each semester on organized portfolio sharing days. Parents emphasized that portfolios provided the opportunity to see how much children developed over a period of time. Regarding the portfolios, one parent said: "We did not have such a folder last year. Thanks to this folder, I can see every aspect of my son now." (T20-P1)

**Table 1.**

*Categories and Excerpts of Parents related to the Theme of Visibility of Learning*

Theme	Category	Parent Excerpts
Visibility of Learning	Practices	"They took photos of each picture made by the children in the classroom and what was done within the scope of this project, and they recorded them on video. We looked at them; for example, they start with very simple things at first and obtain information from children. They asked what is this, what do you think it could be, or where to go from here?... With this project, we can see what the children are doing and how their progress is." (T18-P2)
	Interactions	"I especially liked the bulletin among all the works done. Because although we are in contact with the school and the teacher of my child, I think it is still a very good idea to see in written form what the teachers and children are doing together. I really liked seeing the relationship between my child and his/her friends, what my child is doing in the classroom, and the feedback." (T3-P1)
	Reflections	"We read the feedback and asked questions to our child with my spouse, 'What does that mean? Look, you did that; you never told us.'" Then, our child started to tell us about it, got excited, jumped up and there, showed us something and so on. It was really good. Otherwise, we don't even know, our child had learned something two weeks ago and we saw it here." (T21-P1)

Parents stated that they were aware of the interactions within learning environments, and the photographs and dialogues regarding the communication of their children with other stakeholders, through the documentation tools. Parents also expressed their experiences with different documentation tools, as well as their perceptions and experiences, including the photos, statements and comments of their children in these tools. Documentation tools enabled children to reflect their experiences in

the school context to their homes. Participants drew attention to the significance of these expressions in terms of seeing what meanings their children attributed to what they did in the school context

The findings of the interviews indicated that the documentation tools, which were an important part of the pedagogical documentation process, provided parents with the opportunity to monitor and follow up on the experiences of their children within the classroom. Parents emphasized the importance of documentation panels, bulletins and portfolios in this process. They stated that the tools and the rich content, which reflected the process, were beneficial.

### Parent-School Bridge

According to the findings, the pedagogical documentation provided information to parents about what their children do at school, gave them the opportunity to have an idea about what kinds of activities their children participated in and how they participated and provided guidance for parents about what to do to support their children at home. Table 2 shows sample excerpts of perceptions and experiences related to this theme.

**Table 2.**

*Categories and Excerpts of Parents related to the Theme of Parent-School Bridge*

Theme	Category	Parent Excerpts
Parent-School Bridge	Guidance	"To come here, to participate in parent involvement activities, things that are sent to us by teachers... All, of course, has been guiding us to be a better parent as well." (T21-P1) "Those training or documentation we receive can be a guide for all of us." (T18-P1)
	Support at Home	"It contributed to me very much. And it made me realize some other things as well. Because I can see exactly what they are doing at school. My child is not talkative. If I ask, "What did you do at school today?", the answer will probably be "You know, some stuff." But thanks to the weekly bulletins, daily programs shared by our teacher, I can see what my child is doing; therefore, I am able to think about what more I can contribute to my child on this or that issue." (T15-P2)

According to the statements of the participants, creating a bridge between schools and parents through panels, monthly bulletins sent to parents, portfolios reflecting the development and learning process of children at the end of each semester created a foundation to guide parents in understanding their children and to support what had been learned at school at home. While explaining the contribution of the documentation process to parent involvement in the development and learning activities of their children, one parent stated: "It also

contributed to us; as we knew what they were doing about which topics at school, so we were able to support them in those topics. Because sometimes you have to do something parallel with your children." (T4-P2)

The statements of the parents who participated in this study suggested that the increased visibility as a result of the pedagogical documentation process and tools also contributed to the awareness of parents of their children. One parent expressed this situation as follows: "I think it helped me understand my child better." (T8-P1) Pedagogical documentation served as a bridge for parents to exchange information about what was learned at school, and this exchange had a positive effect on time spent with children. Documentation tools were used in all classrooms to establish communication between home and school. These tools enabled parents to have an idea of the teacher's expectations and efforts for their children.

The documentation process supported the flow of information from the teacher to the parents about the learning outcomes and development processes of the children. The documentation became a means for the teacher to encourage parents to support their children within the home environment. As a result, it can be seen that the link between learning activities in the classroom and learning activities at home was effectively established.

### **Child-Parent-Teacher Collaboration**

Parents stated that their interaction and communication with their children were taking place in a healthier, closer and more effective manner, that their interaction with teachers increased, and that partnership between school and family was developed as a result of the pedagogical documentation process. Table 3 shows the excerpts of parents related to this theme.

Findings obtained from parents indicated that the interactions, the sharing and communication of parents with their children had increased. Accordingly, the parents stated that they shared more about what the children were doing at home and school. One parent said: "I can explain this with the bulletin; my child was very happy to show me what he/she did. My child was very happy to explain it at length, page after page... told all these while having a lot of fun, and I liked it very much." (T3-P1)

Findings obtained from the interviews showed that pedagogical documentation increased parent-teacher interactions, which have a critical role in the preschool period, and enabled these interactions to be more effective concerning content. The parents stated that they engaged in more interaction with the teachers regarding the educational activities carried out at school and the learning and development of their children. One parent said the following: "(...) it is nice to see what our children are interested in and what they have done all week. Therefore, I think it is successful in terms of teacher-parent relationship (...)." (T4-P1)

**Table 3.**

*Categories and Excerpts of Parents related to the Theme of Child-Parent-Teacher Cooperation*

Theme	Category	Parent Excerpts
Child-Parent-Teacher Collaboration	Increase in Communication between Child and Parent	"They started to talk more, to tell and share more..." (T22-P2) "Things are happening concerning close contact, for example, I can say that my child shares what they do at school, wants to do the things that (he/she) could not do at school in this way, I can say that we established a closer communication (...) Let's do this; my friends have done the following activity, I was not there, and so forth... I can say that we have increased involvement a little more now." (T2-P1)
	Increase in Interaction with the Teacher	"It positively affected our relationship with the teacher of our child. We share a lot about [my child]. We meet very often. We constantly talk to each other about the development of my child." (T16-P1) "Of course, we had more dialogue with the teacher." (T7-P1)
	Partnership	"We have always found solutions with the teacher." (T18-P1) "Yes, because I think it strengthens the relationship between the school, my son and me; between the three of us." (T3-P1)

The findings of this study also highlighted that with the pedagogical documentation process, partnership between school and home/family had been developed. Parents drew attention to the partnership they had developed with the school on issues, such as supporting the children and problem solving, as well as teacher-parent interaction. One parent expressed this situation as follows: "We are able to discuss and solve the problems of our child related to the classroom and private life with our teacher privately." (T15-P2) One of the parents described the contribution of pedagogical documentation to the partnership between school and family: "A common language has been formed between the parent, the student [child] and the school." (T20-P1)

When the expressions of the parents were examined, it was that the interaction of parents with their children increased based on what their children learned, how they developed, and what were their interests, skills and needs. In addition, parents emphasized the changes in their dialogues with teachers and stated that their sharing about the learning and development processes of their children increased. Expressions of the participating parents support the developing partnership between

parents and teachers through documentation tools. Findings suggest that pedagogical documentation contributes to the development of child-parent-teacher collaboration.

## Discussion

This study, focusing on the experiences and perceptions of parents whose children attend where pedagogical documentation practices take place, revealed that families see pedagogical documentation as a tool that makes learning visible, nurtures the bridge between the family and the school and supports the interaction between child-teacher-family. In this context, experiences and perceptions of the participant parents are in line with the earlier studies in the literature on pedagogical documentation (Buldu, 2010; Reynolds & Duff, 2016; Mclean, 2019). When the findings of the study are examined concerning the expressions of the parents who have encountered pedagogical documentation implementations for the first time, the visibility provided by the documentation should be evaluated as a significant issue that is required to be researched within the context of family. In addition, if this study is evaluated in terms of parent involvement models introduced by the researchers, such as Epstein (1995), Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), Weiss, Caspe and Lopez (2006), the findings of this study support the claim that parent involvement is improved through the pedagogical documentation process, especially in the themes of parenting, child-family communication, support for the development and learning at home, and school-family cooperation.

Earlier literature shows that interaction and communication between family and children increased with the documentation tools (Buldu, 2010; Gunes, 2018; Kline, 2008). Documentation practices enable families to speak and share more with their children. Parents become more aware of the perspective, thoughts, and existing potentials of their children through the pedagogical documentation implementation and tools; parents build a deeper understanding of their children and respond better to their interests. According to Katz and Chard (1996), conversations between parent and child support the learning process of children. This study also supports that pedagogical documentation offers parents the opportunity to learn more about the learning activities of their children, and thus have the opportunity to talk and share with their children about their experiences at school. Fleck, Richmond, Sanderson and Yacovetta (2015) argue that conversations about learning experiences between mothers and children differ depending on whether there is a documentation tool in the environment or not; they conclude that the dialogues contain more detail in the presence of documentation tools, and the more open-ended questions mothers ask, the more children contribute in the dialogue. Similarly, Reynolds and Duff (2016) emphasize that pedagogical documentation tools encourage parents to start conversations that enable them to establish a deeper understanding of what their children are doing in the classroom. On the other hand, Kline (2008) states that documentation is a method that

supports parents to have more information about the experiences of their children at school. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of the earlier studies within the international literature. Visible classroom processes contribute to the awareness of parents on the learning and development of their children.

Studies emphasize that both parents and teachers should be encouraged to work together and cooperate to support children in the short term and long term (Li et al., 2019; Knopf & Swick, 2008). The prevalence and effectiveness of parent-teacher interaction are closely related to the belief in the need and necessity for these two stakeholders towards each other. Pedagogical documentation practicing teachers and schools adopt a sharing process that supports this cooperation. The findings of this study also prove that the documentation tools provide a foundation that encourages parent-teacher cooperation. Kocher (2008) stated that while pedagogical documentation enabled teachers to have more information about children, it also enabled them to start working more closely with parents. Transparency provided by documentation tools allows parents to involve in their children's experiences at school. Moreover, parents understand how valuable their contribution to their children's education is, and they find the opportunity to become more aware of the various methods to support their children. The parents participating in the pedagogical documentation process understand the importance of the learning processes of their children better and undertake more responsibility in this regard (Kinney & Wharton, 2007). It allows parents involved in pedagogical documentation to more closely follow their children with the help of their teachers and allows involving more in the learning processes at school (Birbili & Tzioga, 2014).

Another notable finding of this study is that the interaction and sharing among the child-family-teacher increases as a result of the pedagogical documentation process. Similarly, Buldu (2010) concludes that the pedagogical documentation process increases the awareness of parents of the learning experiences of their children at school and also improves the dialogue among the parent-child-school. According to Unuvar's (2010) study in which she examined the views of parents and teachers on parent involvement comparatively, the practices of the teachers and the expectations of the parents do not match each other, efforts of teachers to involve parents in the children's learning processes remain only written on a paper, efforts of teachers are unnoticed by the parents, and teachers should be informed to ensure the visibility of parent involvement activities. The findings of this study, in line with the findings in Reynolds and Duff's (2016) study, show that the parents of the children are more involved in the process through the pedagogical documentation process. Pedagogical documentation provides a different perspective for parent involvement. It enables the parents to look at their role in the development and learning of their children from a different perspective. In the study examining the effects of pedagogical documentation on parent involvement in early childhood, Gunes (2018) states that after the pedagogical documentation process, parent involvement definitions of families have changed from coming to school and doing

activities to more complex and elaborate definitions; and therefore, have diversified. As a result of the documentation process, visibility, openness to sharing and transparency increase. Thus, documentation also increases efficiency among stakeholders. More educational interactions are being made to support the development of the children.

In Turkey, communication with parents is limited to parent training/conferences, classroom events and field trips (Atakan, 2010; Abbak, 2008; Caltik, 2004). Considering the studies examining the effects of parent-child-teacher interaction on children's learning and development in early childhood, the quality of this interaction is significant (Arnold et al., 2008). Thus, it is necessary to establish dialogues with parents, especially on children's development and learning, to provide them with ideas about how to support their children at home, and support parents to have information about their children's thoughts and hypotheses. In line with the findings of this study, Gunes (2018) states that as a result of the pedagogical documentation tools, parents may detail information about what their children encounter during their learning process and have an idea of how they can support their children at home.

According to Epstein (1995), it is beneficial to maintain the communication and cooperation between parents and school in a continuous and mutual manner, based on the division of responsibilities; realizing this expands the sphere of parent involvement not only towards the school but also towards all environments that support the development and learning of children. Studies show that parents actually want to be a part of cooperation and a communicative relationship; they want to establish closer and effective relationships with teachers and to take part in the development and learning processes of their children at school (Swick, 2004; Ward, 2009). Supporting parent involvement and school-parent cooperation with long-term and extended applications, such as documentation, shows that the expectations of parents to involve more in education are also met. Similarly, according to some studies in the literature, parents cannot participate in parent involvement activities due to their busy working hours and lack of free time (Carlisle, Stanley, & Kemple, 2005; Gunay Bilaloglu & Aktas Arnas, 2019; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Kocyigit, 2015; Orcan Kacan, Kimzan, Guler Yildiz & Cagdas, 2019). In addition, teachers may encounter difficulties with communicating with parents privately and one by one due to time constraints (Ozkan Yildiz & Yilmaz, 2020). Documentation panels displayed on school and classroom panels periodically and the classroom bulletins sent to homes monthly may be used as one of the effective solutions for these problems.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study examines the benefits of pedagogical documentation in terms of parent involvement, which is a new practice in Turkey. It is expected to contribute to the

literature concerning the role of pedagogical documentation in increasing the cooperation between school and parents. Rinaldi (1998) states the contribution of participation for parents, child and school as follows:

“...schooling for us is a system of relations and communications embedded in the wider social system. Certainly one of our basic principles involves participation, in the broadest sense of the word. To feel of a sense of belonging, to be a part of a larger endeavor, to share meanings-these are the rights of everyone involved in the educational process, whether teachers, children, or parents” (p. 114).

In this context, as a result of this study, new perspectives and practices may be established for the parent involvement in the education process of their children and the communication between the teachers and the parents. Shared experiences through evidence-based and visual documentation tools support the mutual relationship between the schools and the parents. During the implementation, parent involvement activities that focus on the participation of parents in school activities may be interrupted due to reasons such as parents' inability to spare time and different expectations of the school and parents. Besides the parent involvement in school activities, classroom processes are made visible through documentation. Thus, parents can involve in the learning of their children at school. In this respect, the use of documentation tools that increases the interaction among the child, parent and teacher and offers an invitation for cooperation that may be used more commonly. Given the contributions of documentation to stakeholders, including pedagogical documentation practices as a way to support parent involvement, learning this topic in teacher training programs and increasing the variety of lessons on this subject can be an important opportunity to enable teachers to come to the field with better knowledge on this subject. Finally, considering the contribution of the parent involvement in the education process for children and their learning process mentioned in the studies in the literature (Epstein, 1995; Sheldon, 2003), we think that it is beneficial for education policy-makers and program developers to use the findings of this study.

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