



LETTERS OF PARENTS ABOUT STUDENTS' HOME PRACTICES: AN ACTION RESEARCH*

ÖĞRENCİLERİN EVDEKİ UYGULAMALARI HAKKINDA VELİ MEKTUPLARI: BİR EYLEM ARAŞTIRMASI

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ABSTRACT: This study focuses on the effect of action research on monitoring primary school students' home practices and increasing parent involvement in education of their children in Turkey. The aims of this paper are to help the students transfer the knowledge that they have learned in the classroom into new situations, and to determine whether the students' behavioral changes are permanent or not. One classroom teacher, her students, and their parents were participated in this study. Data related to students' learning were collected by using teacher's journal, classroom observations, parent meeting records, and parents' letters. From the analysis of the qualitative data, it was clear that the classroom teacher obtained deep understanding of students' home practices, and she had a chance to plan actions in order to change the students' misbehaviors. Results also indicated that action research helped to increase parent participation in education.

Keywords: Action research, parents, communication, monitoring.

ÖZET: Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de eylem araştırmasının ilkökul öğrencilerinin evdeki uygulamaları üzerindeki ve velilerin çocuklarının eğitimine katılımını arttırmadaki etkilerine odaklanmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı, öğrencilerin sınıfta öğrendikleri bilgileri yeni durumlara aktarmalarına yardım etmek ve öğrencilerde meydana gelen davranış değişikliklerinin kalıcı olup olmadığını belirlemektir. Öğrencilerin öğrenmeleriyle ilgili veriler öğretmen günlüğü, sınıf gözlemi, veli toplantı tutanakları ve veli mektuplarından elde edilmiştir. Nitel verilerin analizleri; sınıf öğretmenin öğrencilerin ev uygulamaları hakkında derin bir anlayış kazandığını ve öğrencilerin olumsuz davranışlarını değiştirmek için eylem planlama şansı elde ettiklerini göstermiştir. Sonuçlar, eylem araştırmasının velilerin eğitime katılımını arttırdığını da göstermektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Eylem araştırması, veliler, iletişim, izleme.

1. INTRODUCTION

Action research methodology closed the gap between educational research and daily practices in the schools (de Zeeuw 2003). It allows the researchers to obtain more relevant and practical knowledge about the people in their natural settings. Action research was first introduced by Corey (1953) and Lewin (1946) as an alternative to the quantitative research approaches in education research methodology. There has been increasing interest in action research in education in the last two decades (Kuzu 2009; Nolen & Putten 2007). It aspires to study a problem that is meaningful to all participants who take an active role in the research process. Researchers stated that actions research is a research with people rather than research on people (Herr & Anderson 2005; Reason 1994).

Educational institutions are preparing the new generation for their roles in transferring the culture and developing the future society (Summak, 1993). It is expected that well-educated people have a chance to define their own future life, reach more comfortable living conditions, know legal rights, and also have more job opportunities. Although the transfer of school or classroom learning into different situations is considered a very important skill of individuals to achieve in everyday life, behaviors of students at school or classroom are not the only indicators of their internalization of knowledge. Researchers define learning as a relatively permanent change in behavior that results from individual experiences (Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith & Bem 1993). Teachers expect that students are

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use knowledge they have learned in the classroom and apply it to their everyday life. As said by Hammer (2003), not only what goes on in the school but also the home environment is crucial in students' learning.

Teachers often complain that they can observe only classroom behaviors of students, but they do not know what is going on at home. Therefore, the teachers do not have exact information regarding either the behavioral changes of students are temporary or permanent. They do not have any opportunity to control each student's home behaviors or behavioral changes of students, if any, as a result of the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Therefore, this study intends to help the students transfer the knowledge that they have learned in the classroom into new circumstances, and to define whether the students' behavioral changes are permanent or not. Furthermore, this study attempts to reveal the effect of action research on monitoring primary school students' home practices and on increasing parent involvement in education in Turkey.

1.1. Phases of Action Research

Through the comprehensive review of literature about main aspects and processes of action research, the following explanation of action research was derived. Action research is described as a cyclical process of change (Brown & Tandon 1983; Cunningham 1976; Susman & Evered 1978). This change process includes three phases with the active participation of key stakeholders in each phase. These phases are problem awareness, intervention, and output. At the first phase, one is faced with a problem and becomes aware of a necessity of change. This phase includes a preliminary diagnosis, data gathering, feedback of results, and a series of cooperative action plans. Intervention or change phase consists of learning processes, action planning, and action. The output includes actual changes in behavior (if any). The action-research process shown in Figure 1 is adapted from Lewin's (1946) general model of change.

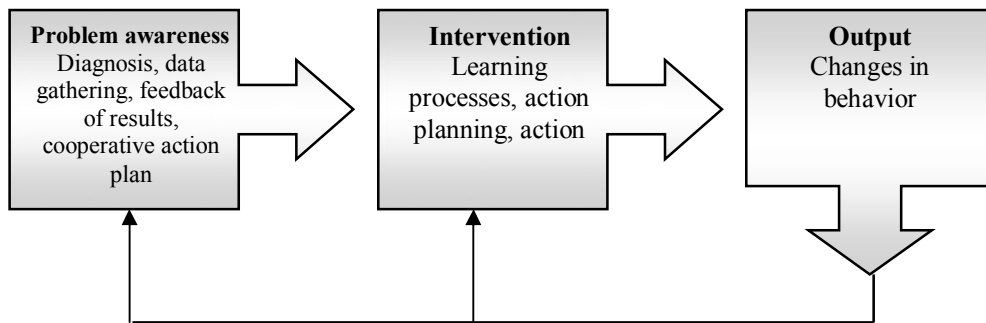


Figure 1. Process of action-research

Glanz (2003) also claimed that action research is a continuing process that includes identification of a problem, responding to the problem with a plan, implementation of the plan, data collection, analyze, and then repeat the same cycle again. Action research tries to answer questions and solve problems that result from the daily life of the classroom and to put findings into the practice (McKay 1992; Twine & Martinek 1992).

1.2. Involving Parents as co-researchers

Researchers claim that active and meaningful involvement by parents in their children's education is very important. There has been a rising agreement that the quality of relations between schools and parents plays a fundamental role in student achievement (Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar 2002; St. George 2009). Parent involvement in children's learning process is widely known as one of the factor that contributes to children's higher academic achievement as well as to reinforce the school performance (Epstein 1991; Henderson & Berla 1994). Rollins and Thomas

(1979) have found that high parental control were associated with high achievement. Student achievement is related to both what they acquire in the classroom and what they do out of school, especially at home. The after school behaviors and home practices of students demonstrate the effectiveness of instruction. Therefore, the transfer of knowledge to actual and similar situations, which is the basis for education, depends on the quality of instruction.

Learning can be transferred from one situation to another, from one class to another, between home and school, and between school and daily settings. Students need to utilize what they have learned at school, whilst they go out into the real world and come across real life challenges. For transfer to take place, learning must engage more than simple memorization or applying a predetermined set of methods (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). If the students internalize the knowledge that they have attained in the classroom, they possibly behave in accordance with this new knowledge. That is, students apply what they have learned at school to new situations or problems and they reconstruct their behavior structures along with the new knowledge.

Although parent-teacher partnerships have an impact on student learning, it is not always easy for the teachers to offer partnerships those promote or maintain home-school relationships. Therefore, this study aims to pioneer teachers who search for new ways to effectively partner with parents to enhance student's educational experience and want to conduct research in their own classrooms by illustrating the process of action research. The rationale of involving parents as co-researcher was that it would offer data on realities of existing home practices from a first hand perspective. The significance of this study lies in the role of the parent participation in monitoring students' progress. Regardless of the general opinion that parent participation is vital part of student achievement, the research conducted with parents is not satisfying. An underlying assumption of this research was that parents would suggest precious information about the students' home practices. In her study, St. George (2009) asserted that action research can facilitate teachers to generate effective partnership with parents in order to support students' learning in a specific context.

2. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is threefold: to report the findings of the research and to present the outcomes of the participation of parents in the research process as participant observers at home. The teacher and parents as researchers were aimed to help the students transfer the knowledge that they have learned in the classroom into new circumstances, and to define whether the students' behavioral changes are permanent or not. Further, this study attempted to reveal the effect of action research on monitoring primary school students' home practices and on increasing parent involvement in education. Action research was employed as a research method because it is particularly well-suited to gathering detailed information about the point of views of parents on students' home practices and it is considered the ideal methodology if one curious about what goes in the classroom.

In this study, students' home practices are considered as a determinant of the effectiveness of instruction of the teacher. This action research consists of several consecutive steps; at the beginning of the inquiry, the classroom teacher as researcher determines a research question that is most interesting to her in order to gain understanding of effectiveness of instruction in her own students. Therefore, the overarching question of this research study was "does my instruction help my students transfer their knowledge to their everyday lives?" More specifically, with the intention of answering this question, she began to keep a journal of classroom observations. Then, she organized several meetings with parents to ask their collaboration to the research as co-researchers and to make decisions about the research questions regarding students' behavioral patterns which the teacher expects to change. After the definition of research questions, the teacher and parents discussed the convenience and appropriateness of the questions. Revisions were made when necessary based on their suggestions and four behavioral patterns of student which is very important for all participants were determined, and the following research questions were formed:

1. Do my students (my child) drink acidic beverages (i.e. coke) out of school?

2. How often do my students (my child) read books at home?
3. Do my students (my child) understand the meaning of democracy? Do they distinguish democratic and non-democratic circumstances?
4. Do my students (my child) have environment-friendly behaviors out of school?

After the diagnosis of the problem several actions were planned as interventions, and put into practice. The outputs of the actions were recorded and analyzed. As a final step, the teacher reported the action research process and the results.

2.1. Participants

The willingness of the individuals to participate in the study and to provide the required information was considered when selecting the participants. The participants of this study were 43 parents and one classroom teacher from a public primary school in Ankara province of Turkey. Demographic findings show that majority of the participants were female (n= 41) and only two of them were males. All of the female participants were housewives, and males were self-employed. The average age of parents was 32. The demographic findings show that most of the parents had primary and secondary school education. Most parents had completed primary school (K-5) (n = 23, 53%) or graduated from elementary school (6-8) (n =13, 30%). Very few parents graduated from high school (n = 5, 12%) or college (n = 2, 5%).

2.2. Data Collection Methods and Data Analysis Procedures

Data collection and analysis were undertaken concurrently throughout the study. Qualitative data were collected through teacher's journal, classroom observations, parent meeting records, and parents' letters were categorized according to research questions. With the purpose of changing students' behavior patterns, the teacher developed a behavior patterns change strategy.

Several meetings were held with parents to provide an overview of the research questions regarding students' behavioral patterns of student which the teacher expects to change. At these meetings, the teacher discussed her concerns with parents, shared the classroom issues, and provided parents with specific recommendations to help their child at home. Then, with the collaboration of parents, the data collection methods were determined. In order to collect comprehensive data on the students' classroom behaviors, the teacher decided to keep a journal of her observations and the parents decided to write letters about their child's home practices. Parent meetings records were also used as data sources.

As co-researchers, the parents were asked to observe their child's home behaviors and noticeable improvements, and to write letter about the progress of their child in line with the research questions. The parents were provided information about what an observation is and what is not. An observation checklist for the home observations was developed with the consensus of all participants. Participants agreed that they do not need ground rules or prescriptions to report their observation; they decided to write their inferences drawn from their own observations, and feelings in words as an informal letter format.

Additionally, the teacher kept a journal about her own observations, comments, anecdotes, and practices in the classroom. She reviewed the parent meeting records with the intention of exposing parents' point of views. Classroom observations of teacher provided precious background information about the classroom in which the study was undertaken. The observations accomplished by means of observation checklist that was consisted of four behavioral patterns of student which the teacher hopes to alter. Firstly, the teacher listed the behavior patterns that she wanted to change. Secondly, she listed the assumptions that were derived from classroom observations about the reasons for those behaviors. Thirdly, she wrote down the interventions in order to change these behaviors and take into practice those interventions. Finally, the teacher asked the parents to observe their child's home practices and note down that the changes. She reported new behavior patterns of students which derived from both

classroom observations and parents' letters. The process of behavior change that organized according to Lewin's (1994) general model of change is shown Table 1:

Table 1: Behavior change strategy of the teacher

Behavior pattern	Assumptions	Interventions	Outputs
Coke drinking habits of students.	Students drink coke because of family habits. They do not know the detrimental effects of coke drinking.	Videos and PowerPoint Presentations about the detrimental effects of coke drinking were used. Made experiments with liquids with acid.	Most of the students do not drink coke any more. Besides, they try to change other people's coke drinking habits.
Reading habits of students.	Students appear to spend less time on reading.	Reading activities are promoted and a reading atmosphere is created in the classroom. Parents' actively participate in reading activities at home by listening to their child or allocating family reading-time.	Students begin to borrow books and to spend more time on reading books at home. They produce story maps as frameworks for storytelling. They prepare poster to introduce the story to their peers.
Students' understanding of democracy.	Students can explain the meaning of democracy but they cannot behave in a democratic manner.	Democratic and non-democratic instances were highlighted in the classroom.	Majority of the students understand the meaning of democracy. They use their knowledge in different circumstances.
Environmental behaviors of students.	Students are aware of the necessity of environment friendly behaviors but they do not change their actions.	Energy saving competition was organized. That is, every student will count the number of their actions that help energy saving at school and home.	Students begin to use papers thriftily, such as they use both sides of the papers. They turn the lights of classroom, toilets, and corridors in daylight. Similarly, they close the dropping taps.

As it is clear from Table 1, the aim of the teacher was to replace students' misbehaviors with intended ones and scrutinize the endurance of those behavior changes by communicating to parent and involving them in their child's education. Accordingly the teacher used parents' letters as an important communication tool. The teacher obtained regular information about the students' progress out of school through those letters.

The data were collected from forty-three 2nd grade students in a public school during the first semester of the 2008-2009 academic years in two months period. With the consent of participants, the classroom meetings were recorded and transcribed verbatim. To get high-quality transcripts, tone, and intonation were considered indicators of feelings and meanings. When transcribing, in order to express those feelings and meanings some signs, punctuation marks, and techniques such as symbols (e.g. smiley face, star), upper case lettering, writing with a colored pencil, underlining, and bold were used. In order to add codes, comments, individual notes, and signs, the right margin of the transcript layouts was widened. Besides, the transcripts were written as detailed as that the reader can comprehend how the data has been coded, how codes have turned to themes, and how themes have been included in the interpretative explanations. Thus, the quotes from the data set include some information such as transcript pseudonym/number and page number in parentheses (e.g. Mother 34, p.3).

The collected data were coded and analyzed by discriminating patterns and constantly comparing incidents to the codes to help establish clearly defined categories (Bazeley 2007; Miles & Huberman 1994). All the transcripts were carefully read several times by three coders who were PhD students from the Departments of Educational Sciences at Middle East Technical University with experience in qualitative research. Then, every item of information relating to the research question was identified, and each was assigned a code or a category in order to disclose repeated words or phrases of the participants, differences and similarities found within and across the individual texts (Thomas, 2006). Member checking was utilized by researcher to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of a qualitative study (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). In the member checking process, the co-researchers were asked to read and specify whether the transcripts reflect their meaning or not. Then, the summary of data analysis and a portion of interpretation of their statements were given to members of the co-researchers in order to check the authenticity of the work. The co-researchers were asked to critically comment on the adequacy of the findings. Their comments served as a check on the viability of the interpretation. In order to obtain informed consent from the participants, they were informed about the overall purpose of the research and its main features, as well as of the risks and benefits of participation. Participants were informed that they have a chance to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without any penalty. Consent was given both written format and verbally. Since the extent of this action research was limited to the data collected from one classroom, the generalizability of the results was limited.

In order to ensure confidentiality, names of participants were not recorded, and they are referred to by pseudonyms in all transcripts. Although there is no clear agreement on what is validity in action research, many qualitative researchers reject the validity criteria of quantitative approaches and look for alternatives for ensuring the quality of the research (Anderson & Herr 1999; Heikkinen, Huttunen & Syrjala 2007; Moghaddam 2007). According to Newton and Burgess (2008), there are three types of educational action research: emancipatory, practical, and knowledge generating. Anderson and Herr (1999) asserted that the validity depends on the ways of action research, thus, there are five types of tentative validity criteria: outcome, process, democratic, catalytic, and dialogic validities. In this study, since behaviors of the students changed positively, the outcomes of the research met the intended purposes of the research. In the same way, action research methodology like a catalyst helped to address the research questions effectively, and co-researchers actively participate in the decision making processes in all phases of the action research. Consequently, it is obvious that this study is valid in all criteria of Anderson and Herr (1999). In an attempt to increase reliability of data, negative cases and alternative explanations, and triangulation techniques were used (Guba & Lincoln 1994).

3. FINDINGS

The ultimate goal of this qualitative study has been to initiate better home-school partnerships to help the students transfer the knowledge that they have learned in the classroom into new situations, and to identify whether the students' behavioral changes are permanent or not. Therefore, this study focused on the effect of action research on monitoring primary school students' home practices with the help of parents as co-researchers. At the beginning of the study, the teacher wondered whether her instructional activities cause permanent changes in her students. During the parent meetings, she asked the question to the parents. As a consequence, the teacher and the parents decided to conduct a research on the students learning. With the agreement of all participants, four behavior patterns of students were taken under investigation. The findings of the research were presented in line with the research questions (i.e. behavior patterns of students that the teacher wants to change).

The collected data revealed that the teacher was very disappointed when she saw their students drink beverages with acid. As a result, she decided to struggle with this problem. She tried to find why the students prefer beverages with acid, especially coke, instead of milk or "ayran", a Turkish drink made with yoghurt and water. After her informal interrogations, she recognized that students prefer coke because of family habits. The results of parent-meetings supported this finding. Parents stated that acidic beverages, especially coke, were an unavoidable part of their meals. The following quote

illustrates this finding: *“Me and my husband like coke very much. When we are drinking it with a pleasure, it is unfair to tell our daughter not to drink it.”* (Mother #40). The results also showed that most of parents do not know the detrimental effects of acidic beverages drinking, so they did not stop to drink. During the parent meeting, one father asked *“Why do we need to stop drink coke? Mmm, I really confused, why you are giving such a reaction?”* (Father #1). The teacher recognized that first of all, the parents need to learn something about this issue. She writes in her journal that *“I was unfair to my students. Coke drinking is not their individual preferences. They take their family members as their model. I should teach them the harmful effect of coke.”* Then, she started to collect videos and PowerPoint Presentations about the detrimental effects of coke drinking, and used them in her classroom as part of instruction. As a second intervention, she brought different liquids in the classroom such as milk, water, vinegar and coke, then put an egg in each of the glasses, and asked the students to observe the eggs everyday. At the end of the experiment, students saw the changes on the eggs; the covers of eggs in the liquid with acid were got very thin and soften, others remained strong. She did not say her students not to drink coke anymore but most of the students give up acidic beverages. The following quote exemplifies this finding: *“My son does not drink coke anymore. Even he tries to change his father’s habits.”* Another mother stated that *“My daughter mentioned about the video that you showed in the classroom. Although we insist on, it is not real she never drink coke.”* (Mother #17). It can be concluded that students’ preferences about beverages changed at the end of the instructional activities both in school and at home. However, it was seen that some of the students insisted on their old habits. One mother stated that *“Your suggestions did not really work. My daughter still drinking acidic beverages... Actually, we, as a family like to drink coke”* (Mother #9). It can be concluded that in order to increase the effectiveness of instruction, parent-teacher agreement is necessary.

The second behavior patterns that the teacher wants to change was the reading habits of students. The results revealed that neither the parents nor the teacher were satisfied with the students’ reading habits. Most of the parents stated that their child does not read anything if the teacher did not give a reading assignment. One mother reported that *“I always explain my daughter to the importance of reading but she prefers to watch television after school.”* (Mother #6). Similarly, the teacher stated that:

“I am keeping the record of my pupils reading speed and writing down number of books they read in a week. They are competing with each other to read more books. When I asked them how many books they have read, they sometimes say incredible numbers. However, there is not enough progress in their reading skills. Unfortunately, I could not assess whether they really read or pretend to read the books. I wish I had a chance to see them in their home.”

After the diagnosis of problem, the teacher and parents planned some actions. The teacher provided enjoyable reading activities, such as beginning to read a story to the students and then stop reading at the most stimulating part, and put the book in the classroom bookcase. The teacher also created a positive reading atmosphere in the classroom by reading books in the break time with smiling face, or laughing. As a result, she showed the students reading is an amusing activity. The teacher also lent some novels to the parents and asked them to read the book, or at least pretend to read in front of their child. Besides, she invited the parents to actively participate in reading activities at home by listening to their child or allocating family reading-time. The findings demonstrated that at the end of the actions students’ reading habits changed in a positive manner. The following quotation of parents illustrated that the instruction of teacher have a positive effect on students’ reading habits: *“My daughter usually plays with her friends or watches TV. Nowadays, she requests to take more books. I couldn’t catch up with her reading speed. Although she wears glasses, she does not give up reading. I don’t know what you have done at school, but it works well.”* (Mother#14).

The findings also revealed that the instructional activities regarding to the development of democratic behaviors of students were very efficient. At the beginning of the study, most of the parents did not recognize whether they child behave democratically or not. One father stated that *“I*

have never thought about whether my child behaves democratically or not. Even I do not know what democratic behavior is.” (Father #1). According to the findings, although the students can express the meaning of democracy, they cannot behave in a democratic manner each other. The students do not respect each others’ rights, some students have an influence on friends’ decisions, especially playing in the garden, or during the collaborative studies decisions were made by the same individuals in the classroom. The teacher put into practice some actions which produced democratic and non-democratic instances in the classroom activities. For example, in the physical education lesson the teacher deliberately behave unfairly to some students, and waited her students to defend their rights. Then, she asked the students to produce ideal action in that situation.

The findings revealed that after the interventions, the students’ understanding of democracy changed in a positive manner. A letter of one mother is worth mentioning on this concern:

“Hello Mrs. O.,

I should explain this incident. Yesterday was an ordinary one for me. My son and I were doing an ordinary homework. My son asked me the question from his book ‘In the picnic some students want to play hide-and-peek, some want to play football. What should we do? Mother: ‘I said ‘You play what the teacher says’. I am writing my sons answer exactly ‘Mum, you are such... There is democracy in our classroom; everyone can say their own opinions. Our teacher has only one vote as everyone.’ Believe or not, I am 29, and could not say this kind of sentence. I stood in wonder...” (Mother #17).

The findings also demonstrated that most of the students behave towards the environment in a respectful manner under the control of an adult, especially the teacher. Moreover, many of the students do not have permanent behavior patterns on saving energy and respecting the diversity of the animals. The teacher thought that she needed to teach her students environment-friendly behaviors. Therefore, she organized an energy saving competition. That is, every student will count the number of their actions that help energy saving at school and home. Besides, she used both sides of the paper, turned the computer off, and closed the taps in front of the students. She also mentioned how she reduced the amount of her electricity, water, and natural gas bills by energy saving. Correspondingly, students’ awareness on the energy resources increased. At the parents meeting, the parents stated that the energy saving competition was very beneficial; their children became more susceptible to the importance of saving energy. One mother stated that:

“My daughter did not give importance our warnings when we said please turn the lights of the toilet off after use, or shut your computer down when you are not using it. However, she pays no attention to those warnings. After the competition, she is very enthusiastic about saving energy.” (Mother #4).

The results revealed that the parents were satisfied with the teacher-parent communication with letters. One mother said: *“First of all I want to thank you for developing such a system (writing letters). I have to chance to know my daughter.” (Mother #32).* Several parents stated that they were very pleased to become a part of the action research. The following quotation illustrates this results; *“I felt like an observer. I am very glad to join this study.”* The findings also showed that parents were comfortable and enjoy involvement in school activities. In addition, the classroom teacher was pleased with active participation of parents. She wrote in her journal that:

“Using parent letters helped me more than I expected. The parents willingly took part in my project. They acted as my eyes in their home. The letters help me to check the effectiveness of my instruction, and I had an opportunity to change my teaching style when necessary.”

On the other hand, the results showed that some of the parents did not like to join the action research. One mother stated that *“The idea (writing letters to you) is so ridiculous for me. I do not have time to write letters. I think it is better to come to school and talk with you (teacher).”* (Mother #2).

In the light of the results, it can be concluded that action research was an effective method both in changing the behaviors of students and in observing students’ home practices. It also helps to increase the parent participation in education.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study appeared as a result of classroom teacher’s inquisitiveness about the effectiveness of her teaching and learning activities. This research has discussed the use of action research in a primary school to gain information about students’ home practices. While there has been considerable interest in the students’ knowledge transfer skills in everyday life, only a few of researches has concentrated on students’ achievements out of school (Johnson 1997; Resnick 1987). Therefore, this study has examined students’ home practices with the participation of parents.

The study revealed that the teacher expects permanent changes in her students’ behaviors as a determinant of their learning. The teacher thought that students’ behaviors at school are not indicative of their real life behaviors. The literature also suggests that students’ success in life is not determined by the school behaviors, the real success determined on how the students behave out of school. As Devine (2006) defined, knowledge transfer is a skill to use information learned in one context to different ones. In his study Resnick (1987) argued that schools teach ways of being successful in school but not to teach the ways of being successful in real life. This study suggested that action research was effective in observing students’ home practices. The findings of the present study were so much parallel with the literature. A number of researchers have pointed out that the action research is an important methodology for obtaining deeper information on the perspectives of people, what goes on it the classroom and out of classroom, and collaboration between parents and teachers (Kidd & Kral 2005).

Nolen and Putten (2007) maintained that the parents’ participation in education of their child might increase, if they become a part of decision-making processes. In the present action research, parents were involved in all phases of the study and participated in decision-making processes. This study suggested that parents were willingly participated in the research process and their concerns about how to participate in their child’s education decreased. Therefore, the present study contributes to parent involvement and home-school relationship literature by providing a way of to destroy the communication barriers between teacher and parents. There has been a growing emphasis on the necessity of parent participation in education (Barton 1999; Croizer 2000; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2001) and the effect of parental involvement in education on student achievement (Cooper, Jackson, Nye & Lindsay 2001), but a few of them mentioned the effects of action research on increasing the parental involvement. The present investigation contributes to effectiveness of instruction and parent involvement literature by providing cyclical behavior change model. The action research was employed as a research method because it is particularly well-suited to gathering detailed information about the point of views of parents and is considered the ideal methodology if one is curious about what goes on in the classroom. Based on these findings, a number of suggestions can be offered to school practitioners to close the gap between the theory and the practice. As de Zeeuw (2003) claimed, action research methodology closed the gap between educational research and daily practices in the schools, therefore, the teachers should be encouraged to carry out action research in their classrooms. Johnson (1993) and McLean (1995) also advocated that in order to develop effective system-level interventions, such as family-school-community collaborations, educators should conduct action research.

Future research should examine the other strategies of assessing students’ knowledge transfer skills and home practices. The current study has important implications for educational inquiry and practice. It shows that action research is an effective way of behavior change, and solving actual

problems of educational settings. Results from this action research can be used to inform teacher educators to improve the teacher education programs, and the practices can be recommended to teachers in order to form an opinion about classroom instruction.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Eylem arařtırmaları, eğitim arařtırmaları ile okullardaki günlük uygulamalar arasındaki açığı kapatmaktadır (de Zeeuw 2003). Bu arařtırma yöntemi, arařtırmacıların insanların kendi doğal ortamları hakkında ayrıntılı bilgiler elde etmelerini sağlamaktadır. Eğitimde eylem arařtırmaları, ilk olarak Lewin (1946) ve Corey (1953) tarafından, nicel arařtırma yöntemlerine bir alternatif olarak ortaya atılmıştır. Eğitimde eylem arařtırmalarına ilgi son yirmi yılda çok artmıştır (Nolen & Putten 2007; Kuzu 2009). Arařtırmacılar eylem arařtırmalarının insanlar hakkında deęil, insanlarla birlikte yapıldığını savunurlar (Herr & Anderson 2005; Reason 1994).

Eylem arařtırmalarının temel özellikleri ve süreçleri hakkında yapılan kapsamlı alan yazın taraması sonucunda eylem arařtırmalarıyla ilgili řu açıklamalara ulařılmıştır: Eylem arařtırması döngüsel bir deęişim süreci olarak tanımlanır. Bu deęişim süreci paydařların katılımını içeren üç aşamadan oluşur; sorunun farkına varma, müdahale ve çıktılar. İlk aşamada sorunla karşılaşılr ve deęişim gereklilięinin farkına varılır. Bu aşama ilk tanılar, veri toplama, sonuçların geribildirimleri ve bir dizi işbirlikli eylem planını içerir. Müdahale ya da deęişim aşaması, öğrenme süreçleri, eylem planlama ve eylemi kapsar. Çıktı aşaması davranışlardaki (varsa) gerçek deęişiklikleri içerir.

Öğretmenlerin çoęu öğrencilerin sadece sınıf davranışlarını gözlemleyebildiklerinden, evdeki süreçte ne olduğunu bilmediklerinden yakınmaktadırlar. Bu nedenle, öğrencilerdeki davranış deęişikliklerinin geçici mi yoksa kalıcı mı olduğu konusunda kesin bilgileri yoktur. Öğretmenler, sınıfta eğitim ve öğretim faaliyetleri sonucunda öğrencilerin davranışlarında ortaya çıkan, eęer varsa, deęişiklikleri kontrol etme imkanına da sahip deęildir. Bu nedenle, öğrencilerin evdeki uygulamaları konusunda velilerin bakış açıları hakkında ayrıntılı bilgi toplamak ve sınıfta gerçekten ne olduğunu ortaya çıkarmak için eylem arařtırması en uygun yöntemdir.

Bu çalışma Lewin (1946)'in genel deęişim modelinden yararlanılarak tasarlanmıştır. Çalışmanın üç amacı vardır: öğrencilerin sınıfta öğrendikleri bilgileri yeni koşullara aktarmalarına yardım etmek ve öğrencilerin bu davranış deęişikliklerinin kalıcı olup olmadığını saptamak, eylem arařtırmasının ilköğretim öğrencilerinin ev uygulamalarının izlenmesi ve velilerin eğitime katılımını artırma üzerindeki etkisini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu çalışmada öğrencilerin evdeki davranışları, öğretmenin öğretim yönteminin etkililięinin belirleyicisi olarak ele alınmıştır. Çalışmada birbirini izleyen birkaç adım vardır: çalışma sınıf öğretmeninin sınıftaki öğretimin etkililięini ortaya çıkaracak bir arařtırma sorusu belirlemesiyle başlamıştır. Öğretmenin ilgilendięi temel soru řudur: “Öğretim yöntemim öğrencilerimin öğrendikleri bilgileri günlük yaşamlarına aktarmasını sağlıyor mu?” Gerçekleştirilen bir dizi veli toplantısında velilere çocuklarının davranış deęişiklikleri işe ilgili bir arařtırmada yer almaları önerilmiş, arařtırmada yer almayı kabul eden velilerle arařtırmanın alt soruları belirlenmiştir, gerekli durumlarda düzeltmeler yapılmıştır. Soruların belirlenmesinin ardından veri toplama aracı olarak öğretmenin sınıf gözlemlerine dayalı yazdığı günlük, veli toplantısı tutanakları ve velilerin evdeki gözlemlerine dayalı olarak yazacakları mektupların kullanılmasına karar verilmiştir. Gözlem yaparken kullanılacak bir kontrol listesi geliştirilmiş, gözlem süreci hakkında velilere bilgi verilmiştir. Mektupların gündelik dilde yazılmasına karar verilmiştir.

Arařtırmaya katılan 43 veliden sadece iki tanesi erkektir. Kadın velilerin hepsi ev hanımı, erkekler ise serbest meslek sahibidir. Velilerin yaş ortalaması 32'dir. Velilerin %53'ü ilköğretim birinci kadem, %30'u ilköğretim ikinci kademe, %12'si lise ve % 5'i ise üniversite mezunudur. Veriler, bir devlet okulunun ikinci sınıfında okuyan 43 öğrenciden, 2008/09 eğitim öğretim yılının birinci döneminde, iki aylık bir süreçte toplanmıştır. Velilerin rızası alınarak veli toplantıları kaydedilmiş ve metin haline getirilmiştir. Veriler metinleştirilirken ses tonu ve tonlamalara dikkat edilmiş, bunlar duygu ve anlayışın birer göstergesi olarak kabul edilmiştir. Bu duygu ve düşünceleri yazılı metinde belirtmek için bazı noktalama işaretleri, simgeler ve işaretler kullanılmıştır (örn: gülümseyen yüz, yıldız...v.s.). Arařtırmanın doğruluk, güvenilirlik, geçerlik ve genellenebilirlięini (uyarlanabilirlięini) sağlamak için üye (katılımcı) kontrolü yapılmıştır (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Üye kontrolü sürecinde, metinler katılımcı arařtırmacılara okutularak, metnin kendi düşüncelerini yansıtmayı yansıtmadığını kontrol etmeleri istenmiştir. Aynı şekilde, veri analizlerinin özetleri ve yorumların doğruluęunu da kontrol etmeleri, bulguların uygunluęu konusunda yorum yapmaları istenmiştir. Bu yorumlar, açıklamaların uygulanabilirlięinin denetlenmesine hizmet etmiştir.

Araştırmada elde edilen veriler, içerik analizi yoluyla çözümlenmiştir. Metinler, araştırmacı ve iki meslektaş tarafından defalarca okunarak veriler düzenlenmiş; birbirine benzer veriler, belli temalar çerçevesinde bir araya getirilerek veriler arası ilişkiler yapılandırılmış ve kodlamalar yapılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarını yazarken katılımcılara takma isimler ve numaralar verilerek veri gizliliği sağlanmıştır. Katılımcı velilerin rızasını almak için gönüllü katılım formları hazırlanmış, araştırmanın amacı, araştırmaya katılmanın faydaları ve riskleri anlatılmış, çalışmadan istedikleri zaman çekilebilecekleri, böyle bir durumda zarar görmeyecekleri yazılı ve sözlü olarak bildirilmiştir. Bu çalışma bir eylem araştırması olduğundan sonuçların başka durumlara genellenebilirliği sınırlıdır.

Eylem araştırmalarında geçerliliğin nasıl sağlanacağı hakkında, nicel araştırmalardaki gibi üzerinde anlaşılmış ölçütler olmamasına rağmen, nitel araştırmacılar araştırmanın niteliği konusunda alternatifler aramaktadır (Anderson & Herr 1999; Heikkinen, Huttunen & Syrjala 2007; Moghaddam 2007). Newton ve Burgess (2008) üç tür eylem araştırması olduğundan söz ederler: özgürleştirici, uygulamalı ve bilgi doğurucu. Anderson ve Herr (1999)'e göre geçerlilik, eylem araştırmasının türüne göre değişen beş geçerlik ölçütü şunlardır: çıktı, demokratik, katalizör ve sözleşme geçerliği. Bu çalışmada öğrencilerin davranışları olumlu yönde değişmiştir, yani araştırmanın çıktıları beklenen amaçları karşıladığından çıktı geçerliği sağlanmaktadır. Aynı şekilde, katılımcı araştırmacılar araştırma sürecinin aşamasındaki karar alma sürecine etkin olarak katıldıklarından demokrasi geçerliliği de sağlanmıştır. Eylem araştırması yöntemi araştırma sorularına değinilmesinde katalizör görevi üstlenmiş, sorunların çözümünü sağladığından bu çalışmanın Anderson ve Herr (1999)'in ölçütlerine göre geçerli olduğu söylenebilir.

Araştırmada, öğretmen ve veliler öğrencilerin asitli içecekler tüketme ve kitap okuma alışkanlıkları, demokrasiyi anlama biçimleri ve çevre-dostu davranışlarında değişiklikler yapmaya karar vermiş ve bir dizi etkinlik planlamışlardır. Sınıfta yapılan etkinliklerin öğrenci davranışlarını gerçek yaşamda da değiştirip değiştirmediğini belirlemek için veliler araştırmaya gözlemci olarak katılarak evdeki uygulamaları anlatan mektuplar yazmışlardır. Araştırma bulgularına göre sınıfta yapılan etkinlikler sonunda öğrencilerin çoğunda olumlu davranış değişiklikleri meydana gelmiştir. Veli mektuplarından, velilerin araştırma sürecine katılmaktan memnun oldukları, çocuklarındaki değişimleri not ederken onları daha iyi tanıma imkanı buldukları anlaşılmaktadır. Katılımcıların büyük bir çoğunluğu çocuklarının asitli içecekler içmekten vazgeçtiğini, hatta başka insanları da bu konuda bilgilendirerek ikna etmeye çalıştıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Diğer yandan birkaç veli aile fertlerinin hepsinin asitli içecekleri sevdiğini, zararlarını bilmelerine rağmen çocuklarının ve kendilerinin içmekten vazgeçmediğini belirtmiştir. Öğrencilerin çoğunun okul dışında da kitap okumaya başladıkları ve bundan zevk aldıkları, enerji tasarrufu konusunda duyarlı hale geldikleri ve çeşitli önlemler aldıkları gözlenmiştir. Ayrıca, demokrasiyi yaşamla ilişkilendirme konusunda da olumlu değişimler gösterdikleri saptanmıştır.

Bu çalışma eylem araştırmasının, öğrencilerin ev uygulamalarının izlenmesi ve velilerin eğitime katılımını artırma üzerinde olumlu etkileri olduğunu göstermesi bakımından kendi sınıflarıyla ilgi yeni bilgiler edinmek isteyen sonraki araştırmacılara yol gösterecektir. Ayrıca, kuram ve uygulama arasındaki boşluğu doldurarak eğitim-öğretim etkinliklerinin niteliğini artırılmasında eğitim paydaşlarına ışık tutacaktır.