


Article

A Different Approach to Evaluation in Early Childhood Curriculum: Learning Stories

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Abstract: Many tools are used in child assessment during early childhood to support the development of children and plan the educational process. Originating in New Zealand, “learning stories” is a technique of observation that enables the assessment of children during early childhood. A learning story is the documentation by a teacher (or parent) of what a child (or group of children) is observed doing in an early childhood program. The adult must know the child well to properly assess a child’s learning. Learning stories are narratives constructed from structured observations designed to provide a collective perspective on a child’s learning. Observations obtained using this method are reinterpreted as stories, then analyzed and used as a basis for planning. Teachers collect ‘critical events’ or moments that seem important to a child. By analyzing a few of them through a narrative, they try to reveal the child’s learning path and the pattern of their learning tendencies in the form of stories. The “learning stories” method, used in many countries across the world in early childhood, is not used in early childhood education in Turkey. In this context, this study was carried out to introduce the method to educators, families and researchers working in the field of early childhood, and to present the important points that should be considered during practice in the preschool period. This study was planned as a case study, which is a qualitative research method. The study group consisted of a teacher working in the preschool period (48–60 months) and a child in the classroom. The study included observations of the preschool teacher and examples of the learning stories created using these observations, followed by the analysis of the interview conducted with the teacher. It can be argued that the learning stories method is an alternative assessment method that can be used to evaluate the curriculum in early childhood education in Turkey, as is the case in many countries.



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1. Introduction

In New Zealand, educators use learning stories to assess children’s progress in early childhood. This assessment tool is also a narrative tool with which teachers observe the children as they play and learn, in order to record their experiences in the classroom and school based on these observations [1]. The stories created through these observations are transformed into narratives that are intended to be shared with children and families. Learning stories serve as a pedagogical tool to discover children’s strengths, assess and examine children’s learning processes, and to help them reflect on their role in the process [2].

By focusing specifically on the positive aspects of children and their role as learners, developing their abilities by highlighting what children are able to do and supporting them to progress step by step by setting goals, the learning stories technique is a teaching and learning approach that differs from other methods, which usually present the negative aspects to children and families, emphasizing what children cannot learn and what they cannot do. At the same time, the learning stories technique differs from various other

assessment methods, since it enables families and their children to participate actively in the assessment process and supports assessment by individual and family narratives [3,4].

Learning stories do not apply a predefined and defined schema to children's actions—they focus on the starting point of children's behavior and how children develop these behaviors in the classroom. For this reason, it focuses on what can be done and what can be improved, instead of negative messages. In this context, it has a constructive and positive perspective [5]. Focusing on children's learning tendencies prevents children from focusing on their developmental areas and developmental support based on only one area. For example, children are evaluated not only on their skills such as running, jumping, or just counting and addition, but also on how they use these skills in their games and in observable areas. This approach tries to consider all the interests, personalities, and developmental integrity of children [6].

Learning stories are utilized in many countries today (Sweden, Norway, Germany, Ukraine, etc.). In addition, learning stories are among the assessment tools used in alternative learning approaches in early childhood, such as the Reggio Emilia Approach and Forest Pedagogy, which have come to the forefront in recent years with their different perspectives on education [7].

The way learning stories appeal to children, the narrative language used in the narrative, aims to develop children's capacity for self-recognition and reflection [8]. These stories are intended to ensure that children become individuals who are aware of their own abilities and can self-regulate [9,10].

The learning stories assessment approach is a form of observation recorded in the form of a narrative story and the documentation of what is obtained through observations. As children explore through play, teachers listen, watch, and take notes on what they do. They form opinions by taking photos or recording their notes with videos from time to time. Through the learning stories explained with this evidence, teachers create a path to share with families what they observe about their children's development. Teachers take on the role of observer and author while reflecting on children's actions, words, and expressions in the process. The story they write is a positive text about children's strengths, good ideas, learning adventures and tendencies. Various steps must be followed when creating a learning story, as listed below [11,12]:

1. Writing the story: The child's actions, words, tendencies, and strengths during events should be observed. Notes should be taken, and photographs, videos, and documents explaining the child's process should be prepared. Using these, the teacher should turn the child's learning process into a short story describing the learning process. Then, they should find a creative title.
2. Reading the story to the child: It should be ensured that the child's own learning adventure, the story penned by the teacher, is shared with the child. The child's feedback on the story should be obtained. If the child agrees, the story should be shared with the other children in the class. Sharing the story in this way can be helpful in motivating other children or creating different ideas.
3. Planning: After the observed learning process and the written story, the teacher should consider what the child can do to improve their play and make progress developmentally (Are you going to add different materials? Will you change the material quality? Will you add research books, atlases, or picture storybooks?). Then, the teacher should record their thoughts as short-term and long-term goals. This will help with the preparation of the next learning story.
4. Connecting to families: It should be ensured that the learning stories, which aid in the identification of goals for the child, are shared with the families, and that their views are also added to the story. These stories can be delivered to the families from time to time with a note or during an interview, and the comments of the families should be carefully examined. This way, developmental goals can be supported at home as well. It is important to try to improve cooperation with the family.

Since the games are born from the child's ideas, interests, or curiosity, teachers should focus on the games that children initiate when they document their learning stories. Discovering these moments and developing them is the important part [13]. Children's engagement, focus, and deep connection with play are important in learning stories. In this context, teachers should diligently try to capture these moments. The teacher should think about the child's relationship with their friends, materials, or environment and try to expand these processes. The deep focus on these processes, where learning tendencies are revealed and goals are set that will enable the child to expand these processes, is the most valuable aspect of learning stories [14].

The learning stories can be used to talk and acquire the following points with children in the following early childhood period [8,15]:

1. Individuality: Since individual interests and characteristics are taken into account in learning stories, it can be used to explore and develop children's individuality.
2. Dialogue: Since individual interests and characteristics are taken into account in learning stories, it can be used to develop dialogues between parents, children, and teachers.
3. Self-reflexivity: It can be used to encourage children to reflect on their own learning.
4. Resources: From all assessments and observations made for the child, his or her strengths have been engraved and made available for emphasis.
5. Learning tendencies: By focusing on positive developments, observations can be made to develop children's learning tendencies and to prepare the next steps accordingly.
6. Holism: Instead of the fragmented developmental evaluation of the child, a holistic evaluation that complements each other is aimed. No development is causeless and independent of any other.
7. Storytelling: It can facilitate remembering events and making it easier for the child to notice. It is known that even when time passes, children do not forget the stories. In this regard, it can be ensured that children transfer their own experiences more easily by using their creativity.

Using learning stories plays an important role in showing children that their discoveries are valued and that their play and ideas are respected. This has a special value for both children and their families. The process encourages children to review their learning adventures and to feel proud of their teacher's focus on their adventures [3].

Using learning stories provides an opportunity for teachers to plan these processes by paying attention to the developmental goals of children while developing their programs. It provides support for teachers to expand their education programs and curricula in this context by focusing more on the developmental differences and individual development of children. It provides an opportunity for all teachers, staff, and families working with the children to get to know them better. It helps families become aware of their children's characteristics, to get to know their children better and to understand how to guide them. With the help of images and videos, the teachers create a guide for families, children, and all educators who will meet the child in the future [16].

It is thought that learning stories are appropriate for all ages in early childhood. This method can be used at any time of the day when children are involved in any learning activity [17]. The documentation includes recording, photographing, and taking notes of a child's learning stories over some time by a teacher. These documents are then analyzed by the teacher to describe one or more of the child's five typical learning areas: "Attention", "Participation", "Persistence in the face of difficulty or uncertainty", "Expressing an idea or an emotion", and "Taking responsibility" [15]. These five learning trends are well aligned with the New Zealand early childhood learning curriculum. Carr [15] recommends adhering to the following rules for a learning story to better reflect children's tendencies in the learning process: "definition", "documentation", "discussion", and "decisions".

Although learning stories are thought to be effective in improving learning and learning experiences in early childhood education in Western countries such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Germany, Iceland, etc., this method is still unknown in many parts of

the world. Over the years, learning stories have also received criticism from some scholars. These criticisms are often related to the fact that learning stories alone are not sufficient to evaluate a child. There are also criticisms that suggest it should be used with many tools, not as a tool on its own.

2. Materials and Methods

This study aimed to examine the use of the learning story method in the curriculum of a preschool teacher in Turkey, who received training on the use of the “learning stories” assessment method, which is not widely used in this country in early childhood, and to present a sample practice.

2.1. Study Design

This study was designed as a case study, which is a qualitative research approach. A case study is an in-depth study of one or more situations by reviewing, examining, researching, and interpreting them [18]. According to another definition, a case study is defined as an approach in which the researcher examines one or more situations in a specific time frame by using multiple data collection tools, namely observation forms, interviews, document reviews, reports, etc. The most important purpose of the researcher in case studies is to observe and present the specific situation or situations to be discussed.

2.2. Participants

This study discussed the case of a preschool teacher who worked with 48–56-month-old children in the preschool period at the time of the study. This teacher was selected because the “learning stories” method was already used in children’s assessments in the classroom in line with the curriculum. The selected preschool teacher had received various pieces of training on the subject before the study. Since the study topic has almost no applications in the preschool period in Turkey, the practices of this preschool teacher were deemed valuable and suitable for the case study.

2.3. Procedure

The learning story assessment method used in this study included observing children, supporting observations with evidence, recording and collecting data, and analyzing documents. The “Learning Stories Observation Form” was used to collect the data obtained in this study. This form included a section for teachers to write their observations, a section to present visual evidence regarding their observations, a section for teacher assessment, a discussion section to assess in regard to the curriculum, and a section to plan further activities. In addition, the form included a family opinion section to take the opinions of the families about the learning stories. The observation form with these specified areas was developed by examining all of the learning story forms in the literature, making translations, and adapting them according to the program in our country. Observations about various activities related to the curriculum were turned into learning stories by the preschool teacher. Examples from the observations made within the scope of this study and the preschool teacher’s views on the learning stories were also presented descriptively in the findings.

3. Results

The study was designed as a case study because it included the unique experiences of a preschool teacher who, after undergoing various pieces of training, set out to use the learning stories method in the classroom as an assessment tool and to establish a link between the method and the curriculum. The findings are presented in two main parts. The first part includes the data on the Learning Stories Observation Form used by the teacher (N.S.) in practice, and the second part presents N.S.’s views on the use of learning stories.

The participating preschool teacher, N.S., prepared the learning stories by following these steps during implementation.

3.1. Planning the Learning Process

In the preliminary meeting, N.S. explained the measurement assessment tools used in the classroom for preschool children and their relationship with the curriculum in the following words:

“In the preschool period, monthly learning processes are prepared in addition to daily learning processes. I prepare my monthly plan first and select some acquisitions and indicators according to the children’s needs. Afterward, I take care to address these in different activities by dividing them over the month according to various developmental areas. I make notes about whether these acquisitions have been achieved in the assessment section included in the observation part or under the activity plans. I do not write my observations in any other specific form. If something catches my attention, I take notes; I try not to forget it. I examine the acquisitions with a general observation and create the developmental assessment forms at the end of the semester. Other than that, I don’t use a different assessment method.”

According to the statements of N.S., it can be argued that the observations in the preschool period are made based on acquisitions and indicators and in a general manner, and detailed and planned observations are not often preferred.

After the preliminary interview, N.S. was asked to plan the daily education flows and list them for a daily flow, considering what should be attended to (to be observed) about the children in these flows. While preparing this list, the teacher was told to pay attention not only to the indicators and concepts but also to many issues in line with the curriculum. N.S. created the following list (Table 1).

Table 1. Preschool teacher N.S.’s list of observations that can be made in activities to be carried out in and out of the classroom for a daily flow.

Activity	The Aspects That Can Be Observed
A trip to the library	Clues on their interest in books, their way of viewing books, their attention to pages, and reading awareness
Free play with natural materials	Creativity, motor skills in holding and placing materials, concept knowledge of color and shape, communication with peers, cooperation and harmony
Active games	The ability to use their senses, the development of touch, body coordination and sense of hearing, cooperation, participation in the game, obeying the rules, communication with their peers during the game
Reading stories	Focusing attention during story reading, answering questions, early literacy skills and awareness, self-expression, language development, communication, harmony with peers, paying attention to instructions
Art activity	Motor skills (small muscle), concept of color, following directions and harmony, working cooperatively with a group, unaided cutting and pasting using scissors

After thinking about the list, the preschool teacher N.S. detailed the issues that could be observed according to the daily flow and started to focus on the observation steps. Beginning to discover the relationship between the learning process and assessment, N.S. started to gain experience about which aspects required attention in the development of learning stories and in the assessment while planning activities.

3.2. Observation and Data Collection

N.S. was asked to make assessments in the form of Learning Stories for the selected children after developing the curriculum and making the relevant preparations. No specific child or activity was recommended to the teacher to focus on during observations. The

teacher was asked to structure the process based on the training previously received on Learning Stories. In the preliminary interview, N.S. expressed the following views on observations and data collection.

“Making observations is a very open-ended concept in preschool. In my opinion, the open-ended nature of what will be observed or when it will be observed makes it rather difficult to use observation sometimes. After a while, making observations may be regarded as taking a glance, or simply watching children’s games. When observation is needed in my classroom, I sometimes have difficulties regarding whom to observe and how to make observations. I believe it would be sufficient to observe whether the child in question has acquired the acquisition indicators in the curriculum.”

In the preliminary interview, N.S. reported that it was sufficient to observe only the acquisitions and indicators, in short, the written indicators related to the curriculum in the preschool period. Further in the process, when asked to convey the experiences about observation following the trainings and the practices about learning stories, N.S. expressed the comments presented in Section 2.



After the preliminary interview, N.S. conducted many observations with the participation of the family, using the learning stories observation form in accordance with the curriculum for the selected children. Considering the frequency of implementation of these observations, it was found that they were made daily for one or two children. N.S. filled the observation tools at the end of each day using the notes and photos taken in the classroom and presented them to the families and children in accordance with the implementation steps. Learning stories were shaped with their contributions. Some sample observations developed by N.S. in this regard are presented below.

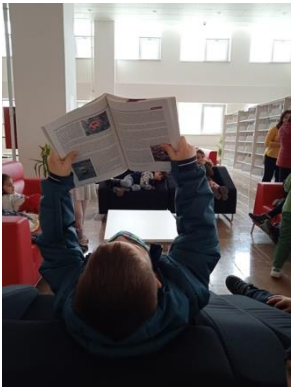
THERE IS A CURIOUS CHILD IN THE LIBRARY!

Child’s Name: U ... C ...

Observer/Author: N.S.

Observation Date: 11.01.2022

Photo(s)	Story
	Today we all went to the library together. UC, you love books, reading and anything related to books. Therefore, the idea of going to the library made you very happy and excited. I didn’t think there were many children’s books in the library, but I didn’t share this thought with you. You were very happy to be in the library but surprised that there were no children’s book in the library. You ran and started to examine the colorful books, especially the animals, on the shelves as in Photo 1. You started taking books that were interesting to you from the shelves and sharing them with your friends. It was very gratifying to see this.
	While many of your friends were running around instead of spending time with the books, you were studying them with all your attention. You took a few books to share with your friends and ran to sit next to them. You can see it in the Photo 2. You handed over some books to them and you looked like as if you knew how to read. You started reading the sentences in the books and telling them to your friends (imitating reading). You tried to get the attention of your friends by showing them pictures. You can see this in Photo 3.

Photo(s)	Story
	<p>The book in your hand talked about microbes and microbiological beings. You made explanations to your friends about them. For example, you were able to really explain what viruses are, how microbes feed, how they look. I am very surprised that you know all this.</p> <p>Your interest in books never waned until you left the library. The book we read in class today when we came back from the library was a book you brought from home, and frankly, I was very surprised that you noticed this and recognized your book. You are a 4-year-old child who loves books and you are really interested in what is told in the books. I really liked seeing this.</p>
Learning Outcomes	Relevant Acquisitions and Indicators in 2013 Preschool Curriculum
<p>Recognizes libraries. Knows what behaviors should be exhibited in libraries. Shows interest in books, examines them. Takes care to return the books in their places.</p>	<p>Cognitive Domain (A1, A2, A17) Language Development (A5, A8) Social Emotional Development (A4, A5, A10, A12)</p>
Short-Term Goal	Long-Term Goal
<p>To further develop U.C.'s interest in books, I need to get him to bring more books to the class for us to read and share with all his friends. I should take care to share these books with the whole class through reading activities.</p>	<p>Based on U.C.'s interest in books, I need to work to ensure he acquires more print awareness. Since he already has reading awareness, I think that the print awareness dimension can be acquired more easily.</p>
Next Goal and Further Steps	Observer Notes/Assessment
<p>Next week, I will ask UC to select and bring a book to use in reading activities with the class.</p>	<p>U.C. seems to be quite advanced in language development, especially in vocabulary (receptive language and expressive language). He turns out to be the best in the class in word count calculations and language development tests that I do in class. I think it's because his parents gave UC a love of reading from a very young age, and they read a lot of books. U.C.'s sophistication in language development often shows itself in the cognitive sense. In the following years, it can be discussed with his family about his taking the BİLSEM exam.</p>
<p>I will plan awareness activities for UC, starting with the spelling of its name and the letters/sounds in it.</p>	<p>His family needs to be supported so that they can continue to work on U.C.'s print awareness at home. Meetings should be arranged and information should be given on how to maintain this at home.</p>

U.C's opinions about the learning story

Teacher, I liked the story very much. You wrote about me. I couldn't read the books to my friends B.H and M.H, because I don't know how to read. I just showed them the photos and told them about the microbes in the photos. I talked about the work of scientists. I wish there were children's books in the library then I could talk about them as well. I could explain them about bacteria, organisms, with photos that were better suited to children. Because I love living things.

The family's opinions about the learning story

I'm so glad you discovered U.C's interest in books. He has been introduced to many children's books since his infancy. We take care to read him an average of 4–5 books every day. Now, the request to read a book comes from him, not from us. U.C tried to explain things to his best friends today, talked about books, and I think that made him very happy. When he got home today, his only complaint was that there weren't enough children's books in the library. I think it's time we introduced him to children's libraries. I had thought that he would not enjoy the library trip very much, but his interest in the subject made me very happy.

I'M WORKING IN THE WORKSHOP WITH MATERIALS FROM THE NATURE

Child's Name: U.C.

Observer/Author: N.S.

Observation Date: 03.03.2022


Learning Outcomes

Photo(s)**Story**

Today, it was the day to make creative designs. We went to the loose part workshop in our school together. There you had the opportunity to freely examine and explore the materials and make the designs you wanted. You (UC) studied the materials really carefully with your friends. I think the place caught your attention. While you were designing, you were particularly interested in corks and you took a very close interest in them. You exchanged ideas with your friends and showed them the materials you chose. The screws of different sizes especially got your attention.



You made your design using screws, beads, corks. You really like to make designs. I like it when you make an array and tell me about it. You designed some kind of vehicle during the activity today. This vehicle was a machine that could go back and forth, helping you with the housework when needed. You placed the beads and other materials one by one and they all had a task. I admired that you focused on your design so carefully and that you created a really different design.

Photo(s)	Story
	<p>While focusing your attention on your design, I saw that you were not influenced by other friends around you. You only cared about what you did. While developing something, you used the materials by counting them. You counted how many pieces of each of the materials you used. When you thought it was not sufficient, you utilized new materials right away. I think the important thing is that you took the selected materials as much as you needed.</p> <p>We continued creativity-based work in the classroom, and this time you designed houses using colored rods in the classroom. You did your design with Z.N. You discussed and decided with him and built two houses next to each other. In this process, you tried to help each other without raising your voices. I think the important thing in your design was that you first worked with 5 rods and then increased the number of these rods up to 10. You designed a chalet. You talked to me about your design and you told me you designed a house to put in your grandfather's garden. You also put a lot of effort into the design of the house.</p>
Learning Outcomes	Relevant Acquisitions and Indicators in 2013 Preschool Curriculum
<p>Ability to express oneself in original and creative ways</p> <p>Ability to use different materials collaboratively</p> <p>Ability to create new and original products using materials</p>	<p>Cognitive Development (A1, A4, A6)</p> <p>Language Development (A5, A8)</p> <p>Motor Development (A4)</p> <p>Social Emotional Development (A3)</p>
Short-Term Goals	Long-Term Goals
<p>Considering that UC enjoys constructing buildings, it can be ensured that the designs include not only two dimensions but also the third dimension. Firstly, materials such as foam, blocks, paper rolls, and cups can be used to stack and build on top of each other.</p>	<p>UC's family can be contacted to ensure that they continue building games at home.</p> <p>STEM activities can be done by taking advantage of UC's interest in building construction.</p> <p>It may be possible for U.C to make designs in the future that combine toys (structured) such as lego, plug-in toys and materials from nature (unstructured).</p>
Next Goal and Further Steps	Observer Notes/Assessment
<p>For this purpose, foams should be put in the loose part workshop for U.C. so that he can build a structure using toothpicks and these foams.</p> <p>When he has better physical balance, the focus time will increase in games such as building construction. Therefore, the next goal is to improve balance and body coordination and to place some loose part building toys in the classroom.</p>	<p>I think U.C.'s creativity has improved significantly since the beginning of the term and he has come a long way. At first, he only was examining and mixing and matching the objects given to him, but now he can create some products using those loose part materials. He even gives names to these products or explains them to me. He can create a different product each time. I think the loose part activity is going well for all the kids, including U.C.</p>

U.C's opinions about the learning story	The family's opinions about the learning story
Teacher, I love the loose parts workshop, it is fun to design there. I wish we always went there. There are shiny stones, beads, and many more. Yes, I had built a house. I also made a design. I'm going to show these to my mom.	UC has always told us that he loves the loose parts workshop at the school. Especially lately, I have been observing that he has been making designs with materials such as kneading materials, buttons and beads at home. He finds them and brings them to tells me about them. He recently made me the following designs. He said these were a snail house and a mandala. He had a bit of difficulty while making the mandala, but I supported him. Thus, we had some quality time together. The fact that he brings together unrelated and different materials to create something really impresses me.



The opinions obtained in the last interview from the preschool teacher, N.S., regarding the learning stories are provided below:

"When I first heard about the learning stories, it seemed to me as if it were a very hard method to apply in the classroom. Then I thought about the form given to me and started to make observations to apply it to my student. Frankly, these observations highly impressed me, because I knew my student U.C., but I realized that I didn't know him that much when it comes to details about him. Thanks to the observations, I started to focus more on the capabilities and abilities of U.C. This was the aspect that I really liked."

"I was exciting to gather the evidence to design the learning story. I realized that the pictures I took must thus have meaning. We take pictures of children in the classroom and sometimes we upload them to our web page or share them in communication groups, with the permission of the parents. However, I usually took these pictures to disseminate the activity. Thanks to the learning stories, I started taking photos to provide evidence for the observations about U.C. This showed me that the pictures I took could be more useful. While explaining the pictures, it became very easy to write the story."

"I think one of the best aspects of learning stories is that they support you in communicating with the family. Thus, the relationship with the family starts to include more trust, because with learning stories, you write the story of the child and it is as if the

family is experiencing what happens in the classroom through your words. Sometimes the family has important observations at home, and by adding their observations, the family contributes these observations to ensure that the learning story is multifaceted. Sometimes, these stories provide an opportunity for families to get to know their children better."

"While writing the learning stories, filling in the section about the relevance for the MoNE program was the most challenging aspect for me. It was challenging to concretize the learning outcomes and write their relevance to the program, because although some observations are very valuable, they do not define a behavior or an indicator in the program. In this case, it is difficult to write this section."

4. Discussion and Conclusions

It was determined that the findings of the study had parallels with the literature. During the interview, the preschool teacher N.S. expressed the following opinion: *"When I first heard about the learning stories, it seemed to me that it was a very difficult method to apply in the classroom"*. Similarly, in the literature, Blaiklock [19] and Zhang [20] state that learning stories are long, and that writing them is comprehensive and sometimes time-consuming. However, it is also reported that the learning stories method brings a comprehensive and detailed perspective to the development of children. In the same vein, Blaiklock [17] explains that there are some shortcomings across the world regarding the learning stories technique and adds that this method should be explained in more detail, that more work should be done on where, when, and how often learning stories should be applied, and that guidance should be provided on the collection of obtained results. Similarly, in their study on the problems encountered by teachers in using learning stories, Davis, Wright, Carr, and Peters [21] found that teachers do not have a good grasp of children's developmental stages and their competencies in these stages. This shows that teachers sometimes fail to mention and address the important events in children's development. The participating preschool teacher, N.S., emphasized the relevant difficulties as expressed in the literature with the following statement: *"While writing the learning stories, filling in the section about the relevance for the MoNE program was the most challenging aspect for me. It was challenging to concretize the learning outcomes and write their relevance to the program, because although some observations are very valuable, they do not define a behavior or an indicator in the program. In this case, it is difficult to write this section"*. Examination of the sample learning stories prepared by the teacher shows that there is a detailed narrative process with an average length of 2 or 3 pages.

Preschool teacher N.S. He replied to the interview questions as follows: *"I was excited to gather the evidence to design the learning story. I realized that the pictures I took must thus have meaning. We take pictures of children in the classroom and sometimes we upload them to our web page or share them in communication groups, with the permission of the parents. However, I usually took these pictures to disseminate the activity. Thanks to the learning stories, I started taking photos to provide evidence for the observations . . . "* When the literature is examined, Aschermann, Dannenberg, and Schulz [22] state that the memory of children's development is quite classy, that is, teachers forget most things. For this reason, he says that photographs can be used as concrete materials to follow the development of children. He stated from time to time that a single photograph does not make any sense, and that a series of photographs of children is required to create a story. The teacher who participated in the study also stated that learning stories is a good way for the children to blend the photographs with their observations. Reese and Cleveland [23] emphasized that purposeful and focused photographs are important materials in following the development of children. Takacs stated in Swart and Bus [24] that purposeful development photographs, which can be used both in print and digitally, are an important part of portfolios and developing assessment tools.

The participating preschool teacher, N.S., also noted the many valuable and field-specific aspects of the learning stories. For example, with the following statement, the

teacher expressed the role of learning stories in family training and communication: *“I think one of the best aspects of learning stories is that they support you in communicating with the family. Thus, the relationship with the family starts to include more trust”*. In the literature, in their study about the importance of the learning stories approach in communicating with the family, Carr and Lee [1] revealed that families receive better and more detailed information about their children in this way. Southcott [25] stated that the learning stories approach strengthens the bond between the children’s families and the school and includes their families in the learning processes of the children. Similarly, Cowie and Mitchell [26] also showed this approach as an important tool in maintaining a healthy and strong bond between the families and the school in which the learning stories approach is used.

According to the findings obtained in the study, N.S. emphasized the contribution of the learning stories to getting to know the students in more detail and to discovering their characteristics while creating their learning stories by stating *“I knew U.C., but I realized that I didn’t know him that much. Thanks to the observations, I started to focus more on the capabilities and abilities of U.C. This was the aspect that I really liked”*. In the same vein, comparing the use of the curriculum and assessment methods of Northern European countries such as Norway, Sweden and Finland, and the learning stories method, also known as the New Zealand method, based on teachers’ opinions, Alvestad and Duncan [27] found that the learning stories method is a very inclusive method in assessing and explaining the evidence gathered by preschool teachers. They also reported that it is an important assessment tool that can contribute to the individual portfolios of many children with differences, even in different age groups. Emphasizing that this assessment method highlights differences, Dunn [28] indicates that it is an effective form of assessment not only in early childhood education but also for children with special needs. In this way, it is possible to evaluate children’s abilities in a detailed way by being aware of their abilities at every step. In their study, Nyland and Alfayez [29], experimented with the use of learning stories with Saudi Arabian children and they revealed that the use of learning stories is an inclusive way to recognize and explore the individual characteristics of children living in Saudi Arabia.

There is evidence in the literature that children and teachers are both positively affected by learning stories. Carr and Lee [1] and Reese [30] stated that children listen to their own learning stories and perceive themselves like a fairy tale hero, and they are curious about the new activities and stories that this fairy tale hero will experience. This way, they are motivated to learn and demand more stories about themselves from their teachers. Similarly, Reese, Gunn, Bateman, and Carr [30] reported that using the learning stories method improves teachers’ language skills. They found that these texts, which were examined in terms of the linguistic reflection of the interactions with children, the organization of the text, the conversion into story format, vocabulary variety and the complexity of expressions, developed the language structures of the teachers in a positive way.

In their study, Reese et al. [30] reported that learning stories read to children support children’s language development, and that this development is reflected in speaking, word diversity, word count, and the length of sentences that are used by students, similar to the development observed in teachers. Picken and Milligan [31] stated that learning stories should be used not only in early childhood, but also in later grades such as middle school and high school, and presented some examples in this context. They argued that such a method, which is based on presenting children’s performances individually by valuing their individual development, should become globally widespread.

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