

## **AN ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION RIGHTS IN FAMILY-SCHOOL COLLABORATION**

Mesude Atay<sup>1</sup>, Ayse P. Sen<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Okan University, Faculty of Education, Department of Primary Education

<sup>2</sup>MA Student, Okan University, Institute of Social Science, Department of Preschool Education

### **Abstract**

*In order for an effective education, there must be collaboration between the family and the school that focuses on the children's educational and developmental benefits and needs. This statement brings forth a very fundamental question. Where stands the child in this collaboration? Since participation is one of the most fundamental rights of children, every decision which affects them directly or indirectly, must be taken with their involvement. This suggests that, if involvement is to be more meaningful to children and effective in influencing change, it is necessary to move beyond one-off or isolated participation and consider how participation becomes embedded as an integral part of our relationship with children in education. The article argues that, in addition to reconsidering what we think it is to be a child, we need to rethink the value of the participation of the children in every decision making process, reconfigure the applications accordingly and value their ideas. This article concludes that children should be viewed, not as vulnerable passive victims, but as social actors who can play a part in the decision to participate in their own education process. By way of conclusion, the requirements of such a vision of children's participation are considered - what will be needed to make it an educational possibility in school-family collaboration pursuant to the laws and applications in Turkey.*

**Key words:** *parent-school collaboration, participation rights of children, decision making process, active member of partnership, active participation*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The most fundamental aim of parent-school partnership is to support children's progress in developmental and educational aspects by detecting and solving the problems and facilitating learning. Parents, the entire school personnel, community and children are the main characters in this collaboration who should be expressing their own expectations and opinions, reunited under a common aim with a balanced and healthy interaction. This article investigates the position and role of children in parent-school partnership in the light of previous research and applications, continuing with an argument on how the partnership actually must be, based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In accordance with this purpose, family-school collaboration will be defined comprehensively, including J. L. Epstein's six typology of parent-school partnership. Relatedly, The Ecological Theory of U. Bronfenbrenner will be described since it partially coincides with the typology, aforesaid. Associatively, the participation rights of children will be explained within the compass of Convention on the Rights of Children, in order to reveal children's participation in the applications of school-family collaboration. The information given above will be evaluated and discussed in the light of the researches that have been done in various countries regarding school-parent partnership. The article concludes by revealing children's turnout in family-school collaboration in Turkey according to the researches and brings up present regulations of family-school collaboration in Turkey for discussion.

The definition of parent-school collaboration according to Joyce L. Epstein is that educators, families and community members work together to share information, guide students, fix the issues and celebrate success. Parents, school and community members share responsibilities in the collaboration

to support the learning and development process of children. It is based on an assumption that the family school partnerships are designed to improve the children's broadly defined success, development and learning. (Epstein, 2001) The partnership concept has an aim to be achieved by the members that interacting each other and collaborating. According to Price-Mitchell (2009) parent-school partnerships aim to support the students' education process, by an interaction between the parents and the school on behalf of children.

Epstein's theoretical model for parent-school partnership is commonly used to organize the collaboration. Parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with community, constitute Epstein's six steps typology. National Parent Teacher Association adopted Epstein's parent involvement model as standards in 1997. The framework of six major types of involvement in family-school collaboration is a non-hierarchical system. It can also be described as overlapping spheres of influence. First type of involvement is parenting, and it explains the basic duties of families such as providing a safe and healthy environment, supporting learning and development at home, understanding and showing a positive approach to the child, developing parenting skills and preparing the children to school. The schools help parents to improve their parenting skills in order to have a healthy collaboration that focuses on the children's development and learning. The second type is communicating which is one of the basic duties of the schools. It is a two way communication as school contacts to home and home interacts with school. The newsletters, notices, phone calls, meetings and conferences are a part of the communication. The interactions are focused on school programs, children's progress and sharing responsibilities. It eases the transition of the students to higher levels. The third type is volunteering which indicates parents and community members may volunteer to participate in school activities, such as watching a sports event, supporting student performances or attending to a lesson. The activities may vary depending on schools improvement on parent-school collaboration efforts. To increase family attendance and improve their helps are schools duties. In the fourth type, parents support students learning at home with the guidance of the teachers. It includes homework, classwork and curricular-related works. Families monitor children with school's assistance and inform school about the student's progress in order to reinforce needed skills in children. Schools help parents to improve their observation and communication skills with their children. The fifth type explains the decision making process. Parents and community members participate in school committees, school site management teams or other groups to advocate or to take part in decision making progress. School guides parents to improve their representation, communication and decision-making skills. Decisions are made between the parents and the school after coming to an agreement. Lastly, Collaborating with the community means that schools collaborate with various organizations and institutions to improve education and share responsibilities. Schools guide and inform parents about community resources that can improve children's learning and development. (Lunenburg and Irby, 2002)

It is assumed that students learning and development improve with parent's effective involvement in school. There are multiple researches supporting the benefits of parent-school collaboration with strong evidences. It is indicated that the parent-school collaboration supports both academic and behavioral benefits motivating children for academic work, resulting with higher grades and improving children's behaviors by complementing the formation of a higher self-esteem in children. Also educators indicates that they feel more satisfied with their works, the evaluation ratings of parents increases and the positive interaction between the parents, school and children consolidates (Callender and Hanson, 2012). School-family partnerships help the children feel supported. The children's attitudes change in a positive way and student achievement tends to increase. (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2005)

Parent-school partnership is a complex process since it includes parents, educators, community members and students. The role of each member has its own descriptions and potential to influence the student's learning and development. Educators have a leading role in providing opportunities to develop the parent-school partnership, as they; create a positive environment, encourage, support and motivate the collaboration, communicate with diverse family forms and reinforce the perception of education as a shared responsibility. The parents support learning at school, provide opportunities to

learn at home, interact with educators and other school personnel if needed and participate in decision making process as an active member.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory also describes some sort of complex collaboration. Every layer of this collaboration has an impact on a child's development. The closest layer to the child is the microsystem. Family, school, neighborhood or childcare environments belong to this layer where child has immediate reach. The child can affect the environment and the environment can affect the child. The child is an active member in this layer. The greatest impacts on the child occur at the microsystem. The mesosystem includes the connection between the child's microsystem. The exosystem is larger than the mesosystem in social terms that the child is not an active member directly. The impacts in the child's development occur indirectly by interacting with some structure in child's microsystem. The macrosystem is the layer that the effects on child occur almost entirely indirectly. Cultural values, customs, and laws are a part of this layer that has an indirect impact on child influencing throughout the interactions of all other layers. The chronosystem effects the child throughout the dimension of time. As children get older, they may react differently to environmental changes and may be more able to determine more how that change will influence them. (Berk, 2007).

Parent-school collaboration as Epstein describes, corresponds to Bronfenbrenner's Mesosystem, as it is a connection between the child's microsystem since family and school are the child's microsystems and the collaboration occurs between these two. Parent-school collaboration aims to provide a better education which commonly considered to be a holistic process to unfold the learners potentials as much as possible to achieve self-selected goals and aspirations. Therefore the participation of the learner is essential in every educational collaboration. In order to learn effectively, the education process must occur in a learner centered way. Since the learner is the center of education, all educative collaborations must include the learner as an active member in every step of partnership such as sharing responsibilities, expressing opinions, participating in decision making process and solving problems.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, also states clearly that the children have the right to express their ideas and participate in all the decision making process regarding themselves, in Article 12 and 13. It emphasizes that the children have a potential and ability to participate in decision-making processes, to express opinions and to be an active part of change. Children's right of participation must be taken into consideration in every situation that is concerning children. It is a fundamental right of the child that must become a living reality and must be considered clearly so that it will not be just a simple strategy. Participation is one of the guiding principles of the Convention, emphasizing the right of the child to be heard and to have his or her views or opinions taken into account. Children's opinions must be respected and evaluated as equal as every member of the decision making process since every opinion has an influence on the decision. The child's age and developmental stage must be considered while communicating the child to take her or his opinion. Children should not be pressured or manipulated to express an opinion since they also have the right to not to do so. There is no age or context limitation in the Convention which means the children can begin expressing their opinions freely at any age and they have an evolving capacity. Just like the child's evolving capacity, adults' evolving capacity and studiousness to consider the child's opinions, to be eager to criticize their own behaviors and thoughts and efforts to find a common agreement is very crucial. Participation is an important process far from a simple formality that both for adults and children should collaborate. (UNICEF, Fact Sheet)

As mentioned earlier, children's right to participation as outlined in article 12 is closely linked to freedom of expression. It is also related to fulfilling the right to information, a key prerequisite for children's participation to be relevant and meaningful. It is in fact essential that children be provided with the necessary information about options that exist and the consequences of such options so that they can make informed and free decisions. Providing information enables children to gain skills, confidence and maturity in expressing views and influencing decisions. (CRC, 2009)

The article 12 and 13 are as below;

*Article 12*

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

*Article 13*

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.
2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
  - (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or
  - (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, viewed on 29 June 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>)

As explained broadly, the involvement of parents and community in school education has a beneficial impact on the children's education process and well being. But this statment brings forth a very fundamental question. Where does the child stand in this collaboration? Is the child an active member in this process or is she/he considered to be an object which has any or few effect in the decision process of how he/she should be educated?

### **CHILDREN'S ROLE IN PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON PARENT-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP**

There is a great number of research that focus on different aspects of family-school partnerships and it's contents in various countries. To see where the child stands commonly, the contents and conclusions of some of the researches regarding family-school collaboration are examined. As a result, there were similarities and differences about the perception of partnership and the status of children.

Symeou (2010), focused on Family-school relations in Cyprus, investigating families' perspectives and needs as far as the ways family-school bonds have been set up in the state primary education of Cyprus. In order to achieve objectives, a survey was conducted among a random sample of the families of Cyprus state funded primary schools. In the survey, the participation right of the child is not clearly stated. As a conclusion, the research suggests that the expectations and perceptions of the family and the school must be changed and reconstructed in order to achieve a mutual understanding. The suggestions about a healthier partnership in this article, do not embed the child's perspectives and expactations in the partnership.

Maksimovic and Harutynyan (2001) compiled an analysis regarding the strong linkages among involved parents to improve the educational systems and societies of emerging democracies. The article refers Europe Region Education Network (EdNet) as it aims to help parents, teachers, students and other community members work together to improve local schools and education systems. Among the goals of EdNet, there is no subject that clearly mentions the children's participation or involvement in parent-school collaboration.

The article written by Dijkstra and Herweijer (2001) focuses on the relationship between motives for chioce and denomination in primary education in a system of choice. It reports that the outcome of the school choice process is a result of the interaction between the ideas and preferences of the parents in Netherlands. The factor analysis in the research indicates the strongest motives for the choice of a

particular school. The children's preferences and ideas are not taken into consideration by the parents as it is seen in the final result section of the analysis.

Epstein and Sanders, (2000), analyzed previous researches on parent-school collaboration in order to improve student's success at school. The findings of the report indicate that there is a lack of communication between the parents and the teachers which results in not knowing each other's goals and expectations. Even if the conclusion of the article recommends that the researches should investigate the parent-school collaboration more deeply, there is no clear statement that implies the necessity to take children's opinions or the participation rights of the children in parent-school and community partnership.

Nor and Neo (2001) also focused on involving parents in children's education investigating the teachers perceptions regarding family-school collaboration in primary schools in Malaysia. After using survey to gather data, the researchers found that majority of the teachers remarked that there is a significant need for parental involvement. Also the findings show that there is a partial partnership between school and families. The children's views and ideas are not a subject in the research and there is no article in the survey regarding the childrens participation in the collaboration. However, the study concludes by suggesting that in order to create a successful partnership, teachers, parents, community and the children should collaborate all together.

With an examination of previous literature, Lahaye, Nimal and Couvreur (2001) focused on young people's representations of school and family relationships. The research made in Belgium investigated young people's view of school and family relationships. In the article, the students identified as groups such as the defenders of a communicative policy, the ones in favor of a strategic policy, the separatists, the rebels, the outcasts, the pragmatics, the nihilists and the apolitical. These different groups refers various attitudes seized upon the young between parent-school collaboration. The various attitudes implies that the students are not considered to be an active member of the education.

The study that focused on the effects of parental involvement on the student achievement, (Williams, 2001) describes parent's efforts as interacting with school, honoring the expectations and views of the children and discussing with student to come to a mutual understanding. The article concludes with emphasize on the interaction between the parents and the children. Children's views are mentioned and their participation is included in the report.

The article written by Braster (2001) focuses on the parental need for pluralistic primary education in Netherlands. The main subjects of the research are questions such as what parents want, what they need from schools regarding the diversity of society. The contents of the research as it can be seen from the research questions, are not related to children's participation rights and their opinions.

Laczik (2001) conducted a study that focuses on parent-school relationship in one Russian school in the characteristics of a case study. The research is about the understanding of parent-school partnerships from the teacher's perspective and different patterns of interaction between home and school. As a conclusion, it reports that there is a bouncy relationship between the parents and the teachers expressing the views of the teachers and the parents. But the children's views are not investigated or included in this collaboration as research shows clearly.

A study linking family education and inferences for collaboration between home and school in Spain reported that some of the needs of the parents, teachers and pupils for partnership, that the researchers cites from the findings of an earlier action-research in Spanish schools are as following; to form a better communication between parents and educators on behalf of the children, to act in unison so that the educator can comprehend the parents attitudes and behaviours towards their children, to communicate about the concerns of parents and teachers. As it is seen clearly, the children's active participation in the colaboration is not mentioned. (Gonzalez, 2001)

In a previous study, Vermaas (2001) evaluates the legal functions of the complaints regulation in primary and secondary education in the Netherlands. The research's aim was to find out which goals of the legal regulation are being reached in the current situation. It is indicated that there were frequent

complaints such as parents think that the teacher made a mistake and the competent authorities did not intervene which shows that the reason of most complaints were a miscommunication between the parents and the school. Childrens opinions and complaints were not a part of the current investigation. It is clearly seen that the pupils participation in decision making process is not mentioned.

In the publismment of *A New Wave of Evidence* (2002), previous researches about home-school partnerships were analyzed as an annual synthesis called; *The Impacts of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement*. The article concludes the findings of the analyses with suggestions in order to put these evidences into action. The recommendations include recognizing parent's different socio-cultural backgrounds, education levels and incomes, engaging and supporting parents to guide their children, developing the school personnel's capacity for a better communication, involving parents and communities in collaboration, constructing strong relationships between schools and community organizations, conducting detailed researches that are more sensitive about different cultures and strengthening the meaning of parent involvement. As seen clearly, the recommendations do not include any statement that mentions the children's participation or children's opinions even if there is also no clear evidence of children's participation as an active member in the family-school collaboration in the researches that were analyzed in the report. Also in the conclusion part of the report, it is indicated that the researches ascertain multiple ways that schools can guide families on how to support their children's education. There is no clear statement that suggests to parents or to schools, to take children's opinions or incorporate the children into decision making process.

A research that investigates the relation between certain parenting practices about homework and studying and the relevance between those practices and parent's education and background, (Clark, 1993) found that children who are relatively more successful come from families who provide a supporting environment for learning and set high standards for their children. When exploring the relation between student's success and family's attitudes, it can be clearly seen that the children's opinions were not taken into consideration in the research. In the conclusion of the study, it is stated that students need their families to support them in additional different ways.

In 2002, Downey explored a variety of factors that affects student achievement and success by reviewing previous researches regarding parent involvement in education. In his study, it is mentioned that parent's interactions with children has a stronger impact on student achievement than parent's interaction with educators and other school personnel. Also, he identifies three different attitude types of parents such as authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting. As a conclusion, the article suggests that schools must concentrate on improving parent's communication skills and relationships between their children since students achievements may be correlated with the families' attitudes, but there may not be causality. Yet, the report does not mention broad needs and opinions of the children.

In the literature examination regarding psychological theory of parental beliefs and roles, Hoover, Kathleen and Sandler (1997) found that the correlation between the parent's beliefs regarding their roles and the students' success at school was remarkable. As a conclusion, it is recommended that parent's roles must be defined clearly by an agreement between the educators and the parents. While honoring parents and educators opinions, the article does not mention the importance of children's opinions involvement.

Allexsaht-Snider and Schwartz (2001) conducted a research on family, school and community intersections in teacher education and professional development that has the characteristics of an integration of theoretical and conceptual frameworks. In the article, a theoretically and conceptually grounded approach to teacher education for family involvement used in programs for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and graduate students in education examined. In the framework of the article, aspects of teachers' cultural knowledge, beliefs and values and family's cultural knowledge, beliefs and values were outlined. The framework also includes the individual concerns of the child, yet it does not emphasize the participation of the child as a crucial right.

The case study of Mapp (2002) focused on the reasons of involvement of the low income families in their children's learning process. It is found that parent's previous experiences of their own educational history and their cultural beliefs and values, shape and influence their involvement in their

children's education. Even if the study is limited by 18 parents from one school, the article concludes by indicating that shared power and balanced relationships between the parents and the school reinforces the parental involvement and a united community. Yet, the research does not mention that the children should also share the power and responsibilities or participate as an active member in the home-school partnerships.

All of the research and studies examined above in different countries focuses on various aspects of parent-school partnership, concluding with several different suggestions. However, the common inadequacy in the mentioned studies is that children are not viewed and evaluated as an active member of family-school collaboration; instead they are viewed as passive objects or the subject as goal in other words.

Family-school collaboration is one of the major contents of the educational approaches in Turkey. Therefore, there is a great number of research regarding school-family partnerships focusing on different aspects. These studies are examined to determine the status of the children in this collaboration and the ways that they participate.

In a recent study, Porsuk and Kunt (2012) investigated elementary school administrator's opinions regarding the problems that occurred in 2009-2010 academic years, during family-school partnership in Denizli, Turkey. A questionnaire including 52 items that developed by researchers was used to collect information. In the questionnaire, there are three major sub-dimensional problems such as; problems arising from parents, from school and from teachers. Children's opinions were not mentioned in any of the items in the questionnaire just as there is no sub-dimension that indicates the problems arising from pupils. By extension, these cues can signify that the study did not consider the children as an active part of the collaboration.

Cömert and Güleç (2004), focused on the importance of parents' involvement in the pre-school institutions, indicating that family, teacher, pupil and the institution as parts of the partnership. The article explicates family-school collaboration signifying the benefits of it for children, school, and family and for institutions. Yet it is not stated that for children to express their opinions in the collaboration might be one of the benefits. Also, the article explains the practices of family-school partnership with details, mentioning that parent-teacher meeting's purpose are to express their own expectations from education and from each other. Again, the children's opinions are ignored as seen. The study concludes with suggestions that could develop and reinforce the partnership which includes offering parents for consideration in which subject they need to be informed, helping parents to involve in education more effectively, organize meetings for parents to know and interact with each other and arranging programs for family education. Nevertheless, there is no suggestion implying that the children's opinions must be taken into consideration while carrying out family-school collaboration.

In a similar article, Camlibel Cakmak (2010) also focuses on the parent-school collaborations in pre-schools while detecting the common mistakes in this interaction. The study suggests to schools to take parent's opinions and keep in touch, nevertheless does not mention the children as active individuals who have opinions and wishes to express.

Aslanargun (2007) reviewed the literature on family-school collaboration and studied on student's academic success in his article. The study also includes a broad information on the benefits of family-school collaboration in various aspects and mentions that the interaction between the family and the child is very important for the collaboration to serve the purpose. Also suggests to reinforce parents to take responsibility in decision making processes regarding their children's academic process in school. But the study does not ignore the children's participation rights in decision making processes and states that the children should also take responsibility in their own education process and have an influence on the decision. Yet in conclusion, the recommendations do not include any statement that suggests the children should also be an active member of the collaboration in every step regarding their own education.

Erdogan and Demirkasimoglu (2010) investigated teacher's views on parental involvement in children's education progress in Ankara. They used semi-structured interviews as research method and

collected data from 10 teachers and 10 school administrators at public primary schools in Ankara. As a finding of the study, it is indicated that some parents interfere in education with personal wishes such as asking teacher to seat their children next to a successful student or next to a girl if the child is also a girl. The article does not mention that these wishes are co-decisions of children and parents. Depending on this information, it is clear that the children do not participate in decision making process in their own education. According to the teachers; parents are behaving quite domineering and over-monitoring. Also the teachers reported that the most popular reason of parent's collaboration with school is their concern regarding student's academic success. According to the study, the topics of discussion between family and school are usually consisted of parent's or teachers concerns. Nevertheless, active participation of children in decision making process in their own education is not indicated in the article. Therefore, it may be reasonable to imply that children are not considered to be an active member of parent-school collaboration, quite the opposite, they participate as objects that can be decided upon by parents and teachers.

Sahin and Unver (2005) also focused on family participation in preschool education programs in a study which they also disclose the obstacles in parent-school collaborations. The article includes topics such as; parent's wants from teachers and teacher's wants from parents, in order to improve family involvement in education. However the article does not mention children's wishes and their participation as an active member in their own education process. The study discusses several approaches regarding parent-school partnership such as; Protective Model, Expert Model, Transmission Model, Curriculum Enrichment Model and Partnership Model. Nevertheless none of these approaches take children as active members in partnership.

Ozbas and Badavan (2009) investigated parent's and primary school administrator's opinions on the applications of parent-school collaborations and possible differences between the applications and what supposed to be done with 284 administrators and 384 parents from 92 primary schools in Ankara. Findings of the survey indicates that parents have significantly higher expectations from school-family collaboration than administrators, especially on solving disciplinary problems. However none of the items in the survey touches on pupils opinions or their participation in parent-school collaboration. In addition to that, the study do not include any recommendation regarding children's participation rights in family-school partnership.

## **FINDINGS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

Sheridan and Samuelsson (2001) investigated the opinions of thirty-nine 5 year old pre-school children on participation in decision making process in Sweden. They used an adapted and translated version of The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) which was originally developed by Harms and Clifford in 1980, to gather data. The basic questions inclusive of the scale that were asked to children concentrate on revealing whether children think that they participate in decision making progress or not. The findings of the study indicate that most of the children in the study did not believe that their teachers knew what they wanted to do, perceived the teacher as an authority, expressed that the teacher decides almost over every issue and felt that they could have participated more at home and at school in decision making process. The article concludes by suggesting that the results of the study should be used to enable children to express their opinions by promoting efficient methods and approaches.

The article that examined the situation in Turkey regarding the participation rights of children (Erbay, 2013) reveals the facts and details of the big picture. It is stated that there are 25 million children living in Turkey that makes % 33 of the population which is a big number that indicates an important factor in terms of its potency in policies and applications. The article adverts multiple participation areas of children such as; participation in institutional processes, in family, in school, in preparing a law, in children criminal justice system, in health care institutions, in adoption and foster home-care, in local authorities and in media. As a conclusion, the article reports that the participation rights of the children in Turkey is not totally applied as it is indicated to be in the Convention on The Rights of

Children. As the article states, the biggest obstacle in the application of the children's participation rights in Turkey is the confusion of prioritizing whether to adhere to the best interest of the child or to let the children participate in decision making process totally freely.

In a recent article, Degirmencioglu (2012), identified the participation rights of children in Turkey as 'reverse participation' indicating that most of the children in Turkey are precluded from the activities that they enjoy to do and forced to participate in some sort of activities that they don't like. As a strong example he refers the celebrations of April 23<sup>rd</sup> National Sovereignty and Children's Day in all over Turkey. While April 23<sup>rd</sup> is a significant national festival of children, the applications of the festival does not centralize the happiness and wants of children, on the contrary, the children are forced to demonstrate and parade in the ways that their opinions are ignored. Degirmencioglu states that the adults ironically take no notice of the children's wishes on a specific festival called "The Children's Day". The article recommends as a conclusion that the competent authorities must take action to prevent the violation of the children's participation rights.

Another article that focuses on the children's participation rights compares the perceptions and applications in developed countries and in Turkey. After the comparisons, the study concludes recommending that in order to help children express their opinions freely, the environment of the child must be organized in a way that the child feels safe and comfortable. Also the children must be guided and informed appropriately by the adults in the subjects that the children will decide. The article also indicates that the expression ways of the children may vary depending on their maturity and developmental stages, such as demonstrating, painting or drawing, body language or any kind of verbal and non-verbal communications (Sahin and Polat, 2012).

In a recent study, children's participation rights are investigated and analyzed in local levels in Turkey to generate a new understanding regarding children participation. The article indicates that legal infrastructure of Turkey is not efficient on the participation rights of children. The children's rights are considered to be only protectionist implementations, not participatory adaptation in 1982 Constitution of Turkey. The study concludes by recommending that the governments must reconstruct the social policies regarding the children in Turkey and in all over the world (Ozer, 2013).

## **CONCLUSION**

As seen clearly, a large portion of current discussion on school-family collaboration in various countries including Turkey is marked by a series of interlocking discourses which serve to ignore the children's ideas and wants in contravention of the clear statements in Convention on the Rights of Child. As well as the expectations of the families from their children, the children's expectations from families and school must be taken into account. Children should be viewed, not as vulnerable passive victims, but as social actors who can play a part in the decision to influence their own education process. Such a view would result in more careful attention in communicating effectively with children about school, education and ensuring that they may have a more central role in decision-making about participation. The requirements of such a vision of children's participation must be considered in order to make it an educational possibility in school-family collaboration pursuant to the laws and applications in all over the world and in Turkey. Involvement of families in the education of children helps to improve the student achievement. Yet, it is not enough to take only the parent's, community's and the school personnel's opinions in the education process. Since learner is the focus and the key member of this process, the pupils opinions on his or her achievements are crucial. In addition, academic success should not be the only criteria while evaluating the children's achievement. All of the criterias must be commonly created with every single member of partnership. Children's perceptions of achievement must be included in educational processes. Besides it is a fundamental right of the children to participate in all of the decision making processes regarding themselves as an active member.

This study clearly indicates that most of the current applications of parent-school partnership are ignoring the participation rights of children. Therefore, the applications and the approaches in parent-school collaboration must be reviewed in order to activate the children in all the decision making

progresses that affect them directly or indirectly. In addition, children's participation rights must be considered not only in schools, but also every other environment that they exist. Communities and families must take children's opinions and assist them properly to influence the decision. Children's developmental stages must be considered while assisting or guiding them to decide freely. The subject must be told to children by an adult in an appropriate way for their age, developmental stage or cultural, individual differences. Therefore, painting, demonstrating, talking, playing etc. should also be considered as alternative procedures in taking children's opinions, according to the specific situation. Parenting educations must include trainings such as enabling parents to communicate with their children more effectively and improving parent's abilities and knowledge on how to make co-decisions with their children. Above all, the perception of parent-school collaboration must be changed and considered as parent-school-child and community partnership. As every member, the child must be stated as an active member of the partnership.

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