

# A Cross-National Analysis of Parent Involvement in Decision-Making: Germany, France and Turkey

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## Abstract

Being a cross-national analysis, the aim of this study, which draws on data from school principals, is to evaluate parents' involvement in decision-making processes comparatively in Turkey, Germany and France, which are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and were included in the study in terms of some variables, such as data in Human Development Index (HDI) report 2016 and results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 reading skills, math and science literacy results' based on demographic, socio-economic, socio-cultural variables as well as achievements in education, population trends and parents' involvement in education. Phenomenology research design from qualitative research methods was used in this study. Data analyses relied on content analysis technique. School administrators from Turkey, Germany and France were included through criteria sampling method from purposeful sampling methods. Interview technique was employed in order to collect data through a semi-structured interview form. The findings of the study highlighted that all participants agree on the positive impact of parents' involvement in decision-making but there are some ambiguity how and what level parents must involve in decision-making processes. Some recommendations are made on how to improve involvement in decision-making process.

**Keywords:** parent, parental involvement, school-parent council, decision-making processes

## 1. Introduction

It wouldn't be wrong to say that a wide team of stakeholders in education must be formed in order to boost the academic performance of students given that a number of students are taught in schools. For this reason, educational issues must be addressed by all stakeholders who have a word on the future of the children, rather than laying the burden on education systems. Parents, on the other hand, must keep in mind that they are the first teachers of their children, while expecting things to be done by schools and educationalists (Dunn, 2012). As mentioned by (Epstein, 1995), an active parental involvement in educational process are likely to make contribution to development of a better school climate, improving curriculum, development of parents' knowledge and skills on child education as well as teachers' motivation to teach. Children whose families take responsibility in educational settings in an active way gain achievements in terms some basic skills, such as language skills, planning, determining target and those skills are necessary throughout not just educational life, but lifelong, as well (OECD, 2012). Epstein (2009) calls parent involvement in education as "shared leadership" and mentions that it includes not merely administrators and teachers, but also parents and others in society. From this perspective, it can be suggested that the fact that involvement of parents and others in society in educational processes certainly add to academic achievements of students is an issue agreed by almost everybody, but there is a big difference between knowing and implementing this fact. On the other hand, as Epstein (2013) reminds us, schools still have difficulty in collaborating parents as well as other stakeholders in society. Parent involvement considered as a strategy of boosting student achievement are attached importance by politicians, scientists, school administrators, teacher unions and other stakeholders associated with education (González ve Jackson, 2013). Even though there aren't great numbers of students per teacher as much as in old times (OECD, 2016a), it is still difficult for teachers to care each student separately in the classroom. In this context, parent involvement must be regarded as a necessity rather than an optional means of increasing school improvement or student achievement. Quesel, Näpfler ve Buser (2017) note that parent involvement encompasses from learning processes to learning difficulties as

well as from social activities to having a voice on school administration.

### **Dimensions of parents' involvement in decision-making process**

Parents, school and society comprise the elaborated system affecting the students' achievements according to a taxonomi formed by Epstein (1995). According to this model, there are duties and responsibilities that parents, school and society need to do from time to time, separately and occasionally, to support learning and development of students. The model takes the student as the center and evaluates them as the actors of education, development and success. In this context, factors outside the student should design the actions of supporting, motivating, guiding and directing the success of the students together. The basic assumption of the model suggests that there is a high probability that the students will be successful in the academic direction when they know that they are really taken care and supported (Epstein, 1995). The relationship between attempts of schools to include parents in education and student achievement can be seen as the effective outcome of family involvement. In this context, school leaders can have an idea of which methods and techniques to use for parent involvement (González and Jackson, 2013). Epstein (1995) defines six dimensions related to parent involvement: Parenting, communicating, volunteering, family learning, decision-making and collaborating.

### **School-based management for parental involvement in decision-making**

Parent involvement in education is regarded as an important situation for realizing national targets and development of schools (Drummond ve Stipek, 2004). It is necessary to take the support of the parents at the solution of the critical problems encountered in society. In this context, the most important thing for educators to think about is how and in what dimensions parents can participate in educational processes, especially decision-making processes (Adelman, 1992). It is seen that one of the dimensions suggested by Epstein (1995) is involvement in decision-making in education. In this context, it can be understood with involvement in decision-making that parents can have a voice in certain decisions in schools. In a study conducted by González and Jackson (2013), it was argued that parents can involve in decision-making processes by a variety of ways, such as employment of teachers, determining course books and other educational materials and equipments, standarts of curriculum, evaluation of students, school finance and professional development of educators. Teachers and parents must come together and discuss ideas and suggestions to improve children's school performance. It can be seen as an important factor affecting student performance that the educators' awareness of the status of the public in the process of involvement in educational decisions. Adding parents to the decision-making process in education also provides accountability and is influential in the action of all stakeholders (Dunn, 2012).

In the history of parent involvement, the focus has always been the school-based management approach and it has been believed that this kind of thinking would add much to the issue as well as other means of efforts. It has now been hypothesized that school-based management can be defined as moving from a centre-based management approach to local authority management (Cole, 1993; Golarz, 1995). Darga (1993) defines school-based management as involving local stakeholders, including parents, in decision-making process in education with different roles. Rosan (2006), on the other hand, draws our attention to a management such as:  $\text{Autonomy} + \text{Involvement in Decision-making} = \text{School-based management}$ . The school-based management approach allows parents to play an active role in education by participating in local decision-making processes (Darga, 1993). There are many issues that are needed to dealt with regarding the involvement of parents in decision-making processes. Davis (1997) lists the most important issues as follows: (1) the forces that parents have in school policies and practices, (2) the rights and powers of other citizens in this context, (3) the responsibilities of the parents in the school budget administration, (4) the choice of which schools their children can go, (5) the trust of the public schools in the eyes of their parents, (6) the educational reflection of parent involvement, (7) the responsibilities of parents in their own children's education. There are six different components of school-based management at school level (Darga, 1993): students, parents, society, teachers, other staff and school administration. Gramet (2007) underlines that the main responsibility, here, which can be primarily attributed to school principal, is to implement the decisions taken collaboratively in a democratic manner. Darga (1993) stresses that decision units can take part in school managements in three different areas: school budget, curriculum and employment. The studies conducted on parent involvement in decision-making in educational settings (Anderson, 2001; Blow, 1999; Clark, 1994; Colley, 2005; Moses Daniel, 1980; Graham Daniel, 2008; Darga, 1993; Davis, 1997; Dunn, 2012; Flakes, 2007; Folk, 2015; Freeman-Nichols, 2013; Gramet, 2007; Ingram, 1991; John, 1981; Klara, 1991; Maboya, 2001; Ndon, 1994; Ortiz, 2004; Patmor, 1998; Raymond, 1983; Sanders, 2005; Sansosti, 2008; Seitsinger, 1998; Serico, 1998; Sharp, 2002; Sievers, 1997; Suzanne, 1994; Tharp, 2000; Walsh, 1995; Walters, 1994; Woods, 2008) have revealed that students' achievements as well as attitudes and behaviours are directly affected by parent involvement. In Turkey, a key problem with much of the literature on parent involvement in decision-making is that there is still considerable uncertainty with regard to how parents can be involved in decision-making process, although the current researches put forward some general framework. That is, what level and dimensions of parents' involvement in

decision-making processes are therefore required in order to elucidate the issue. With this in mind, this paper is expected to make a comparable cross-national contribution and broaden the perspective in research topic. Additionally, this present study, seeking to address parent involvement in decision-making processes crossnationally, is also supposed to shed new light on the issue and to guide policy makers and practitioners. Within this framework, this paper is to evaluate parents' involvement in decision-making processes comparatively in Turkey, Germany and France, which are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and were included in the study in terms of some variables, such as data in Human Development Index (HDI) report 2016 and results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 reading skills, math and science literacy results' based on demographic, socio-economic, socio-cultural variables as well as achievements in education, population trends and parents' involvement in education. Additionally, it was attempted to reveal the perceptions of school principals in selected OECD countries on parent involvement in decision-making. In line with this main aim, the following research questions formed the study:

In selected OECD countries;

1. What are the perceptions of school principals on parent involvement in education?
2. In what ways do parents involve in decision-making processes?
3. What do school principals do in order to include parents in decision-making processes?
4. What barriers are found in terms of parental involvement in decision-making processes?
5. What do school principals suggest regarding parent involvement in decision-making processes?

## **2. Method**

### **Research design**

The design of this study was based on phenomenology research design from qualitative methods, which is one of the most feasible way to address an issue as it is or to determine an existing situation. This method was chosen because it is one of the most practical way to investigate the phenomenons which we don't understand clearly (Yildirim ve Simsek, 2016). As described by Creswell (2014), phenomenological research design is an inquiry that comes from philosophy and psychology where the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. From this context, this method can be said to present a groundbreaking advantages for the phenomenons experienced in the minds of individuals.

### **Study group**

In the initial stage of the determination of the countries for cross-national analysis among OECD countries, some criteries such as science performance, reading performance, mathematics performance, population 2015 (million), population 2030 (million), HDI rank, HDI value, gross national income (GNI) per capita, life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, legal procedures on parents involvements in education , schools' efforts for involving parents in education, the ratio of involving parents in decision-making from PISA 2015 results and HDI 2016 data were considered. PISA 2015 data were applied because it presents one of the most confident and comprehensive data of cross-national analyses. It can also be said that basic skills that are indicators of success in education play an important role in determining countries when considered as a direct output of training activities. The population ratios have also been determined in order to make the comparison of the reasons for inclusion in the country selection criteria more realistic. In this context, countries close to Turkey population ratios are preferred. The HDI has been used because the data are directly related to the ranking and education of the countries according to the level of development. In this context, countries which have higher values or ranks than Turkey and OECD averages were selected for the data collection. From this perspective, Germany and France are similar to Turkey in terms of population ratios, but are more successful in terms of international exams and HDI values. The detailed information about selected countries are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information on selected countries and OECD Averages

Countries	Germany	France	OECD avg	Turkey
Science performance	509	495	493	425
Reading performance	509	499	493	428
Mathematics performance	506	493	490	420
Population 2015 (million)	80.7	64.4	-	78.7
Population 2030 (million)	79.3	68.0	-	87.7
HDI rank	4	22	-	72
HDI value	0.926	0.897	-	0.767
Gross national income (GNI) per capita \$	45,000	38,085	-	18,705
Life expectancy at birth (years)	81.1	82,4	-	75.5
Mean years of schooling (years)	13.2	11.6	-	7.9
Legal procedures on parents involvements in education	87.1	-	69.8	94.4
Schools' efforts for involving parents in education	94.6	-	88.2	93.2
The ratio of involving parents in decision-making	96.7	-	76.8	91.2

As shown in Table 1, it is seen that France and Germany have higher values than Turkey and OECD averages in terms of science and math literacy as well as reading performance in PISA 2015 results. According to 2015 data, countries are listed as Germany, Turkey and France in terms of population numbers. It can be seen that Turkey has almost equal numbers in population with other OECD countries, Germany and France. When it comes to expected population in 2030, Turkey is assumed to have higher numbers population than others. When HDI values are examined, it is understood that Germany has far higher ranks, whereas Turkey is positioned almost at the end of the list. Turkey has almost half of the Gross national income (GNI) per capita when compared selected countries in this study. Life expectancy at birth is expected to be above 80 in countries except Turkey. Turkey has lower mean years of schooling when compared to Germany and France. When legal arrangements regarding the participation of parents in education are evaluated, it can be said that the countries have similar proportions. There is also a similarity between countries in terms of schools' efforts to involve parents in education.

A total of 84 school principals from Turkey, Germany and France (respectively 21,26,37) were recruited for this interviews. The criteria sampling method from purposive ones was employed to determine the study group. In order to collect data in France and Germany, school principals were invited to interviews voluntarily. School principals in France and Germany were recruited from those who have built some partnerships with Turkish schools within the scope of Erasmus+ Programme, directed by Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate for EU Affairs Center for EU Education and Youth Programmes and databases formed in order for findings partners for international projects. They were offered to be a participant of this cross-national analysis and a great deal of attention must be paid whether they are willing to do this from the heart. It was also checked whether they are school principal or not and they confirmed that they are assigned to a school principal position in their current institutions. Demographic information about the participants are demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic information on participants

Variable	Turkey		Germany		France		
	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)	
Gender	Female	5	23,80	12	46.15	21	56.70
	Male	16	76,20	14	53.85	16	43.30
Age	35 and below	5	23,80	2	7.70	1	2.70
	36-40	7	33,35	3	11.60	1	2.70
	41-45	7	33,35	1	3.85	5	13.50
	46-50	2	9,50	3	11.60	8	21.60
	51 and above	-	-	17	65.40	22	59.50
Marital Status	Married	19	90,50	17	65.40	28	75.70
	Single	2	9,50	9	34.60	9	24.30
Professional Experience (year)	1-5	3	14,30	-	-	-	-
	6-10	3	14,30	5	19.20	4	10.80
	11-15	6	28,60	1	3.85	4	10.80
	16-20	4	19,00	1	3.85	11	29.80
Administrative Experience (year)	21 and above	5	23,8	19	73	18	48.60
	1-5	10	47,60	9	34.60	9	24.30
	6-10	8	38,10	7	26.90	15	40.5
	11-15	3	14,30	6	23.10	8	21.600
Serving in Current School (Year)	16-20	-	-	4	15.40	2	5.40
	21 and above	-	-	-	-	3	8.20
	1-5	16	76,20	11	42.5	22	59.50
	6-10	5	23,80	7	26.9	11	29.80
Student Number	11-15	-	-	1	3.85	3	8.20
	16-20	-	-	2	7.70	-	-
	21 and above	-	-	5	19.20	1	2.70
	500 and below	15	71,40	18	69.25	22	59.50
	501-1000	4	19.10	5	19.2	10	27.00
Teacher Number	1001-1500	2	9,50	2	7.7	4	10.8
	1501-2000	-	-	1	3.85	-	-
	2001 and above	-	-	-	-	1	2.70
	20 and below	10	47,60	11	42.50	15	40.50
Education Level	21-40	7	33,35	2	7.70	6	16.20
	41-60	2	9,5	7	26.90	9	24.30
	61-80	2	9,5	2	7.70	2	5.40
	81-100	-	-	2	7.70	1	2.70
	101 and above	-	-	2	7.70	4	10.80
Total	Associate Degree	-	-	1	3.85	2	5.40
	Undergraduate	15	71,40	2	7.70	8	21.60
	Graduate	6	28,60	20	76.90	20	54.00
	Postgraduate	-	-	3	11.60	7	19.00
	Total	21	100	26	100	37	100

### Data collection instrument

In qualitative research methods, interview is one of the most effective ways of data collection. According to Patton (2002), we interview individuals to get information on those things which cannot be observed in a direct way. Here, the issue is not if using observation method are more desirable, or it is more sensible than self-report data. The issue is that we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. Therefore, the aim of interviewing is to let us to enter into the others' perspective. By exploiting semi-structured interviews, through either face-to-face or online means, we aimed at include semi-structured interviews, allowing for focused, time efficient and easy to analyze conversations (Patton,

2015). Participants from Germany and France were asked questions in their native language so as to get proper information and then they were translated into Turkish by the experts of each language. Additionally, all statistical data were taken from OECD PISA 2015 publications (OECD, 2016a & 2016b)

### Data analysis

Content analysis technique was employed in the analysis of data. The researchers followed an iterative thematic coding approach in the analysis of qualitative data. Data were transcribed, coded and analysed. In order to provide reliability of the study, for each interview question, the obtained data were analysed and then presented an educationalist expert to provide consistency between codings. After this comparison, it was understood that there is a 90% agreement. This rate is reasonable according to the formula of Miles and Huberman (1994): Reliability Formula: Agreement/Disagreement+Agreement. In order to increase the validity and reliability in the research, data diversification was also carried out. Diversification of data sources is important in terms of reaching multiple realities by showing different perceptions and experiences through involvement of participants with different characteristics (Yildirim and Simsek, 2016). For the credibility of the study, the researchers paid attention to being objective from the beginning of the research. As for transferability of the study, the necessary details have been provided in the study. To increase the dependability of the study, the agreement was provided in terms of codes and findings.

### 3. Findings

#### Perceptions of school principals on parent involvement in decision-making

Table 3. Perceptions on parent involvement in decision-making

Codes		Codes		Codes	
Germany	n	France	n	Turkey	n
Parents contribute to education positively	18	Parent involvement is crucial	25	Parent involvement make education stronger	13
It must be enhanced	8	Not satisfactory levels	13	Roles must be clarified	5
Awareness levels of parents must be boosted	4	More encouragement and counselling are needed	6	Involvement must be restricted	4
Not satisfactory levels	3	Parents of hardworking students are more active	3	Level and style depends on parents	4
Roles must be clarified	2	Depends socio-cultural levels	3	Not satisfactory levels	4
Total	35	They mustn't be involved in issues needed being expert	3	Only possible with the support of teachers	3
		Depends parents' educational experiences	1	Must be re-designed	1
		Total	54	Total	34

As indicated in Table 3, it can be seen that almost half of the principals in all countries regard parental involvement as a positive contribution to the education. The fact that parent involvement is not satisfactory levels was reported by the participants. Additionally, it was reported that roles must be clarified in parent involvement in decision-making. When the data are compared, it can be stated that Turkish participants also believe that teacher play an important role in parent involvement in decision-making and parent involvement is increased when encouraged by teachers. A need for revision of parent involvement was among the codes formed according to Turkish participants. French participants, on the other hand, draw attention to parents' own educational experiences regarding parent involvement in decision-making. In this direction, it was reported that parents who have achievements in their educational stages involve more than those who don't.

#### Perceptions of school principals on parent involvement styles in decision-making

Table 4. Perceptions on parent involvement styles in decision-making

Codes Germany		Codes France		Codes Turkey	
	n		n		n
Delivering opinions on school-board meetings	19	Delivering opinions on classroom-board meetings	29	Taking part in school development activities	15
Taking part in social activities	15	Delivering opinions on school-board meetings	27	Delivering opinions on elective courses for students	13
Taking part in school development activities	10	Taking part in school development activities	21	Delivering opinions on school-budget	12
Delivering opinions on classroom-board meetings	6	Delivering opinions on special meeting when necessary	17	Delivering opinions on school-uniform	7
Total	50	Delivering opinions on school-budget	13	Delivering opinions on special meeting when necessary	4
		Delivering opinions on parent-board meetings	15	Total	51
		Taking part in students' evaluation	7		
		Delivering opinions on disciplined and school safety	4		
		Total	133		

As indicated in Table 4, it can be seen that parents involve in decisions regarding school development processes, have a say in school budget decisions, and participate actively in class and school-based meetings. In the opinion of German participants, it is understood that parents have participated in the identification and implementation of social activities. In the French participant opinions, while it was reported that they involve in the discipline and school security issues, Turkish parents involve in decisions for the determination of the school uniforms and the elective courses of the students.

#### Perceptions of school principals on activities conducted for parent involvement in decision-making

Table 5. Activities conducted for parent involvement in decision-making

Codes Germany		Codes France		Codes Turkey	
	n		n		n
Organizing regular parent-meetings	20	Getting them to participate parent-meetings in large numbers	24	Organizing regular parent-meetings	14
Through a transparent administration	10	Asking opinions during parent-meetings	24	Regular home-visits	10
Asking opinions via email or school website	10	Organizing social activities	23	Through parent-meeting hours	9
Including them in social activities	10	Asking opinions on social media or getting them to fill in online questionnaires	9	Through school-parent council	5
Asking opinions directly on special issues	6	Asking opinions via email or telephone	6	Through social activities	5
Organizing informative meetings	4	Asking opinions through school-parent communication council	5	Through text messages or informative notes	3
Through an open gate policy	2	Forming the trust between school and parents	4	Giving responsibility	2
Total	62	Through class teachers	4	Total	48
		Total	99		

As indicated in Table 5, it can be seen that principals typically organize parent-meetings or design social activities to get

parents to involve in decision-making processes. Sending e-mails, text messages and social media posts are the most repeated codes. Apart from common implementations, there are some different applications among the countries. For example, German principals adopt an open gate policy, whereas French principals form school-parent communication councils. Turkish principals, on the other hand, perform home-visits in order to include parents in decision-making.

### Perceptions of school principals on barriers towards parent involvement in decision-making

Table 6. Barriers towards parent involvement in decision-making

Codes Germany	n	Codes France	n	Codes Turkey	n
Low awareness level of parents	9	Low awareness level of parents	25	Low awareness level of parents	6
Busy working life of parents	8	Lack of communication between school and parents	15	Indifference of parents	4
Insufficient knowledge of parents	7	Lack of education of parents	12	Negative attitudes of teachers	3
Transportation problems of parents	3	Negative attitudes of teachers	11	Busy working life of parents	3
Total	27	Expecting things to be done by school	10	Low socio-economic level of parents	4
		Parents' own school experiences when they were younger	11	Bureaucracy	2
		Family problems	10	Not applicable	4
		Social problems	9	Total	26
		Distrust towards school	7		
		Low level expectations of parents	6		
		Busy working life of parents	4		
		Language and communication problems	2		
		Not applicable	3		
		Total	125		

As indicated in Table 6, it can be seen that the most repeated codes by all participants are lack of awareness of parents and their busy working lives. Parents' low educational level, lack of communication between school and parents, indifference of parents and social problems are other codes repeated more than others. German participants, on the other hand, reported that transportation problems of parents can be considered as a barrier to parent involvement in decision-making, while negative teacher attitudes were reported by French and Turkish participants. French principals also believe that language problems, distrust to school, family problems, parents' own school experiences are barriers in front of involvement in decision-making. The most striking result to emerge from the data is that bureaucracy is a barrier for parents to involve in decision-making.

### Perceptions of school principals on recommendations for parent involvement in decision-making



Table 7. Recommendations for parent involvement in decision-making

Codes Germany	n	Codes France	n	Codes Turkey	n
Awareness levels of parents should be increased	14	The frequency of parent meetings should be increased	17	Awareness levels of parents should be increased	10
Involvement style and roles should be more clarified	12	Parents should be invited to each activity in schools	13	Communication means should be varied	7
School-parent collaboration based on trust should be supported through parent meetings	7	Knowledge levels of parents should be increased	16	Involvement style and roles should be more clarified	6
Current systems should be improved	3	Parent involvement in decision-making redesigned	11	Home-visits should be done	5
Existing arrangements are sufficient	3	Awareness levels of parents should be increased	18	Awareness levels of teachers should be increased	1
Total	39	School-parent collaboration based on trust should be supported through parent meetings	9	Parent involvement in decision-making redesigned	1
		Involvement style and roles should be more clarified	8	Education should be privatized	1
		Existing arrangements are sufficient	3	Total	31
		Total	95		

As indicated in Table 6, it can be seen that it is a common view that the roles of families in their decision-making process should be rearranged and that the existing legal arrangements for participation in the decisions should be reassessed and their families' awareness of involvement should be increased. The code reflected jointly with the views of German and French participants is the development of school-family co-operation based on trust. In the opinion of the Turkish participants, as a different opinion, it was realized that they would be able to participate more effectively in the decision-making process by making home visits to the families. Privatization of education, awareness of teachers and diversification of communication channels are among the codes reflected only in Turkish participant opinions.

#### 4. Results, Discussion and Recommendations

This paper outlines the perceptions of school principals from Germany, France and Turkey on parent involvement in decision-making processes and presents cross-national analyses. When the findings are evaluated in general, parent involvement is considered as a positive contribution. The finding of the study conducted by Akkaya (2007) is consistent with this study. It, on the other hand, is crucial to note that parent involvement in decision-making processes aren't at satisfactory levels and must be enhanced. In line with this compelling evidence, this research underlines that awareness of parents as to involvement in decision-making processes must be increased. Our findings which highlight that parent involvement in decision-making is insufficient corroborates with previous results (Argon & Kiyici, 2012; Davis, 1977). Additionally, it was obtained from the analyses that there is a need for clarifying the roles of parents in decision-making processes. French participants reported that parents don't take part in decision-making adequately and they must be encouraged and educators should counsel parents in making their involving in decision-making. It was also found in this study that participants felt that parents don't have enough knowledge and skills in order to involve in decision-making processes, so the participation to decision-making processes must be restricted and parents must be prevented to involve in decisions which need pedagogical decisions in educational settings. The work of Cakir (2007) tells us that principals consider school-parent unions as necessary, but don't think that they can make useful contributions to education. The articles by Akbasli and Kavak (2008) as well as Dolaman (2015) show that school-parent unions don't function properly.

Simon (2004) found that one of the possible reasons for the inadequate involvement of parents in educational decision-making is that school principals and teachers think that they invite the parents by sending an invitation letter or message, but in fact parents don't receive or read the invitation at all and therefore they think that they aren't invited school. However, Anderson and Minke (2007) point out that parents don't regard these invitations as a call for involving in decision-making even if they take the invitations or messages. For this reason, it should be noted that school administrators or teachers must communicate with parents directly rather than sending invitations, texting messages, or trying to reach parents through children themselves. Anderson (2001) highlights that the role of parents cannot be ignored in child education when the indisputable findings of parent involvement in decision-making literature are

considered. Andrew (2012) dealt with the issue from the perspective of east and west cultures and indicated that parents from eastern cultures believe that they must be involved in decision-making, while those from western cultures stand aloof from involving in decision-making. Andrew (2012) attributes this difference to the fact that parents with eastern culture consider the involvement as a right presented to them officially. Colley (2005), on the other hand, made a classification of parents' motivations in involvement in decision-making according to intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic motivations for the willingness of the parents to participate in the decision-making process are the need for adequate leisure time (being unemployed, free time, wanting to do something), personal concerns (supervision of school administration, curiosity, political reasons, recognition) and to get information (to experience learning, to follow how the school budget is spent and to learn about school processes). On the other hand, when assessed in terms of extrinsic motivations, it can be viewed as being requested by someone else to participate in decision-making processes, or as a desire to follow processes related to the school and see what kind of contribution it can make.

When the findings obtained by German principals in the study are examined, it was found that parent involvement can reveal possible negative works or situations in the school organization. This situation, which is defined as "whistle-blowing" in current literature, can be considered as one of the most intriguing findings of this research in that whistle-blowing behaviours are believed to be displayed mostly by staff in the organizations (Near and Miceli, 1985). This finding can also be evaluated as a cultural reflection of German culture. As Aktan (2015) reminds us, it should be noted that in whistle-blowing, someone who reveals, reports, or discloses a negative event he or she sees in an organization does not do so to harm someone inside or outside the organization, but not to harm other people or organizations. In this context, whistleblower may be from within or outside the organization. From this finding, it can be argued that although it seems to be a positive situation for parents to display whistle-blowing behaviors to the necessary institutions regarding the problems they have seen in schools, it would be more appropriate for them to first express this situation in the school-parents associations beforehand.

In this present study, according to the findings obtained by French participants, it was found that those who usually involve in decision-making are the parents whose students have high levels of achievements in schools and it can be argued that parent involvement partially depend on parents' socio-economic levels and their own educational experiences in the past. This finding concurs well with (Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001; Sheldon, 2002) and also is confirmed by the study conducted by Welsch and Zimmer (2008) and is revealing that the educational levels of the families, the occupational and monthly incomes, and the socio-economic levels are positively associated with involvement in education. In this present study, it was confirmed that the previous experiences of parents play an important role in involving in decision-making processes. This lends support to previous findings in the literature. For example, the findings of Thuba, Kathuri and Mariene (2017) as well as Avvisati, Besbas and Guyon (2010) go so fairly well with this paper that parents' involvement in decision-making is shaped according to their own experiences. Basaran and Yildirim (2017) investigated the effects of parents' own school experiences on students' attitudes towards school and academic achievements and found that there was no relation between their parents' attitudes towards the school, academic achievements of students and exam scores. As an explanation for this situation, it can be suggested that in the study conducted by Basaran and Yildirim (2017), the sample consisted of high school students and this sample group may have been affected the findings in that the more students get older, the more they tend to be dependent to their parents in educational processes, and therefore they can take their own decisions. Additionally, there are studies in the literature in step with this finding and they show that family involvement is directly related to the academic achievement of the students and parents' own school experiences, as well. In a study conducted in France, it was determined that the parents allocate an average of 19 hours a day in primary school, 14 hours in junior high school and 6 hours in junior high school for activities and decisions related to the education of their children. (INSEE, 1994;2003). Rây (2003, 2007, 2010) investigated the reflections of parents' own school experiences to the children's early education and determined that parents' previous experiences have a direct relationship with academic achievements and attitudes of children.

In this research, it was found that parent involvement may sometimes be inconvenient in terms of some issues which must be addressed by only experts. At this point, all participants draw attention to the fact that roles must be certain in parent involvement in decision-making. In the same direction with this findings, Cakir (2017) obtained a similar finding that shows school principals are of the opinion that parents should only participate in decisions not directly related to managerial issues of the organization. In Cakir's study (2017), this finding was supported with the saying "*School is governed by principal*". When the related literature is examined, it can be seen that parent involvement is perceived in different ways. That is, parents understand that they are supposed to secure their children when they are expected to participate in decision-making, while teachers refer to parent involvement as an active involvement of parents in educational processes (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Within this context, the works of Landeros (2011) and Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) tell us that parents who continuously exert negative influence on school policy, especially mothers, affect the school climate negatively. As a result of misunderstandings, there occurs communication problems and

teachers, therefore, tend to blame parents for this unwanted school climate (Lawson, 2003). Anderson (2001), on the other hand, argues that it is important for parents to have practical knowledge of legal regulations and policies that determine their rights. This is in complete agreement with Blow's study (1999), which focused on parents' involvement in curriculum design and it was confirmed that the curriculums designed by the participation of the parents were found to be more successful by the review committee and it was concluded that parents should be included in the curriculum development process due to their positive contributions. Clark (1994) stressed that some training or guidance must be provided with parents before such kind of participation and argued that the curriculum leadership skills of school principals are utmost importance at this point, however. Another striking finding of the research is that parent involvement is insufficient. Since the education has been started to provided formally in schools, parents feel that education is the main task of schools and their children can be educated in these institutions. Within this context, education has been considered as a public service provided by authorities like security, health or governing services. But, this is not the case and education issue is such a vital task that those whose occupations are teaching may not be successful as expected. That is, just as the police need their witnesses to perform their duties, or firemen need smoke detectors for fire fighting services, educators need the support of their families and the community in schools (Conley, 1993).

When the findings of the research are examined, there occur some different ones based on either education systems or cultural differences. Turkish participants attach importance to teachers in parent involvement in decision-making, whereas French participants lay burden of parents' previous school experiences when they were students. In French participants, it was mentioned that only parents whose students are successful try to involve. In Germany, on the other hand, parents typically participate decisions, by delivering their opinions as well as attending or organizing social activities and school development works. In France, it has been found that families are participating in more decisions in class councils and school boards, in school development work, and in decisions on certain roles in the school budget. It is also among research findings that families are at the center of decision-making processes in discipline and school safety issues. On the other hand, in Turkey, parents actively participate in activities as a decision-makers, including projects related to school improvement, determination of elective courses, school budget and selecting school uniforms. In addition, in special cases involving students, school principals include parents in the decision-making processes. Erdem and Simsek (2009) also point out that parents should be involved in decision-making processes when taking precautions for students with special conditions such as physical disability and chronic illness.

When the findings agreed by all participants are evaluated, it can be argued that parents mostly participate decisions related to school budget and school improvement processes. In France, parents often deliver opinions on school safety and discipline issues, whereas Turkish parents typically take responsibility in school uniforms and elective courses of students. In a study conducted by C. Epcacan, E. Epcacan, Celik, Ekin and Yuksel (2016), it was reported that found that the majority of the student's parents were against the practice of no uniform, and therefore stated that the views of the parents should be taken in the practice of determining what students wear at school. With a similar finding, Kahraman and Karacan (2013) has also expressed that parents must be given ear during decisions, such as school uniform. According to research findings, school principals try to get parents to involve parents in decision-making processes by making regular parent-teacher meetings in a transparent management style, informing them via e-mail or school website, and receiving feedback. In the German participants' views, which were identified by the school managers who applied the open door model, the social activities were evaluated among the methods used to incorporate parents into decision-making processes in education. Erdem and Şimşek (2009) also point out that in order to increase the school achievement of the students, the opinions of the student and parents should be taken in the educational club activities as well as other social activities. Akkaya (2007) found that families have been implementing applications for participation in the training, such as defining needs and arrangements, arranging parent meetings, submitting information bulletins and sending newsletters, organizing parental trainings, conducting individual interviews, and involving parents in class excursions or social events. When dealt with for France, it was determined that school principals included parents in their decision-making processes through parents' meetings, school-family meetings, and social media. Akal (2010) found that the representatives of school family associations most actively participate in social activities within the school. Turkish school principals are among the important findings of the research that they try to include parents' meetings and family visits and families in education and decision processes. Erdem and Şimşek (2009) also pointed out that the result of the researches is that the families should be visited in a systematic way, that the guidance of the student and the parents can be guided and the students' reflection on their academic achievement and learning desire will be reflected. In this respect, Argon and Kiyici (2012) also state that teachers can communicate effectively with their families through regular home visits and that they can get to know the students more closely.

Among the findings of participants agreed on are school principals' usage parental meetings, school-parental associations and social activities to incorporate their families into decision-making processes in education. Open door model for Germany, school-family communication commissions for French and home-visits for Turks are the most

fundamental findings of the research in terms of activities conducted for parent involvement. Senge (1990) states that for managers, it is difficult to describe organizations from the very top, and that they must intervene in order to understand what is happening within the organization. Detert and Burris (2007) and Shenhar (1993) note that managers' attitudes and behaviors are related to the attitudes to which they exposed and, therefore, managers should act accordingly. In this context, it can be said that the close relationship of school principals to all stakeholders is especially important for parents to participate in decisions.

When the barriers to involvement of parents are assessed, it can be considered that the interests of the families, the intensive working life of the families and the inadequate knowledge levels, as well as the transport problems are valuable barriers for Germany. Argon and Kiyici (2012) argue that the factors that prevent families from participating in education are the low educational and cultural levels of their families, the bad economic conditions, the intense working life, fatigue of the working family, the family environment, family problems and children number of parents. Regarding parent involvement, families with high socio-economic levels both have flexible working hours, and convenient transportation opportunities make it easier for them to attend school at low income families and get their information. On the other hand, it should be taken into account that parent involvement options can be considered differently by those with low socioeconomic levels, and it is necessary to explain broadly and explicitly what is wanted to be explained by parent involvement (Anderson and Minke, 2007).

It was coded in French participants' data that parents' awareness and communication between school and parents are not at expected levels and parents' own school experiences block their involvement in decision-making processes. In contrast to earlier findings Golarz (1995), we found that teachers' negative behaviours was reported as a barrier by French and Turkish participants. Golarz (1995) noted that argued that teachers have a positive perception on parent involvement in decision-making processes, however. In consistent with Golarz (1995), Cakir (2017) confirms that the involvement of parent in decision-making is regarded as a positive phenomenon. From this perspective, it can be argued that school administrators and teachers must keep in mind that they are supposed to adopt a democratic attitude rather than traditional one, which advocates that people shouldn't interfere with their occupations. As proposed by Payne and Kaba (2001), trust between family and school, and strong communication are directly related to student success and this situation is tried to explain via the term "social trust" by Payne and Kaba (2001). Gordon and Louis (2009) and Landeros (2001) concur well with Golarz (1995), Cakir (2017) and Payne and Kaba (2001). There are other studies lend support to this thinking. That is, Miretzky (2004) points out that it is necessary to see teacher-parent communication and interaction as strengthening the formation of democratic communities in schools and as a support for education far from seeing families as "natural enemies" in education (Waller, 1932). When evaluated in terms of Turkey, the families of unconscious attitudes towards education may be expressed among the greatest obstacles to their participation in the decision-making process. In addition, bureaucratic structure is one of the research findings evaluated as an obstacle in parent involvement in decision-making.

Among the findings obtained in all countries, it has been determined that parents' unconsciousness, attitudes of teachers, and intensive working hours of parents are regarded as barriers internationally in their participation in decision-making processes. Language problems in French school principals, and bureaucracy in Turkish participants were also identified at the national level. Colley (1995) also found that parents did not participate in the decision-making process due to lack of time or language problems. González and Jackson (2013) found that teacher professionalism is directly related to student achievement and that the deterioration of the professional working environment is directly reflected in the learning of students. On the other hand, UNESCO and OECD oppose bureaucratization and centralized management in schools and call on all stakeholders to demonstrate accountability, flexibility and commitment in educational management. They also draws attention to the educational participation of families and citizens in order to reflect the public soul. There are different applications for family involvement as there is no internationally recognized common definition, term or practice. In one country school administrations, including parents, have the power to appoint school administrators, while in another country they can not go beyond communicating between parents and teachers (Quesel, Näpfl and Buser, 2017). According to Dizbay (2010), a mutual understanding should be adopted within the framework of the management concept, and the participation of the parents with various professions and specialties should be provided. In this context, it can be said that the legislative arrangements and the making of the changes are important.

It was found that German school principals need to raise awareness levels of their families and clarify their roles in the decision-making process so that their parents can be effectively incorporated into decision-making processes in education. Sahin and Unver (2005) list that activities to be undertaken in this context are to participate in seminars and conferences organized to develop the academic achievements and self-perceptions of children, to enable their parents to play an active and qualified role in the school-to-school activities, to establish effective communication with their parents, to provide regular and continuous forms such as appointment system for teachers, to make contact with all parents of the school representatives determined in school decisions, to ensure that all of them are active in different

tasks regardless of their socio-cultural differences. and increasing their communication with the school by taking a role. Argon and Kiyici (2012) also recommend that conferences, seminars, social activities and visual-written communication tools can be utilised to increase the parent involvement in the educational process as a result of their research. When dealt with for France, it has been found that families need to have more involvement in parent and school-parent association meetings. When the findings obtained from the Turkish participants' opinions are evaluated, it has been determined that the communication routes established by the families should be diversified and the families should be made aware of them. It has also been determined that family visits will be positively reflected in the participation of parents in educational decision-making processes. In the Anderson and Minke (2007) study of communication with family members, it is not clear that what kind of communication (written, telephone, brochure or teacher-written notes) is more effective on the family, as well as whether the quality of communication is more effective suggest that there is no significant finding. Finally, it is one of the important findings of the research that the privatization of education will also have a positive effect on the participation of families in decision making processes. Halsey (2005) found that communication in informal ways is more effective in institutional communication (brochure, letter). Anderson and Minke (2007) and Colley (2005) found that private invitations made by teachers are the most influential variable in participation behavior and that families are also associated with behavior in the home or school.

In sum, parent involvement undoubtedly has a positive effect on student achievement and student improvement. Dijkers (2013) states that as long as there is no co-operation with the parents, we divide the students into two groups: school children and home children. Despite the fact that there are certain legal arrangements for parents to involve in educational processes, as evidenced by Avvisati, Besbas and Guyon (2010) and Graham Daniel (2008), parent involvement is not yet at the expected level and there is a need to evaluate meaningful parent involvement programs. Parents need to be aware and encouraged about the type of involvement.

When the legal arrangements of parent involvement in all countries are examined, it can be seen that there are a great numbers of items in different legislations. However, it can be argued that France and Germany have prepared more comprehensive legislation for parent involvement rather than Turkey. As a reason for this, although there are many factors among the main reasons for this, it can be said that the governance forms of the countries are also influential, and in Germany more detailed regulations have been made in order to unify the practices due to a system divided into different states. In this study, we have managed to present a cross-national analysis and to obtain some compelling evidence related to parent involvement in decision-making. The findings of this paper outline parent involvement perceptions through a cross-national analysis and it can be said that the findings obtained after the research will lead to a re-evaluation of the family politics and the applications of the families about the education participation to the countries and to bring cultural, economic and educational explanations about the subject.

This study has some theoretical and practical implications. Within this context, it would be better to consider school-parent unions as a system contributing to school improvement and student achievement rather than just being a unit addressing financial issues. Our findings appear to be well supported by existing literature. On the other hand, we are aware that our research may have some limitations. The first one is the difficulty of collecting data from the participants in abroad. Even if it is a validate method of collecting data through online interviews, it would be better to interview with the participants from abroad in person. As Kvale (1996) reminds us, the researcher can be considered as a traveller setting forth on a journey together with the participant, and in this context, the researcher interprets the narratives and makes sense of them through interview. The interview technique provides data on participants' past experiences, opinions, feelings and direct knowledge of the level of knowledge about the subject, and collects data on these experiences and perceptions of research participants (Patton, 2002). The second limitation of the research is that it would be better to observe for a long period and determine the perceptions of school administrators, teachers or parents regarding parent involvement in decision-making. It would be certainly to attend school-parent meetings in all countries while collecting data. The third limitation is that another possible source of error is language difference between the researchers and participants from France and Germany. As Patton (2002) reminds us, consideration to language differences crossnationally can make the researchers more sensitive to barriers to comprehending that can originate even among those who speak the same language. For this reason, a considerable attention was given to language differences during the analyses. These limitations are evidence of the difficulty of collection data on this research. In the light of research findings, some recommendations can be made for policy makers, practitioners and researchers. For policy makers, there occurs a need for rethinking current legislation in parent involvement and it is also needed that the roles and borders of parent involvement must be clarified so as to achieve an effective participation. When it comes to practitioners, innovative ideas help to maintain a sustainable continuous parent involvement. The number of representative families in school-parent associations can be increased in order to provide a good example. When it comes to researchers, further works need to be done to establish a detailed framework for parent involvement. A new research path would be to evaluate the parent involvement according to grade levels as well as demographic features of

population. It would also be useful to go more deeply into the barriers in front of parent involvement in decision-making. Notwithstanding the lack of a longer period of collecting data, we believe that our findings compare well with the perceptions of school principals in terms of cross-national analysis.

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