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Research Article

Perceptions of Prospective Pre-school Teachers Regarding Children's Right to Participate in Classroom Activities *

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Abstract

This study investigates the behaviours of pre-school teachers working with children aged between 4 and 6 years with regard to their right to participate in classroom activities. In this context, pre-school teacher's negative or positive applications regarding children's participation rights were revealed. Furthermore, pre-school teachers' applications were evaluated with regard to requirements of participation. The data of 15 pre-school teachers observed in the 'school experience' course were obtained from the files of prospective teachers. Further, 64 hours of observations for each teacher were recorded by two prospective teachers during eight weeks. The data reflecting teachers' behaviours in the educational environment were analysed using descriptive analysis techniques. Results of the research suggested 144 positive and 505 negative cases for 15 teachers in terms of these requirements. It was observed that some teachers consider child-centered and democratic behaviours and children's wishes and opinions and take decisions accordingly. Furthermore, teachers showed negative behaviours predominantly in terms of requirements for participation.

Keywords

Child participation in education • Participation rights of the child • Requirement of participation • Pre-school teachers

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The right to participate in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12) states that in every matter affecting the child, children have the right to be present consciously and willingly and to directly or indirectly express their opinions freely and ensure that these views are considered (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC], 2005, 2009). The participation right emphasizes that all children should express their views on issues that concern them and that these opinions should be taken seriously. It addresses the legal and social status of children, who, on the one hand, lack the full autonomy of adults but, on the other hand, are considered to be subjects of rights. The participation right can be a criteria for evaluating the individuality of the exercise of children's rights. Besides, it may be a universal expression that embodies children's freedom of expression and their right to be heard and to be taken seriously (Değirmencioğlu, 2010; Hart, 2007; Lansdown, 2005; UNCRC, 2009; UNICEF, 2001, 2006).

The fact that children are not yet fully matured physically and that they lack knowledge and experience deprives them of the opportunity to make decisions consistent with their developing capacities (Lansdown, 2001). Adult's perceptions of children as immatured individuals who do not have the basic understanding, communication and selection capacities are considered to be negative with regard to children's participation rights (Pais, 2000). This causes adults to not behave in accordance with and toward the child's best interest at all times, considering children to be weak in family and society; this causes a bias toward the protection of caregiver's rights compared with the child's rights, and children's views are ignored in local policies (Emilson & Folkesson, 2006). It is emphasised in the General Comment (N: 12) issued in 2009 by the Committee of Child Rights that the participation rights of the child are not adequately guaranteed by the states that are parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The committee highlights that the participation rights have been violated in many countries with political and economic reasons in addition to ongoing practices and attitudes. It is emphasised that certain groups of children, especially children from marginalised and disadvantaged groups, are faced with certain obstacles regarding the application of the rights, and most existing practices have quality concerns. The committee also emphasizes that there is a common belief that children desperately need care and protection; therefore, adults find it more appropriate to make decisions instead of children (UNCRC, 2009). Accordingly, children perceive themselves not as individuals taking the responsibility of their own lives but as individuals who realize the wishes and decisions of the adults through the guidance of adults. Participation right leads children to take the role of individuals who can express their thoughts and make their own choices instead of the role of needing protection (Değirmencioğlu, 2010; Hart, 1992).

Although adults' beliefs negatively affect children's participation, children are sensitive to their environment and are aware of their unique identities. Children

can also express their feelings, thoughts and wishes in various ways, make a choice and come to an understanding of the people, places and routines before they learn to communicate with written and verbal language traditions (Hart, 2007; UNCRC, 2005; UNICEF, 2004, 2007). Children are perceived as passive, undeveloped, in need for protection and their skills mentioned above are ignored in the adult's world; these facts should be considered as an important obstacle against participation of the child at home, school and society (Lansdown, 2001; UNCRC, 2009).

It is obvious that only participation-friendly practices of teachers and other adults working with children can ensure the consideration of 'child's participation right' as a biological, psychological and social need instead of an abstract and imaginary concept (Değirmenciöđlu, 2010).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) on 12 March 1996, and it became a part of domestic law. However, studies exploring the Rights of the Child, including the participation right (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 12/1996), have been limited. In addition, concerning the legislation on children in the country, the age limit of children was lower in the Children Act than in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the Children Act, changed and unified by amendments of 22/1959 and 4/2005, children are defined as individuals under the age of 16 years, whereas the amendment of 27/1995 and 2/1999 defines children as individuals under the age of 14 years in the Juvenile Criminal Law.

Studies have revealed that although there are organisations formed jointly by government bodies and non-governmental organisations to increase the awareness on Child Rights, such as Child Rights Platform, previous research on Children's position and Children Rights conducted by the [Cyprus Social and Economic Research Center \(2009\)](#) on behalf of the SOS 'Children Village Association', half of the child population (65%) are under the risk of neglect and exploitation. Accordingly, with results of the research mentioned above, raising the awareness of both adults and children about the issue and taking adequate measures are important. Educational institutions are considered to initiate these measures (Akbođa, 2015; [Education Reform Initiative, 2009](#)).

When educational institutions offer opportunities to teach children their rights and establish an environment for teachers to implement these rights as models for the people around them, the application of universal rights and freedom of each child in all education process and the educational environment seems to be a necessity ([Education Reform Initiative, 2009](#)). This reform could be realised by improving children's abilities, using their existing potentials, developing their self-esteem, helping them to take initiative, acquiring skills in life and recognising children's right

to participate in educational settings consistent with the requirements for participation (Bae, 2009; Hart, 1992; Landsdown, 2001; UNICEF, 2006).

The risk factors in terms of children's right to participate in educational environments are as follows: approximately 8.2% of children in North Cyprus are exposed to physical abuse in schools (Cyprus Center for Social and Economic Research, 2009), the TRNC Ministry of Education's written procedures and child protection policies aimed at preventing neglect and exploitation in schools are inadequate, children's rights with regard to educational programmes are recognised only at the fifth grade level of elementary school and teachers have limited involvement in in-service training activities.

Many studies (Action Aid International, 2011; Breen, 2006; Emilson & Folkesson, 2006; Steinitz, 2009) have suggested similar results. Studies have indicated that adults who are responsible for the protection of the child rights (parents, teachers, etc.), often use violent means to control child's behaviour and that they use traditional methods to suppress children due to the fear of losing authority (Milne, 2011).

Education must be provided in an environment that is free of violence, and children must have the opportunity to freely express their views, participate in school life and gain new skills that develop the democracy and tolerance and help them to pursue their lives as responsible citizens (Hannikainen & Puttonen, 2010). From this perspective, teachers in pre-school educational institutions can provide children with maximum developmental support, and it is possible through facilitating their right to participate in their activities and offering appropriate services for their participation (Bae, 2009; Feinberg & Toress, 2001). Investigating pre-school teachers' ways to implement children's right to participate in educational practices is of great importance in terms of providing children with the highest possible level of development opportunities and qualified educational environments.

Method

Purpose

This study investigates the behaviours of pre-school teachers working with children aged 4 to 6 years with regard to their right to participate in classroom activities. In this context, according to the opinions of prospective teachers, the negative or positive ways adopted by teachers in implementing children's right to participate and the respectful, voluntary, informative and inclusive requirements of the application of these participation-related activities were reflected.

Study Design

This is a qualitative case study. A case study is a research design that provides a detailed explanation and analysis of one or more cases (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2015; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Merriam, 2009). The case is a system in which boundaries can be defined by people, groups, organisations, events and processes. The system is a holistic concept that includes the relationships between the components of the case, whereas boundaries that can be defined explains the boundaries that determines what the case is and is not. Many methods and approaches can be used to collect data in case studies. Data can be collected from documents, interviews, test results and archive records (Christensen et al., 2015). In this study, documents created by prospective teachers in the school experience course of pre-school teacher training program were used. Therefore, document review method based upon the observations of prospective teachers was used as a method of data collection.

Sampling/Study Materials

In this study, the goal-oriented document selection approach was used to identify the study material (Creswell, 2007). Data was decided to be collected from the teachers in the Girne region. For this study, it was appropriate to use the already existing school experience course observation records of 15 of the 18 teachers working in Girne. In this context, observation record files created by 30 teacher candidates under 15 teachers with regard to school experience course were used. Observation records of each teacher were created by two different prospective teachers. The document contains observation records of eight hours per week for eight weeks with a total of 64 hours for each teacher.

Data Collection

Secondary data (Christensen et al., 2015) was used as the data collection method, and document review method based on the observations of prospective teachers was used. Documents are one of the many methods and approaches that can be used to collect data in the case study design. Observation records created by prospective teachers in the school experience course, which is included in the sophomore years of the Pre-School Teacher Department of a private university, were used as the document. There are some reasons to use these existing records in the data.

First, classroom observations made by prospective teachers within the scope of the school experience course are made repeatedly as a standard practice that repeats every year, and thus, teachers are already accustomed to this practice. Teachers gave consent without feeling disturbed. Thus, it is thought that teachers are more likely to approach children participation with their existing and more realistic ways. The second factor in determining the use of observation records is the fact that

64 hours of observations reflect teachers' classroom behaviours in detail. Finally, prospective teachers were trained on how to make observations before they record their observations in the school experience course, which is another reason. Within the scope of this training, prospective teachers were informed about the kinds of observations, points to be observed and especially taking fast and effective notes. In addition, prospective teachers' knowledge on child participation and child-friendly practices had been revised with the group discussion technique. It is believed that this training provides skills for observers to see details of behaviours of teachers, interactions and recording in detail.

Ethical Principles

Permission has been obtained from the Ministry of National Education and the university to conduct this research in the due course of law of Turkey. Informed consents of teachers and prospective teachers were obtained (Creswell, 2009). In the observation procedure, the code of ethics determined by the university and the Higher Education Council of the Republic of Turkey for the school experience course were used.

Reliability

Reliability in the study was provided using data sources such as triangulation using multiple and partially investigator triangulation. Observation of each teacher by two teacher candidates was accepted as multiple data source. Investigator triangulation was also used for reliability/validation of the data (Creswell, 2009) in peer reviews. For this, six observation records of three teachers were analysed by one of the researchers and by another researcher independently.

The analysis data were analysed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula, and the overall reliability was 86% ($\text{Reliability} = 15 + 28/15 + 28 + 7 = 0.86 = 86\%$); with this high reliability value, the analysis was continued with a single rater. However, critical review meetings were held by two researchers to prevent the experimenter bias (Merriam, 2009) during the evaluation process. During these meetings, the factors influencing the decision to assign codes and the likelihood of bias were discussed rather than intervening in assigning categories at these meetings.

Data Analysis

All the collected data were analysed using descriptive analysis techniques. Coding was done at the first stage. Coding categories may be constructed from the existing theory, the inductive generalisations made during the research and the categories used by previous research (Maxwell, 2008). In this study, a framework of descriptive

analysis was constructed using the requirements of participation such as volunteer, informative and informal in the child's participation, as pointed out in the General Comment No. 12 (UNCRC, 2009).

In the second phase, the data according to the thematic framework were analysed as follows.

1. Reading observation records
2. Teacher's involvement in child participation is supported by favorable (positive) and unfavorable (negative) statements.
3. Evaluating the situations that reveal the participation positively and negatively according to the respectful, voluntary, informative and inclusive nature of participation.

In the third phase, the cases that are analysed in terms of four requirements as positive and negative were included with quotation from documents (with sentence examples) in the findings.

Findings

In this section, teachers' understandings of the participation of the child in terms of respectful, voluntary, informative and inclusive requirements were evaluated. In the General Comment No. 12, investigating the basic conditions for the application of the participation of the children, it is emphasised to be effective and meaningful and should be understood as a process in which children have the opportunity to be heard and to participate, which shall have all the requirements of the participation, rather than being an individual, one-time activity (UNCRC, 2009).

Requirement of Respectful Participation

The requirement of respectful participation is defined in terms of approaching children's views with respect and offering them opportunities for initiating ideas and activities (UNCRC, 2009). Furthermore, 56 positive and 213 negative cases were reflected in the data of 15 teachers.

The positive cases did not suggest any examples that could be evaluated positively in terms of the respectful requirement of the six teachers' practices. Nine teachers' practices suggested cases that they used child-centered approach, democratic classroom management and that children were provided different options and respected for their choices by their teachers. Observational records showed that teachers asked guiding questions to them to help express their views and wishes, considered children's wishes and created opportunities for children to make decisions.

Observation examples of certain teachers could be stated as follows: “Teacher distributed activity papers and said ‘You can paint them any color you want.’ After their paintings were over, they were called to gray carpets. Here, the teacher distributed the toys and the children played with toys for a while” (Teacher 4). “Two kinds of toys were presented. Legos and kitchen ware.” It is stated as “everyone can play when they want” (Teacher 6). “It was decided to combine with the other 4-year-olds class to make a fruit salad. They peeled fruits and chopped them together. Then they went out to the garden and ate the salad” (Teacher 8).

It is thought that the situations that violate the respectful requirement of the right to participate include teachers’ practice of teacher-centered and autocratic classroom management practices and traditional and convergent solutions rather than artistic processes and creativity.

The observation records reflected that teachers’ approaches were teacher-centered and autocratic to classroom management, and they perceive children as passive individuals and communicate with them in a one-way and limited manner. Accordingly, in the documents reflecting the practice of teachers numbered 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14 and 15, it is thought that teachers violate “respectful requirement” with teacher-centered and autocratic classroom management.

Examples are as follows: “Teacher does not listen to S because his speech is not understood, he always yells at him” (Teacher 3); “When the time is up, none of the kids wanted to wind up. They were begging their teachers to play some more. They had to wind up.” (Teacher 4) “During the event, a girl was left behind trying to keep out of the lines. ‘You are behind everyone’. The teacher shouted, ‘Be a little more quick, be alive’” (Teacher 5); Since the teacher did not bring the CD in the English lesson, he/she played the CD that has English songs in it. The children wanted to dance just like those singers and sing along since they knew these songs by heart. The teacher paused the song and was angry with the kids. Teacher said, “this is an English lesson. Now you are just listening” (Teacher 11). In these applications, it can be said that the teacher is the only source of information and that children are passive receivers and practitioners of information. Moreover, it can also be stated that teachers disregard the needs, desires and opinions of children and that they also demonstrate practices that are contrary to the respectful requirement of children’s right to participate. The statements about the Teacher 7 of “When the children do not do what, teacher wants, they are confronted with question of ‘Are you the teacher, or am I?’” and about the Teacher 12. The teacher who sees that R is drawing something on a small part of his homework, asked “Why did you do that?” R said “I’m bored.” The teacher was angry and said “You are not doing that again, look I cannot erase it.” When similar examples are examined, it can be said that teachers ignore the needs, individual characteristics, opinions and wishes of the children.

In the practice of 15 teachers, teachers are concerned with correct, acceptable and standard ways; their expectations on using acceptable methods are clear and sharp, and they use standard, strict and immutable ways to manage children. E.g. Children wanted to ask questions but teacher did not accept and said "I do not accept any questions now" (Teacher 3). The teacher asked children whose names have been announced to come over. When a child went over to the teacher, the teacher shouted at the child despite the fact that the child was trying to say something as "I did not read your name. Go sit down!" (Teacher 12) and The children were talking among themselves. Teacher shouted to one of the children and said "I hope your tongue gets stung by wasps and swells this big and hopefully you can not speak" (Teacher 15).

Finally, teachers' approach to children's artistic production processes has been examined with respect to respectful requirement. Certain statements are thought to be reflecting teachers' approaches that include implementing common and traditional (convergent) ways and neglecting divergent and creative solutions. Examples from prospective teachers' observation records are as follows: Children paint pastels with mouse, but some children paint with a pencil. The teacher said that they should not do painting with a pencil, that everyone should do it with pastel colors. (Teacher 3); In another free painting activity, children are making the sea red. The teacher asked what was the red part is. The child said "this is the sea." Teacher replied as "The sea ever be red? The sea is blue. Get another piece of paper and paint the sea in blue" (Teacher 5); Showing the picture of the firefighter in the book, "We will draw a fire truck here." You will draw a brown tree. The pressured water will come out of here. You paint it blue and you know its water. The children who did the painting came over and showed their paintings to the teacher. The teacher commented individually and commented as "You can paint more blue. Look, fill these gaps;" Teacher also took her own paint and started to do paintings; Teacher was seated at her table without standing up in the meantime (Teacher 11). These examples show the approaches of teachers 1, 2, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

Requirement of Voluntary Participation

This requirement includes not forcing children to express their views and informing them that are free to end their participation at any stage. Within the scope of this requirement, evaluations of child's voluntary participation to activities and discussions and teachers' ways of creating the environment for this voluntary participation were evaluated. For the 15 volunteer teachers, 73 positive and 110 negative cases were identified.

There are four teachers whose approaches were consistent with the requirement of voluntary participation. Investigating the samples of approaches of teachers 4, 8, 10 and 13, it was determined that teachers' applications for voluntary participation was

reflected in decisions made by the children. Examples of these teachers are as follows: Children took the paints and measured their lengths. The teacher joined them with doing the movements by taking paints. (Teacher 4); The teacher told everyone to play in interest corners they want until the class time. (Teacher 10); The school bell ringed for break, but the teacher waited for the last child until the child finishes drawing his/her triangle and then went to teachers' room. After the break was over, the teacher came back and cleaned up the class together with children. Some time was dedicated to games. Children played with the materials they wanted to play. Some children preferred to play with toys while others play in the sand pool (Teacher 8); During this time, one of the students wanted to sing. Teacher gave permission. The student went to the blackboard and sang (Teacher 13). These expressions can be shown be examples of the requirement of voluntary participation. Teachers' practices in these examples can be seen as demonstrations of supporting children's voluntary participations, considering their needs, individual participation, cooperation and motivation.

Observation recordings of the teachers 1,2,3,5,6,7,8,11,12,14 and 15 considered as negative cases that are not based on voluntary participation of children. These violations of voluntary participation suggested teachers' authoritarian approaches in decision-making processes. In addition, it stands out in observation records that the teachers were focused on how his/her own wishes were fulfilled rather than the wishes of children and forced children to act in line with teachers' wishes. Examples are as follows: A child said: "I do not want to play this game." The teacher looked at her and said, "You too, queue up" (Teacher 2); After the children have been playing for a while, the teacher said, "Now let's play hide and seek." He chose one of the children and said "You're it." They played this game for a while. Then the teacher ended the game (Teacher 8); Teacher said children, "play with the toys I play. Do not take any other toy and everyone will play in the place I picked for them to play" (Teacher 15).

Examples of observation records of teachers suggestedly showing anti-voluntary behaviours such as preventing children from freely expressing their views and threatening children are as follows: "Now, collect your plasticines (play dough) and lay on the table." The teacher called the most silent child to start the game. (Teacher 1); One of the children wanted to read poetry. But the teacher said "You missed your chance because you did not read when you were asked before. You are a spoiled child." (Teacher 6); The child began to paint before the teacher and painted a cloud and the sun. The teacher was also angry with him and said "I will tell this to your mother in the parents' meeting." The child said "She should see it and be happy" (Teacher 11); Teacher is doing the activities that children ought to do and want children to do the activities just like him/her and threaten children who are not doing the activities by saying "I will send you to principal's office" (Teacher 12).

Requirement of Informative Participation

The informative requirement of participation includes providing information that is complete in terms of its potential effect and objective, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate to children (UNCRC, 2009). Furthermore, 10 positive and 112 negative cases were shown in the observation records regarding this requirement. Observation records of teachers 4, 8 and 9 did not suggest any examples that reflected this requirement positively and negatively.

Observation records of teachers 5, 6, 7 and 13 suggested positive approaches in their classroom activities in terms of their informative requirement of participation. These teachers assessed the clues coming from children in their classroom activities and, by taking advantage of opportunities in processes initiated by children, informed them in the way that children need. Examples of observation records are as follows: "We will paint the butterfly of those who can name the organs I show." The teacher reminded those who do not remember by giving clues. He/She said to children who did not raise their fingers, "Let's paint your butterfly, too" (Teacher 5); One of the children did not know how to keep the scissors. He helped him. Teacher made practice with the child on how to use scissors (Teacher 13).

The data obtained from observation records of prospective teachers reflected that teachers 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 violate the informative requirement of participation (negative practices). It can be said that these cases that are evaluated as negative are related to teachers' communication obstacles of I language as commanding, directing, warning, intimidating, nicknaming, mocking, judging and criticising.

Examples are as follows: You have grown up and you came here from a smaller class. If you act like this in upper class next year, you will be thrown out. If you act like a baby, I will send you to the class of 3 years old (Teacher 6); One of the children showed a color and asked, "Teacher, is this yellow?" She was also angry with her. "Have you forgotten the colors? If you do not study, you will forget just like that!" (Teacher 13); Some of the children cannot find a square toy and teacher said, "Use your mind! Don't you see? You are not looking!" said angrily.

In the study, cases that reflect the teachers' violations of informative participation right of children who do not obey teachers' expectations and rules were determined. Examples are as follows: B. "I will not listen to you anymore. You are not just on your foot but you also do not raise your finger" (Teacher 1); The ones who did the activity incorrectly came by the teacher, but the teacher was angry and said "No one will do anything incorrectly;" Although the teacher passed by a child raising hand, told F. (another child), "You tell me" (Teacher 14). Due to the rigid and inflexible approach of teachers, it is thought that the children are not informed about the process.

Inclusive Requirement of Participation

The requirement of inclusion indicates the practices that are distant from discrimination, avoid existing forms of discrimination and underline the promotion of opportunities for children's participation, including girls and boys, in different forms and needs. It is emphasised that children are not a homogeneous group and that participation should not contain any type of discrimination and should provide equal opportunity for all without having any means (UNCRC, 2009). In the study, 5 positive and 70 negative cases were reflected in prospective teachers' observation records. Practices of teachers 9 and 13 did not suggest any negative or positive examples.

It can be said that examples of positive practices of this requirement include inclusive behaviours of teachers on gender and individual characteristics of children. Teachers 2, 4 and 6 exemplify the idea that teachers behave equally with all children and do not exhibit discriminatory behaviours towards gender roles or individual characteristics and opinions of children in the classroom environment. Examples are as follows: Teacher said "Everybody bring me their baby photos." The children gave the picture to the teacher. The teacher showed each child's photo to the whole class. (Teacher 2); Teacher said while distributing toys "Kitchen materials to play with girls and boys here" (Teacher 4); Teacher has put the snowmen pictures of all children on the board. Some of pictures did not look like snowman. Teacher also put them. (Teacher 10)

It is thought that negative examples in terms of this requirement reflect teachers' practices that include indirect gender discrimination among children based on material selection. Teachers direct children to activities that are appropriate for girls and boys according to teachers' own views. These examples can be shown as: The teacher said, "Girls will play with blocks, boys will play with toy animals." The teacher directed them to play house. (Teacher 3); One of the boys got the baby doll and started to play. Teacher said to this child "Give me the baby doll. This is a girl's toy" (Teacher 7); Teacher asked one of the boys, "Put the baby doll back! Are you a girl? Take the car" (Teacher 12).

Observation records also showed that teachers display discriminatory behaviours towards children by labeling children as clean and dirty and good and bad. Examples are as follows: Z. is smart and clean, and A. is naughty and dirty. (Teacher 1); Teachers said, "Who should I call?" He said, "I will choose the most silent child, let's see who it is?" (Teacher 4); "If you continue like this, I will send you to other classes. I will not send Z. she is very intelligent, she does not upset me at all" (Teacher 14). It is thought that teachers in these examples performed the practices that are thought to contain such discrimination to be unbiased when making their selections.

Prospective teachers' recordings related to teachers' practices can be said to suggest that teachers acted discriminatively against children who did not fulfill their

responsibilities. Examples are as follows: In nutrition class, teacher took children who did not bring food on board. Children without fruits watched while others were eating. (Teacher 3); The teacher raised children who did not bring their prom fee and asked "Why you did not bring it?" Children did not answer, and teacher told them to sit down (Teacher 7). These examples indicate that teachers acted indirectly discriminative towards children who did not fulfill their responsibilities according to the teacher.

Discussion

In the study that examines the provisions of pre-school teachers of child's right to participate in classroom practices according to observation recordings of prospective teachers, there are cases that are determined to have the respectful, the voluntary, the informative and the inclusive participation requirements positively as well as cases that violate these provisions. Positive applications of these requirements carried child-centered and democratic behaviours of teachers. It is thought that practices wherein teachers offer choices for children and respect children's choices and opinions indicate a child-centered approach and democratic classroom management. The right to participation occurs in environments in which the child's wishes and opinions are considered, where they are respected as individuals and where the decision-making power is shared between the teacher and children. Such positive teacher approaches provide opportunities for children to express their views and practice in line with their own views, be in cooperation with other children and become active and entrepreneurial. These practices take children to the center of the educational process and consider them as an active participant in it.

Child-centered education is defined as the reconstruction of the educational process to ensure child participation at all stages, considering individual characteristics of children, and to ensure that individuals who have scientific thinking skills are productive, have communication skills, have adopted universal values, use technology effectively and have realised their potentials (ActionAid, 2011; Akyüz, 2001, ERI, 2009). In this approach, the role of the teacher is to guide the children in terms of children's developmental characteristics, interests and needs. The study on the perceptions of the primary school teachers conducted by Maden, Durukan, and Akbaş (2011) and the study on child-centered practices of pre-school teachers conducted by Kaya and Güngör (2012) suggested that positive opinions of the teachers about the child-centered approach were high and that they included this approach into their applications.

In our study, prospective teachers' records of positive practices of all requirements of teachers' participations indicate the presence of child-centered practices. The child-centered approach of teachers gives children the opportunity to choose, freedom to

think, explore, question and answer the questions. It is unlikely that teachers adopting child-centered approach ignore children's participation in their practices (Community Child Care Victoria, 2010; Maxwell, 2008).

Another factor that is related to teacher behaviour, which is evaluated positively in terms of requirements of participation, is teachers' understanding of democratic classroom management. The understanding of democratic classroom management implies that teachers share the classroom control with children and that they support the participation of children in classroom activities and decision-making processes. The study conducted by Tuncel and Balcı (2015) showed that most teachers who participated in the study exhibited democratic behaviours in classroom environments and that a significant part of these behaviours were also reflected in student behaviours. In another research, positive and strong correlation was suggested between democratic classroom management and child participation (Ahmad, Said, Mansor, Mokhtar, & Hassan, 2014). Teachers who act in line with this type of understanding regard children's views as an important aspect that shapes and enriches their educational practices in the classroom environment.

Moswela (2010) and Yıldırım (2013) defined democratic attitudes that teachers perform the most in the classroom environment to support the participation of children in educational settings as considering the interests and needs of the students and determining class rules together with the students. In these environments, children can discuss their views with their peers and their teachers without being exposed to discrimination and without the fear of being judged. In a democratic classroom environment, teachers feel that each child is a valued member of the class and consider the individual differences of the children, as opposed to the idea of growing children accordingly with traditional patterns (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Feinberg & Toress, 2001). In these environments, each child is supported in the development of their individual qualities and abilities, and they contribute to the processes in educational processes as a valuable member of the class. The study conducted by Çelik (2011) to determine the relationship between teacher attitudes and self-esteem levels of students concluded that democratic classroom management is associated with high self-esteem. It is thought that the negative cases regarding the respectful requirement of right to participate include teachers' practices of teacher-centered and autocratic classroom management and preference of traditional and convergent solutions rather than artistic creativity in artistic processes. Relatedly with the teacher-centered and autocratic approach of classroom management, it can be interpreted that teachers perceive children as passive in their practice and communicate with them in a limited and unidirectional way. Furthermore, it can be said that the teacher is in the position of the only source and communicator of the information; the children are passive recipients and actors. In addition, it is thought that teachers demonstrate practices that

ignore the needs, desires and opinions of children. In our study, all of the teachers were interested in the right, acceptable and standard ways to do something in their practice; they had clear and sharp expectations about doing the work with acceptable methods; and managed the children in an immutable, standard and strict way.

Examples obtained from observation records support that classroom practices and rules are determined by teachers and that teachers expect that children obey these rules without questioning. It is thought that the teachers' behaviours in cases that children do not obey the rules or when children appear to have an unwanted behaviour in the classroom are strong evidences that teachers do not respect the age and individual characteristics of the children and that they show reactions such as reminding, shouting and anger. It can be said that with these reactions, teachers aim to put forward the fact that they have the power in the class management.

According to the literature, teacher-centered and autocratic approaches cause teachers to become an actor of source of information, hold and suppress the classroom control, use age and experience differences between children to create authority over them, force children for the application of teachers' own views and ignore the interests and needs of children (Bilgin & Bahar, 2008; Celep, 2002; Güneş, 2007; Senturk, 2007). In environments where teacher's authority is high, practices are guided by teachers, and such practices pose risks to child participation (Emilsson & Folkesson, 2006). The study conducted by Akyol (2011) concluded that although there is an inclination towards making children to be more active in their decision-making process in educational environments, the traditionalist approach is still in practice and children's views are not considered sufficiently. The study conducted by Özpolat (2013) named as 'student-centered education approach in teacher's professional priorities' suggested that teachers organize in-class activities generally in accordance with teacher-centered education rather than student-centered education. The researcher explains that this is caused by the fact that education programmes dominate the center of the educational process rather than students, and teachers are making decisions in accordance with educational programmes and exams rather than prioritising students. All these studies that emphasize the teacher-centered and autocratic classroom management approach pose a risk for child participation are consistent with the findings of our study. Erol, Özyayın, and Koç (2010) emphasised that students remember better strict classroom management rules and authoritarian classroom management behaviours related to their teachers. It is thought that this study supports both the existence of autocratic teacher behaviours as well as prominent effects on students.

Similarly, negative behaviours of teachers that prospective teachers have recorded regarding respectful requirement are also reflected in children's art works and product

creation processes. It can be said that the teachers were not acting respectful for children's constructions of different answers or solutions using divergent means in the process of product creation. Teachers are practicing applications such that the existence of only a single solution and choosing the convergent way were accepted wherein feeding the creativity and imagination is impossible (Argun, 2004; Sungur, 2001). Children are restricted from expressing themselves creatively in their own ways. Expectations from teachers in creating creative class environments can be briefly summarised as giving children as much time as they need to finish the activity, creating an inviting and engaging classroom environment and presenting interesting and attention-grabbing materials (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004; Morris, 2006).

However, observation records suggested that teachers are far from the goal of establishing a creative learning environment by placing boundaries on children, evaluating what children do as positive and negative in their own opinions and presenting precise prescriptions about what to do and how to do certain practices (Akdağ & Güneş, 2003; Güven & Cevher, 2005). The study conducted by Özkan and Girgin (2014) evaluated the applications of visual arts activities of pre-school teachers and suggested that applications of teachers are limited by painting technique and expression method; most teachers think that the education they had taken about art education is inadequate. The study of Broinowski (2002) emphasised that there is a positive correlation between creativity and imagination possessed by pre-school teachers and creativity possessed by children, and it was also stated that children's characteristics of creativity are affected by creativity characteristics of teachers. These two studies emphasised the role of the teacher in nurturing the creative potentials of children. These previous studies emphasised the role of environments and teacher characteristics on nurturing creativity and imagination, and our study reveals the fact how teachers' common and traditional applications might be restrictive in terms of children's creativity and imagination.

Teachers have practices that allow voluntary participation of the children in their choices. It can be said that in the examples that promote voluntary participation, teachers encouraged children to self-learn and acquire new skills by creating a free, unrestricted environment. This situation can be related to democratic and child-friendly teacher attitudes, just like it can be related with the requirement of respect.

It can be outlined that violations of voluntary participations involve teachers using their own authority in decision-making processes. It was also demonstrated that teachers push children to behave in accordance with teacher's wants and focus mainly on how their own wishes will be fulfilled by children rather than wishes of the children. It is thought that in anti-volunteer practices, teachers exhibit behaviours that are far from the idea of perceiving children as individuals who have the capacity

to implement their own views and wishes. In such situations, teachers prefer not to share power to take decision with their children, as in the teacher-centered approach and traditional classroom management. They prefer decision-making authority and power in classroom practices (ERI, 2009; Emilson & Folkesson, 2006; Hannikainen, & Puttonen, 2010).

Teachers consider children's expressions of views as a violation of his or her authority, and they expect the child to apply the teacher's views without questioning them. In the study, it can be said that applications including violations to voluntary participation emphasize children in the role of listeners and actors of their teachers' decisions rather than individuals who are participating and taking responsibility. This fact can be considered to have association with the traditional teaching and autocratic classroom management in which the teacher is active and the child is passive. Correspondingly, it can be said that applications that violate respectful requirement of participation in this study were shaped by teacher-centered education and autocratic classroom management approach. In the study conducted by Davies (2000), according to the opinions of the children, teachers ignore them in the decision-making process and do not consult their opinions. This research supports the findings of our study regarding respectful and voluntary requirements of participation.

In positive applications related to informative requirement of participation, teachers use cues given by children and inform the amount needed by the children using opportunities that arise during processes initiated by children. Adult help provided by teachers in positive practices encourages and supports children to increase their existing capacities (Lansdown, 2001a, 2005b).

In applications that violate informative requirement of participation, it is thought that the teacher uses expressions with "you" language obstacles and violates these applications with an understanding of autocratic classroom management. Messages that constitute an obstacle with the use of "you" language in communication consist of expressions such as accusatory, expressive behaviours in a manner that causes people to feel uncomfortable, reluctant to speak again, prevent to reveal the reason of anger, underestimate children and force them to defend themselves in general (Ataman, 2003; Bulut, 2008; Gordon, 2003; Yavuzer, 2003). In this study, it was determined that teachers usually use communication obstacles such as directing, warning, giving orders, intimidating, nicknaming, mocking, judging and criticising. Communication barriers convey messages to children that they are not accepted as they are and that their feelings or needs are not important. It also includes the subliminal messages that they must adhere to the adult's wishes and opinion (Gordon, 2003).

Communication obstacles may lead children to feel threatened and deprived, develop feelings of inadequacy and avoid communication (Gordon, 2003). The

findings of the study conducted by Varol (2012) suggested that pre-school teachers have communication problems with their expressions in in-class activities; for instance, teachers are not able to use the language effectively, make gestures and mimics that are not suitable for children and they do not try to activate the communication. Classroom environments that have intensive communication obstacles create risks for children's participation. Use of "you" language by teachers leads to intensive communication obstacles in classroom environments, and it causes teachers to take the role of authority of giving directions to children and controlling them (Sadik & Saban, 2008). Teachers' behaviours of warning, threatening and shouting restrict children's freedoms to express themselves. Besides, these behaviours are affecting children negatively in terms of creating a trusting environment, which is previously mentioned in the informative requirement of participation as a condition to increase the participation of children (Akboğa, 2015). In this respect, these behaviours are evaluated within the context of emotional abuse in classroom (Kanak, 2015).

The study conducted by Salminen (2013) to investigate factors that increase the classroom activities of pre-school teachers related to the right to participation emphasised that encouraging children to express themselves by teachers is an important element. In the same research, the conclusion that teachers' verbal and non-verbal ways of directing children were considered as negative in terms of children's right to participation was also emphasised. In our study, children whose behaviours did not meet the expectations and rules were violated by certain teachers in terms of their right to informative participation. Due to rigid and inflexible approaches of teachers, children are not informed sufficiently about processes. Therefore, it can be said that characteristics of teachers who expect children to act in line with the teacher's wishes and rules negatively affect the application of informative requirement of participation as in respectful and voluntary requirements.

Significant part of teachers' behaviours that cause violations in respectful, voluntary and informative requirements of participation are thought to be related mostly with the understanding of teacher-centered and autocratic classroom management. The classroom practices of teachers observed in our study show consistencies with the characteristics of teachers who adopted an autocratic and teacher-centered approach in classroom management indicated in the literature (Bilgin & Bahar, 2008; Celep, 2002; Güneş, 2007). On the other hand, Degirmencioğlu (2010) emphasised that services for children in school environments are practices that are under the control of adults such as teachers and administrators and that these applications are far from practices that can contribute to children's right to participate. The term "reverse participation" is used for such practices that do not contain informing the children and receiving opinions of them.

In positive examples of integration requirement of participation, teachers exhibit inclusive behaviour towards children's gender and individual characteristics. It can be said that these teachers behave equally with all children and do not exhibit discriminatory behaviours towards children according to their gender roles or individual characteristics and opinions in classroom environment.

As a negative example of integration requirement of participation, it is mainly thought that teachers observed had exhibited indirect discriminatory behaviours depending on the gender roles of the children. It can be said that this is especially the case for the selection of materials and directing children to activities. In the past, gender discrimination in the education system had a structure that prevented female from educational opportunities and have a profession, caused them to stay at home, do the housework and get married at early ages. However, in today's world, the discrimination between girls and boys in the education system has been reduced to a considerable extent, but indirect discrimination continues in practice (Coleman & Kerbo, 2003). Such discrimination poses a risk to children's right to education consistent with their development and skills and causes children to be educated in determinate patterns (Breen, 2006; Demirbilek, 2007). The conclusions of the study by Özdemir and Ramadan (2012) proposed that mothers and teachers tend to prefer toys that are mostly stereotypical regarding gender roles. Teachers are individuals who, in terms of gender, apply the values of their society in class environments. Relationships between teachers and students are established regarding to gender roles, consciously or unconsciously, by teachers.

These behaviours of teachers shape children's behaviours starting from the pre-school period. Such judgments create an unfair process in terms of both boys and girls and negatively affect children's selection of activities and points of interest (Esen, 2013; Zittleman & Sadker, 2002).

Another type of discrimination occurs when teachers choose children to take part in activities or participate in discussions. It was observed that teacher choose children by labeling them as well-behaved, naughty, clean and dirty. In these examples, it is thought that teachers have carried out these discriminative practices to be impartial while making selections among children. Although these behaviours appear to be impartial, they create disadvantages for certain children in classroom environment and indirectly affect children in a negative way (ERI, 2009).

It may be said that teachers give silent and well-behaved children more chance to participate in the class environment. It is also believed that teachers exhibit discriminatory behaviours against the children whom they think do not fulfill their responsibilities. It may be said that expectations of teachers who exhibit such behaviours are not realistic in terms of children's age and development levels, and

it is difficult for them to distinguish between responsibilities of families and of children. In contrast, in the present study, teachers who are principally responsible take precautions to remove discrimination and exhibit discriminatory behaviours towards children because their families do not fulfill their children's responsibilities (Breen, 2006).

In a study conducted by Altinkurt and Yılmaz (2011), according to opinions of prospective teachers, teachers mostly exhibit discriminatory behaviours towards students who are misbehaved and low in academic level. Teachers are not interested in these children and ignore them.

In a century where the education aimed to allow children to freely express their views, participate in school life and be free from violence, the education is intended to develop the democracy and tolerance and provide skills for children to their lives as responsible citizens (Hannikainen & Puttonen, 2010; Steinitz, 2009; World Vision International, 2006); teachers' discriminatory practices are seen as one of the most important obstacles to achieving these goals. These behaviours of teachers are thought to be a risk not only in terms of integration requirement of participation but also in terms of children's right to participate in education in general. Teachers' behaviours that contain indirect discrimination may affect the position and the development of the children in classroom negatively (Plessis & Bisschoff, 2007). It is also suggested that such behaviours of teachers lead to the development of stereotyped behaviour patterns in terms of discrimination in children (Ruggs & Hebl, 2012). According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005), "educational inequality" is a concern for all countries and discrimination continues to influence the school systems.

It can be said that observation records of pre-school teachers suggested some positive applications in terms of children's right to participate and their requirements; however, negative practices are dominant in terms of both quality and quantity. Taking positively, the applications regarding to children's right to participate and sustainability of these applications are of great importance.

The following suggestions can be made to increase pre-school teachers' levels of awareness about children's right to participate and give the right place to children participation consistent with its requirements.

- In-service training programmes for teachers and administrators should include subjects concerning child-centered approaches, understanding of democratic classroom management, effective communication, gender, support for creativity in children, child's rights, child's right to participate and protection from abuse and neglect.

- Child protection policy should be established to prevent abuse and neglect in schools, and education concerning this policy should be provided for administrators, teachers, school staff, children and families.
- Activities should be organised to increase the level of awareness of children, teachers and parents about the rights of children and child's right to participate in collaboration with Pre-School Education, Psychology, Psychological Guidance and Counseling departments of universities.
- Research that investigates classroom practices in terms of child participation in Turkey should be conducted, and these studies should cover primary and secondary levels of education starting from the pre-school period.

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