



Final Year Faculty of Education Students' Views Concerning Parent Involvement

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Abstract

This study has aimed to determine the knowledge, skills, and views held by pre-service teachers attending different teacher training programs about parent involvement. A total of 520 4th year students receiving education in primary school teaching and in branch teaching programs participated in the study. Data were collected by the "Parent Involvement Survey" developed by Epstein and Dauber. This survey contains both open-ended questions and Likert-type items regarding the dimensions of parent involvement. A mixed research model was employed in this study. MANOVA, ANOVA and t-test were used. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed. The results show that although participants generally have positive opinions about parent involvement, participants from the primary school teaching program have higher averages in all dimensions. There is a significant difference between groups in regard to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 7th dimensions, but not in terms of the 5th, 6th, and 8th, dimensions. According to the results, branch teachers working with middle school students have more limited knowledge and less positive views on this subject. While they believe that the subject of parent involvement should be included in teacher training processes, they also think that parent involvement is not sufficiently supported at schools due to reasons stemming from both teachers and families.

Keywords

Epstein's Parent Involvement Model, Family-school Collaboration, Parent Involvement, Teacher Education.

Parent involvement is a continuous and systematic approach involving such activities as providing knowledge and skills in needed matters in order ensure and support both students' academic and personal development, the establishment of continuous and active communication with teachers and school administration, recruiting and organizing parents' help and support by volunteering in the activities carried out in one's school and classroom, and establishing collaborations involving not only school and parents, but also social resources. Different models have attempted to define the various aspects of parent involvement in detail (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Epstein, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). Among such models, the model put forward by Epstein (2005) stands out

among others as being the model which addresses all aspects of parent involvement while also attracting the most attention. The model employed in the present study treats parent involvement under the following six titles: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

The literature shows that when parents are involved in their children's education and when teachers and administrators allow such involvement, positive changes are experienced in student achievement, student attendance, student attitudes towards school, student motivation for learning, increase in social skills, and a decrease in disciplinary issues (Ashby, 2006; Aslanargun, 2007; Catsambis, 1998;

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Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005; Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1989; Herndon, 1995; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jaynes, 2007; Kotaman, 2008; Sarpkaya 2005; Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002, 2005; Şad, 2012; Wheeler, 1992). Despite the above-stated advantages of parent involvement, the current reality is that parent involvement is not at a satisfactory level. Parent involvement practices, despite certain regulations introduced in countries like USA and England, are far from covering all schools (Conteh & Kawashima, 2008; Gonzalez-DeHass, 2005). According to Moles (1993), there are three main reasons influencing the involvement of parents in the educational process. The first one includes psychological and cultural factors related to parents and teachers that prevent the establishment and development of the parent-school partnership (Flynn, 2007; Morris & Taylor, 1998). The second reason is the fact that interaction opportunities are limited due to the working conditions and schedules of parents and teachers (Epstein & Becker, 1982; Flynn, 2007; McBride, Bae, & Blatchford, 2003). However, it is argued that the factor most effective in preventing involvement is the insufficiency of knowledge and skills of teachers regarding how to foster parent involvement (Gonzalez-DeHass, 2005).

The efforts made by teachers after beginning their professional life are shaped by both the professional experiences gained during teacher training and professional career as well as their own personal beliefs (van den Berg, 2002). Research demonstrates that although the importance of parent involvement is accepted by teachers, school administrators, and researchers, the required amount of attention is not given to the issue in teacher training (Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Epstein, 2005; Flanigan, 2005; Graue & Brown, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002; McBride, 1991; Patte, 2011; Shumov & Haris, 2000; Tichenor, 1997; Young & Hite, 1994). In parallel with this deficiency in curricula, many students attending teacher training programs state that they not only consider themselves lacking competence in parent involvement practices, but that they also need more training in this matter (Chavkin & Williams, 1988; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Flanigan, 2005; Katz & Bauch, 1999; McBride, 1991; Tichenor, 1997, 1998).

In Turkey, it is the Council of Higher Education that makes all definitions concerning course content, the periods during which students are required to study, and which competences are applied in all the programs of Turkey's faculties of educa-

tion, which serve as teacher training institutions. According to the review conducted in the present study, no program other than preschool and special education programs involve compulsory courses related to parent involvement. However, both the Parent-Teacher Association Regulations arranged by the Ministry of National Education in February 2012 and the General Qualifications for Teaching Profession, again defined by the Ministry of National Education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2012), emphasize the importance and necessity of parent involvement. With this being said however, the literature shows that there are problems in applying programs and methods encouraging parent involvement to schools in Turkey (Başaran & Koç, 2001; Erdoğan & Demirkasimoğlu, 2010; Yolcu, 2011).

According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1987), McBride (1991), and Garcia (2004), those teachers who begin to work without having gained sufficient knowledge and skills in the matter of parent involvement have low levels of competence and confidence, and thus develop negative attitudes toward it. Considering that opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills concerning parent involvement become even more limited once a teacher begins employment, it is clear that training on this subject should be provided in the teacher training process (Epstein, 1995; Tichenor, 1998).

Purpose

This study has attempted to answer following questions:

- 1) Do the views of pre-service teachers regarding parent involvement vary by the dimensions of parent involvement?
- 2) Is there a significant difference between the views of pre-service teachers studying in different teacher training programs regarding the various dimensions of parent involvement?
- 3) Is there a significant difference between pre-service teachers studying in different teacher training programs in regard to how they consider themselves competent in using parent involvement strategies?
- 4) What are the views of pre-service teachers regarding the place and importance of parent involvement subjects in the teacher training process?
- 5) What are the views of pre-service teachers regarding the current parent involvement practices in schools and the factors preventing such practices?

Method

Triangulation design, a mixed research model, was employed in the present study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Accordingly, quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed simultaneously, and then interpreted together.

Participants

The study group consisted of final year students of the elementary school teaching program as well as a number of branch teaching programs (Science Teaching, Mathematics Teaching, Religious Culture and Social Sciences Teaching, Turkish Teaching, Computer and Instructional Technologies Teaching, and Fine Arts Teaching) of different faculties of education in Turkey. A total of 520 students participated in the quantitative part of the study. Of these students, 271 (52.1%) were in the final year of elementary school teaching program, while the remaining 249 (47.9%) were in the final year of branch teaching programs. Of the participants, 346 (66.5%) were female and 174 (33.5%) were male. Four open-ended questions were answered by students who volunteered to participate in the qualitative part of the study. The first and second questions were answered by 209 students from the elementary school teaching

programs and 181 students from the branch teaching programs (n: 390); the third question was answered by 173 students from the elementary school teaching program and 109 students from the branch teaching programs (n: 282); and the last question was answered by 212 students from the elementary school teaching program and 144 students from the branch teaching programs (n: 356).

Instruments

In this study, “The Parent involvement Survey” developed by Epstein and Dauber (1989) was used. The original scale, which is a four-point Likert type scale, consists of 82 items, 6 open-ended questions, and 10 demographic information questions. The original scale has a six-dimension structure: 1) Basic obligations of parents; 2) Basic obligations of schools; 3) Parent involvement in the schools; 4) Parent involvement in learning activities at home; 5) Parent involvement in decision-making roles; and 6) Parent involvement in general. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Lindberg and Ülker-Tümlü (2012). In the adaptation process, the construct validity of the scale was tested through confirmatory factor analysis (Kline, 2011), and its reliability was tested by calculating the Cronbach’s alpha internal

Table 1
Statistics related with Scale’s Factors

Factors	Item number	X _{ort}	SD	Cronbach Alpha This study	Cronbach Alpha Lindberg-Ülker Tümlü 2012	Cronbach Alpha McBride, 1991	Cronbach Alpha Tichenor,1998	Cronbach Alpha Uludag, 2008
I. Basic Obligations of Parents	13	22,10	6,63	.90	.87	.80	.80	.82
II. Basic Obligations of Schools	10	17,79	5,17	.86	.72	.69	.72	.73
III. Par. Inv. in the schools	6	11,59	3,52	.77	.67	.69	.76	.72
IV. Par. Inv. in learning activities at home	11	20,76	5,86	.86	.87	.86	.86	.84
Par. Inv. in decision-making roles *	2	-	-	-	.35	.47	.21	.44
V. Parent involvement in general	7	22,57	3,11	.71	.71	.65	.62	.63
VI. Volunteering and par. inv.	5	13,89	3,28	.72	.75			
VII. Communicating and Par. Inv.	5	14,85	2,87	.63	.50			
VIII. Different family types and parent involvement	8	17,65	3,45	.62	.64			

consistency coefficient. Through the analysis aimed at construct validity, an eight-factor structure was obtained as distinct from the six-factor structure of the original scale.

The questions included in the factor, "Parent involvement in decision-making roles" in the original scale were not incorporated in the adapted scale (collectively or in a separate factor). Thus, this factor and its items were removed from the scale. Goodness of fit indices related to the dimensions had values varying from acceptable to very good: $\chi^2 = 5263.03$, $sd = 2456$ ($\chi^2 / sd = 2.06$), $RMSEA = .05$, $SRMR = .06$, $CFI = .95$, $GFI = .73$. In the present study, the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated for investigating the reliability of the scale was found to be .90.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of quantitative data, a one-way MANOVA was used for determining whether there were any significant differences between the responses of those included in the study group by dimensions and by teaching program (i.e. elementary school teaching or branch teaching). As a follow-up test, a one-way ANOVA was used for each dependent variable. In addition, *t*-test for each independent group was performed in order to determine whether there were any significant differences between the means of the preservice teachers from different teaching programs (i.e. elementary school teaching or branch teaching). The data were analyzed at a .05 significance level. The qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions were analyzed via thematic analysis (Flick, von Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004).

Findings

Views Regarding Parent Involvement

According to the answers given to the scale items, it was found that the participants generally held positive opinions. The averages of the answers given to the dimensions varied between 2.28 and 3.29 with results shown in Table 2.

The MANOVA results based on teaching program followed showed that there were significant differences between pre-service teachers in all the dimensions of parent involvement (Wilks' Lambda (λ) = 0.928, $F(8, 510) = 4.916$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .072$). On the other hand, according to the ANOVA results concerning each dimension based on the teaching program followed, there were shown to be signifi-

cant differences between the averages of both groups in terms of the 1st dimension ($F(1.518)=11.76$; $p = .001$), the 2nd dimension ($F(1.518)=26.09$; $p = .000$), the 3rd dimension ($F(1.518)=7.81$; $p = .005$), the 4th dimension ($F(1.518)=16.61$; $p = .000$), and the 7th dimension ($F(1.518)=24.24$; $p = .000$) ($p < .05$). However, no significant difference was found between group averages the 5th dimension ($F(1.518)=1.54$; $p = .215$), the 6th dimension ($F(1.518)=3.33$; $p = .068$), and the 8th dimension ($F(1.518)=.150$; $p = .699$) ($p > .05$).

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of Parent Involvement Dimensions

Dimensions	Program	n	\bar{X}_{mean}	SD
I. Basic Obligations of Parents	Elementary School Teac.	271	3,37	(.47)
	Branch Teac.	249	3,21	(.55)
II. Basic Obligations of Schools	Elementary School Teac.	271	3,32	(.45)
	Branch Teac.	249	3,08	(.60)
III. Par. Inv. in the schools	Elementary School Teac.	271	3,14	(.57)
	Branch Teac.	249	3	(.54)
IV. Par. Inv. in learning activities at home	Elementary School Teac.	271	3,22	(.50)
	Branch Teac.	249	3,03	(.55)
V. Parent involvement in general	Elementary School Teac.	271	2,93	(.77)
	Branch Teac.	249	2,85	(.70)
VI. Volunteering and par. inv.	Elementary School Teac.	271	2,34	(.76)
	Branch Teac.	249	2,22	(.71)
VII. Communicating and Par. Inv.	Elementary School Teac.	271	3,08	(.55)
	Branch Teac.	249	2,84	(.57)
VIII. Different family types and parent involvement	Elementary School Teac.	271	2,80	(.42)
	Branch Teac.	249	2,79	(.46)

Views of the Pre-service Teachers Regarding (1) Their Levels of Readiness for Employing Parent Involvement Strategies and (2) the Place of Parental Involvement in Teacher Education

Participants were asked how ready they felt they were to use parent involvement strategies. The answers to the question varied from "I am definitely ready" (4) to "I am definitely not ready" (1). The averages of the answers to the question revealed that pre-service teachers felt that they were SOMEWHAT ready ($X_{avr, Elementary} = 2.11$, $X_{avr, Branch} = 2.13$). The results are shown below.

Table 3
The Levels of Readiness for Employing Parent Involvement Strategies

Program	X _{mean}	N	sd	Levene's Test (p)	t	sd	p
Elementary School Teac.	2,11	270	.73	.268	-0.160	515	.873
Branch Teac.	2,13	247	.79				

As is illustrated in Table 3, no significant difference was found between the views of students from different teacher training programs regarding their level of readiness ($t(515)=-0.160; p > 0.05$). In parallel with this, an open-ended question was asked to the participants regarding whether they had received any course on parental involvement or whether the subjects had been covered within any of their other courses. In response, 73% of the students from the elementary school teaching program and 77% of the students from the branch teaching programs stated that they had not taken “any” course on parent involvement. Additionally, 64% of the students from the elementary school teaching program and 79% of the students from the branch teaching programs related that parent involvement subjects had not been covered in any course “at all.”

Views Regarding the Importance of Parent Involvement in Teacher Education and the Arrangements to Be Made in Faculties of Education

The second open-ended question addressed to the participants asked whether they felt it important to receive a separate course about parent involvement. The answers to this question indicated that most of the participants thought that receiving training on matters related to parent involvement is important (Elementary: 93.3%; Branch: 85.1%).

Students from the elementary school teaching program emphasized that parent involvement is important not only as a teacher qualification (29.6%), but also due to its contribution to student development and education (23.9%). The majority of students from the branch teaching programs stated that parent involvement is important because of the critical role played by parents in education (19.2%). However, students from both teacher training programs, though limited in number, mentioned that establishing and maintaining a relationship and partnership with parents depends on the personal characteristics of individual teachers, and thus that receiving a course on parent involvement is not important.

Table 4
Importance of Parent Involvement in the Teacher Education

	Elementary School Teacher		Branch Teacher	
	n	%	n	%
Important	195	93,3	154	85,1
<i>Why</i>				
Teacher qualification	62	29,6	28	15,5
Contribution to student development and education	50	23,9	33	18,2
Important roles played by parents in education	40	19,2	64	35,4
Continuity of education	27	12,9	15	8,3
I don't know	16	7,7	14	7,7
Not important	14	6,7	27	14,9
<i>Why</i>				
Parent involvement depends on the personal characteristics of teachers	10	4,8	23	12,7
I don't know	4	1,9	4	2,2

The third open-ended question asked to the participants solicited their opinion as to what faculties of education could do to train their students in parent involvement. This question was answered by 173 students from the elementary school teaching program, and 109 students from the branch teaching programs. While 43.5% of the students from the elementary school teaching program and 22.6% of the students from the branch teaching programs said that courses about parent involvement might be added to curricula, a total of 32.62% of the students from both groups emphasized that there should be both theoretical and practical courses on parent involvement. In this vein however, students stated the concern that even if courses were planned to be both practical and theoretical, they would mostly be only theoretical later on. Of the total respondents, 42% of students from the branch teaching programs and 15% of students from the elementary school teaching program mentioned that parent involvement might be covered within such courses as sociology, psychology, and effective communication rather than in a separate course, and that awareness could be created among pre-service teachers in regard to the subject through discussions. Moreover, 32% of students from the elementary school teaching program and 27% of students from the branch teaching programs suggested that parent involvement activities or practices might be included in the course of “Teaching Practice” provided during students’ 7th and 8th semesters.

Parent Involvement in Schools

The last open-ended question focused on parent involvement practices in schools and those factors preventing parent involvement. Student answers to the question demonstrated that most of the pre-service teachers were of the opinion that parent involvement practices of schools and teachers were generally inadequate (68.5%). Besides their opinions regarding parent involvement practices in schools, 356 parents also mentioned factors preventing parent involvement.

Table 5
Factors Preventing Parent Involvement At Schools

	Elementary School Teacher		Branch Teacher	
	n	%	n	%
Teacher related obstacles	110	51,9	46	31,9
- <i>The intensity of working hours</i>	19	8,9	8	5,5
- <i>Unwillingness of family intervention</i>	32	15,2	24	16,7
- <i>Do not understand the importance of participation</i>	31	14,6	10	6,9
- <i>Escaping from professional responsibilities</i>	25	11,8	-	-
- <i>Low career motivation</i>	3	1,4	4	2,8
Family related obstacles	47	22,2	63	43,9
- <i>Being unconcerned about parent involvement practices</i>	35	16,5	21	14,6
- <i>Low levels of education</i>	12	5,7	32	22,3
- <i>The intensity of working hours</i>	-	-	10	7
Lack of teacher education	27	12,8	15	10,4
Lack of support by the school administration	15	7,1	10	6,9
Failure of policies	7	3,2	-	-
I don't know	6	2,8	10	6,9

As shown in Table 5, the majority of 212 students from the elementary school teaching answering this question (51.9%) stated that obstacles preventing parent involvement were related to teachers. On the other hand, 43.9% of the 144 students from the branch teaching programs emphasized family-related factors. With regard to teacher-related factors, pre-service teachers from all teacher training programs stated that teachers did not support parent involvement practices much because they did not want families to intervene. The participants also stated that parents did not provide enough support even when teachers made an attempt to ensure parental involvement. According to the pre-service teachers, one reason for this situation may be that schools want money from parents via teachers for meeting the needs of the school or the classroom. The pre-service teachers from the branch teaching

programs associated obstacles preventing involvement with low educational levels of parents, and thus their believed ignorance of how to become involved.

Discussion

The research results demonstrate that the students from the elementary school teaching program and the branch teaching programs generally had positive opinions regarding parent involvement. However, the total averages of all participants concerning each dimension were lower than those obtained by McBride (1991), Tichenor (1998), and Uludag (2008). This may be because the present study included participants from branch teaching programs besides those from elementary school teaching program. The involvement type considered most positive by both groups was "Basic Obligations of Parents." The literature review also shows that practices pertaining to the dimension of "Basic Obligations of Parents" are one of the involvement types most supported by teachers (Shumow & Harris, 2000; Tichenor, 1998). This may be because this participation type is in tune with traditional teacher roles featuring information transfer from teachers to parents. The dimension receiving the least positive opinions from the pre-service teachers participating in the study was "Volunteering and Parent Involvement." In the related literature, volunteering is regarded as one of the traditional involvement practices addressed as the basis of an integrated parent involvement approach when compared to other involvement types (Garcia, 2004; Patte, 2011). However, it seems that the pre-service teachers participating in the present study do not support parents supporting teaching activities or administrative works, or any other kind of activities in either the classroom or school. However, the importance of communication and partnership between school and parents was stressed in the most recently made arrangements detailed in the Parent-Teacher Association Regulations in February of 2012.

In parallel with the literature, the evaluation of the findings on the basis of the teaching programs followed shows that parents from the elementary school teaching program had higher averages. The literature demonstrates that parent involvement in education is more common in elementary school years in comparison to middle school and high school years (Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Epstein, 2008; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2007). The results of the present study indicate the limitedness of views held by pre-service teachers from branch teaching

programs regarding the necessity of school-parents partnership for education and the development of students during the adolescence period. In fact, the literature shows that activities supporting the desire of young people for independence yield beneficial results for both parents and students (Halsey, 2005; Wiseman, 2010). On the other hand, the higher average among the pre-service teachers from the elementary school teaching program may have resulted from program-based learning processes experienced by them. In this respect, both research findings (Salıcı-Ahioğlu, 2006), coupled with the relevant courses of these teaching programs, highlight that there should be a strong relationship between parents and teachers in accordance with the development characteristics of children and educational goals (e.g. learning how to read and write, etc.) in the elementary school period. However, that may have arisen from the positive personal experiences of the participants during their own elementary school periods (Graue & Brown, 2003). The pre-service teachers from different teaching programs had low averages in the dimensions of Parent Involvement in General, Volunteering and Parent Involvement, and Different Family Types and Parent Involvement, and no significant difference were found between the groups. This may be because the pre-service teachers did not receive any training about parent involvement throughout their educational career. However, the views held by pre-service teachers regarding the voluntary parental involvement in the classroom or in school activities may have resulted from their limited knowledge about the subject and from the traditional school structures in which teachers are considered not only the most important, but only authority (Sabanacı, 2009). In a sense, the pre-service teachers participating in the present study focused on “respect” rather than “partnership” in relations with parents, as was the case in Graue and Brown (2003). Low group averages obtained from both groups in the dimension of planning activities for involvement based on different family types (working parents, single parents, families with a child attending 1st to 3rd grade, families with a child attending 4th to 6th grade, etc.) may have resulted from the pre-service teachers’ limitedness level of awareness that parent involvement practices might vary by individual family characteristics. In parallel with the literature, both groups stated that involvement opportunities might address “parents working full day” the least and “parents with a child attending 1st to 3rd grade” the most (Uludag, 2008).

Most of the students from both teacher training program types stated that they had not received any separate course about parent involvement, or that the subject had not been covered for at least 1 week in other courses. As indicated by McBride (1991), Tichenor (1998), and Uludag (2008), this may be why students deliver less positive opinions about more advanced involvement types, but more positive opinions about the more basic traditional involvement types. Surely, a single course may not be enough to improve the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of pre-school teachers regarding parent involvement. Thus, subjects about parent involvement should be covered as part of the existing courses, rather than through the inclusion of a separate course (Chavkin & Williams, 1985, p. 17). However, as revealed by Mattingly, Prislis, McKenzie, Rodriguez, and Kayzar (2002), there is not enough evidence showing that in-service training provided in this matter has positive effects. Therefore, relevant training should be provided prior to graduation, and such trainings should be arranged for each program separately in accordance with the characteristics of children’s different ages, development levels, and cultural backgrounds.

All of the participants thought that training on parent involvement should be offered during their study period in the faculty. Although participants’ explanations about the reasons for such training varied by teacher training programs, they generally emphasized the well-accepted positive results of parent involvement. Even though the related literature mostly focuses on the positive effects of parent involvement on children, its benefits for parents and teachers are also discussed (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, & Van Voorhis, 2002; Ying & Han, 2008). The themes introduced in the present study reveal that the pre-service teachers addressed the issues from the perspectives of students, parents, and teachers. Most of the pre-service teachers from the elementary school program thought that being knowledgeable about parent involvement was a professional competence. The students from the branch teaching programs emphasized the roles of parents in education. This result may stem from the difference in perceptions based on different educational levels regarding the parents’ roles and competences. The results obtained from the participants of the present study imply that students from the elementary school teaching program may consider parent involvement as part of their professional development as they will work in elementary schools. On the other hand, pre-service teachers from the branch teaching programs put more emphasis on the roles of parents in education, thereby seeming to express a general fact

emphasized during their study period rather than focusing on professionalism. The related literature also demonstrates that parent involvement opportunities are more limited and are considered less important in middle schools and high schools in comparison to elementary schools (Çubukçu & Girmen, 2006; Epstein & Dauber, 1989; Vaden-Kiernan & Chandler, 1996). However, as emphasized by Catsambis (1998), Gonzalez-DeHass et al. (2005), Hill and Tyson (2009), Wheeler (1992), and Sarpkaya (2005), parent involvement is important in that it has positive influences on adolescents' attitudes toward school, school attendance, social skills, and academic achievement, and it offers strategies that help them gain autonomy and independence and improve their cognitive skills.

Those pre-service teachers who considered themselves incompetent in using parent involvement strategies seemed to be of the same opinion that they should be trained on this subject. However, the pre-service teachers from the elementary school teaching program and those from the branch teaching programs held different views in regard to how such training should be provided. While the pre-service teachers from the elementary school teaching program were in favor of a separate course supported by practices, those from the branch teaching programs stated that training integrated into suitable courses existing in their curricula would be enough. This difference seems to result from pre-service teachers' differing perceptions as to the role of parent-teacher relationships. However, as stated by Chavkin and Williams (1985), Epstein and Sanders (2006) and Tichenor (1997), after pre-service teachers, regardless of their program and level, develop perspectives about the value and results of involvement, and acquire sufficient knowledge and understanding concerning basic involvement types, they should gain practical experiences or opportunities to improve their skills in cooperating with parents.

As to the factors preventing parent involvement, the pre-service teachers from elementary school teaching program mostly emphasized teacher-related factors, while those from branch teaching programs

generally focused on family-related factors. The elementary teacher-related factor stated by the pre-service teachers from both groups was their own unwillingness for parents to intervene in the classroom. However, an interesting conflict of interests appeared; being that while pre-service teachers delivered positive opinions about parent involvement on the one hand, they regarded such involvement as a loss of authority on the other. This conflict not only shows that knowledge and skills are superficial and insufficient to be put into practice, but also seems to highlight the importance attached to respect accompanying authority as stated by Graue and Brown (2003). However, Epstein and Becker (1982), Epstein (2005), and Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2002) report that those teachers who believe that parent involvement is important, not only interact with families more and feel that they are competent in matters of involvement practices and teaching skills, but are also less likely to display negative behaviors concerning parents and have positive attitudes toward parent involvement overall. With regard to family-related factors preventing involvement, the pre-service teachers from the elementary school teaching program stated that parents were uninterested in involvement, while those from the branch teaching programs stated that parents had low educational levels. However, teachers who do not receive the anticipated support from parents or who are criticized by them in practice start to believe, after a while, that involvement practices are meaningless, or simply abandon such practices (Flynn, 2007). Additionally, many studies reveal that parents of a low socio-economic level may not support involvement practices because of working conditions or the existence of another small child or an ill person at home (McBride et al., 2003). However, as indicated above, obstacles resulting from non-interest, low educational level, or working conditions may be overcome by teachers who believe in the importance of parent involvement, and who develop and implement suitable involvement strategies (Epstein, 2008; Tichenor, 1998).

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