



# Early Childhood Educators on Parental Involvement: A Comparison between Finland and Turkey

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this study was to analyse the similarities and differences between the views of early childhood educators on parental involvement and their parental involvement practices in Finland and Turkey. Previous studies have indicated a gap between the rhetoric and practice of parental involvement practices and of insufficient parental involvement. In this study, the reasons for these insufficient practices were also investigated. A binary comparison was applied between Turkey and Finland. A questionnaire was developed based on Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model. Altogether 515 early childhood educators from Helsinki and Ankara completed this comprehensive questionnaire. Quantitative methods were used for data analysis. The results showed that Turkish and Finnish early childhood educators have positive views on parental involvement, but Turkish early childhood educators implement all types of parental involvement with significantly greater frequency than their Finnish colleagues.

**Keywords:** *parental involvement; teacher opinions, early childhood education, Finnish-Turkish comparison*

## **Introduction**

Early childhood education (ECE) not only builds the foundation for the future academic life of a child, but it also shapes future academic attitudes through the experiences an

individual gains as a child (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2003). Given the importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the healthy development of children, it is important to investigate the factors that play a crucial role in establishing a successful ECEC system. Recent research shows that parental involvement (PI) has a significant effect on children. According to a meta-analysis of 51 studies on PI programmes (Jeynes, 2012), there is a significant relationship between PI and children's academic achievement. The positive impact of PI is not limited to the children themselves; it extends to their surroundings, as well (Çakmak, 2010; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Ma, et al., 2016). For example, the best way to enhance educational programmes (Çakmak, 2010) is to involve parents in decision-making and educational activities. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) claim that with the PI, the teachers' morale improves and parents establish networks among each other, enabling them to learn from other parents (Hill & Taylor, 2004). In addition to gaining an extended parental support network, parents also become more confident and satisfied with their parenting experiences (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Although a considerable amount of research has documented the benefits of PI programmes (Jeynes 2012), teachers' understanding of PI undoubtedly shapes their PI practices (Thompson et al., 2017) and several studies showed that teachers hold a positive view of PI and acknowledges the importance of it (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Koutrouba et al., 2009). However further investigation seems to change this positive look, for example Karlsen Bæck (2010) states that although teachers highly value PI, their view of PI is skewed. Similar to another study in Finnish context (Alasuutari, 2010), teachers viewed PI as a support system for themselves and children rather than a shared responsibility and a collaboration (Karlsen Bæck, 2010). Such differences show the importance of studying teacher views to truly support PI.

Over the decades, the benefits of PI are frequently vocalised in the literature and by policy actors (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012; OECD, 2001), and policy makers (Beveridge, 2005) have also recognised these benefits. Thus, a global trend has emerged, where almost all countries have adopted laws and regulations to increase PI in ECEC (Beveridge, 2005). Considering the significance of ECEC and the well-recognised role of PI, it is crucial to assess how different countries are structuring PI in their ECEC systems. This paper focusses on approaches of PI in the ECEC practices of Finland and Turkey, both member countries of the OECD. This fact has played a role in case selection, since it enables easy access to some of the statistics and literature, since the OECD collects data from member countries and publishes reports based on these data (Hantrais, 2009). The OECD membership of these countries justifies their inclusion in this study by creating a shared reference point. Furthermore, narrowing down the possible cases to Turkey and Finland was strongly linked to the researchers' background and the availability of resources, as recommended by Hantrais (2009) and by Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008).

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## Affecting factors

Although the benefits of PI are well documented and well recognised across the globe, there are differences between what is recommended through research and actual applications in the field of education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Janssen & Vandebroek, 2018). These differences lead to insufficient practices which may be rooted to a number of affecting factors, such as different understandings of PI (Anderson & Minke, 2007), socio-economic backgrounds of families (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), language and cultural differences (Denessen et al., 2007).

Equal division of the roles between parents and educators for early learning of children is the core element of PI (OECD, 2001). For such equality, establishing mutual respect and open communication is necessary (Driessen et al., 2005). This might be taxing due to the increased migration which creates highly diverse communities (Arango, 2000), and language issues arises in such multicultural communities. Previous research on PI shows that language differences create a barrier between institutions and parents (Denessen et al., 2007). Additionally, language differences are often associated with cultural differences and this creates further challenges (Denessen et al., 2007; Sy et al., 2007). Culture can affect the parents' understanding of education and their place in this process (Sy et al., 2007), and when these culturally shaped ideas of education of parents do not correspond to the educators' ideas, minorities and immigrants tend to become stereotyped and conceived as non-interested (Denessen et al., 2007; Gunn-Morris & Taylor, 1998).

Along with the language and cultural background, the social class of the parents plays a significant role in PI. According to Lareau (1987, 2000), educational institutions favour middle-class parents because their family culture is better suited to the institution's culture. This is not because of compatibility of economic capital but rather because of experiences rooted in the social classes, since the experiences of the parents influence their involvement, and the closer these experiences are to the teachers' own experiences, the closer the relationship they maintain will be (Reay, 2002). Although middle-class families are more advantaged than working-class families in this regard, higher class does not necessarily imply higher PI (Ringenberg et al., 2009). Indeed, Australian educators state that upper-class parents are less involved (Mahmood, 2013).

In addition to factors related to the societal and familial level, there are some factors arising from the educators and the institutions. Thus, the content of teacher training plays a significant role for PI practices. Educators who are knowledgeable on the importance of PI become more supportive of PI practices (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). In addition to their training, the attitudes of teachers toward PI are also important in terms of

establishing sufficient PI practices. Teachers might, for example, consider PI activities as an additional burden to their workload and avoid PI unless it is an obligatory component of the curriculum (Peña, 2000). And vice versa – PI increases when teachers encourage parents to engage in home-school interaction (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Alasuutari (2010) approaches educators' attitudes from another viewpoint and argues that educators assume their place in PI practices in two frames; horizontal and vertical. In the horizontal frame, educators acknowledge the parents' knowledge about their child and organise PI practices based on an equal role division. On the other hand, in the vertical frame, educators assume a hierarchical role due to their education in ECEC, and this creates a barrier for PI practices. Similarly, Venninen and Puroila (2013) argue that early childhood educators claim that parents do not have sufficient knowledge in ECEC and that they therefore do not want to involve parents in decision-making, activity designing or daily activities.

Although there is strong evidence pointing to a positive impact of PI on ECEC, there are also variety of factors affecting the sufficiency of PI. Despite the significant amount of research on societal and parental factors, research fails to provide a same amount of evidence on the influence of teacher backgrounds. This study focuses on aspects of teacher backgrounds, e.g., work experience and education level. These aspects are especially significant in Turkish and Finnish contexts where the educational backgrounds of teachers vary widely.

## **Importance of parental involvement for ECE**

Although working with families is crucial for learning outcomes, it becomes especially important in the ECEC setting since young children need much care in the early childhood period (Morrow & Malin, 2004). The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project (Sylva et al., 2004) reported that PI in ECEC supports children's social and cognitive development and reduces special needs among young children. Similarly, parental involvement in decision-making processes has a positive impact on the cognitive development of children. When parents and educators agree on a common educational strategy that is mutually followed at home and at the educational institution, child development is promoted (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

PI also plays an important role for improving educational programmes and parental well-being. Akkok (1999) argued that the more involved the parents become, the more adapted they become to the cultural environment of educational institutions. In addition to adopting to institution's culture and understanding educator's expectations, PI gives parents the opportunity to learn from other parents and educators. This provides them

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with a supporting network in their parenthood and increases parental confidence and satisfaction (Hill & Taylor, 2004). This supporting network is also beneficial for educators, because it brings a shared responsibility for educating children which lifts some of the burden off the educators' shoulders (Akkok, 1999). As a result, effective PI practices improve educators' morale (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

## Parental involvement practices in Turkey and Finland

The constitutive law on Turkish national education (1973, Article 19) states that early childhood education is not compulsory, nor it is a subjective right for families. In Turkey, ECEC covers the education of young children before compulsory school age. Similarly, in Finland, ECEC is meant for children younger than compulsory school age, but since 2015, one year of preschool has been made compulsory before children begin elementary school (*Varhaiskasvatuslaki* [Early Childhood Education Act], 580/2015). In Finland, ECEC has been a subjective right for families since 1996. Both countries acknowledge the importance of PI in ECEC in their national ECEC programmes/plans. In the Turkish context, PI is listed as one of the 18 main principles of normative guidance in the Early Childhood Education Programme (2013). The programme explains also the benefits and significance of PI and states that PI activities must be a part of the education and planned in advance, and also gives some examples of PI (Bağçeli et al., 2017). Common examples of such activities are communication, learning at home and volunteering of parents.

In the Finnish context, the significance of PI in ECEC is also stated on the national level (Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Finland, 2000; National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health [STAKES], 2005<sup>1</sup>). Although the importance of PI is discussed at length in these documents, they do not provide operative guidance, i.e., how PI should be practiced (Hirsto, 2010). The most important form of PI is involving parents in the child's individual ECEC plan, which is adapted for each child individually to determine and support his or her needs (STAKES, 2005). Although the main point of these plans is to support child development and learning, the plans are also aimed at supporting parent–teacher communication (Salminen, 2017).

These similarities and differences are presented in Table 1 to summarise and to achieve clarity the text.

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<sup>1</sup> These were valid at the time the data was gathered in 2015.

TABLE 1 Differences and Similarities of ECEC in Turkey and Finland

	<i>TURKEY</i>	<i>FINLAND</i>
Prominent family type (Kagitcibasi, 2017)	Psychological interdependent	Independent
Societal culture (Hofstede Country Comparison Tool, n.d.)	Collectivist	Individualist
Women in work force (15–64 yrs)	30.8% (TSI <sup>1</sup> , 2015)	67.9 % (OSF <sup>2</sup> , 2015).
ECEC system <i>Governance</i>	-Shared between Ministry of family and social policies and Ministry of national education (Social Services Law 1983; Legislation of Early Childhood Education and Primary School Education Institutions, 2014)	-Passed on to the Ministry of education and culture in 2013 from the Ministry of social and Health services (FMoEC <sup>3</sup> , 2013) -Passed on to the Finnish National Agency for Education in 2015 from THL <sup>4</sup>
<i>Power distance</i>	-Comparatively more dependent society with a hierarchical structure in which authority figures are often inaccessible. -Centralised administration of ECEC	-Independent and less hierarchical, with equality and accessible figures of authority. -Decentralised administration of ECEC
<i>Budget</i>	-1.1% of the total budget for education (Saklan & Erginer, 2016)	-3% of the total budget for education (OSF, 2018)
<i>Beginning of obligatory education</i>	-Elementary school at the age of 5.5 (can be postponed until 7)	-Preschool at the age of 6, compulsory education at 7
<i>Staff<sup>5</sup></i>	-Kindergarten teacher (4 yrs university) -Early childhood educator (2 yrs higher education) -Classroom helper (4 yrs vocational high school)	-Kindergarten teacher (3 yrs university) -Social pedagogues (3 yrs university of applied sciences) -Practical nurse (2 yrs upper vocational school)
<i>PI policies</i>	-National normative programme (Early Childhood Education Programme, 2013) -Explicitly states the importance of PI	-National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland as an informative guidance (STAKES, 2005) (national reform in ECE 2013 – 2018) -Explicitly states importance of PI

<sup>1</sup> Turkish statistics Institute

<sup>2</sup> Official statistics of Finland

<sup>3</sup> Finnish ministry of education and culture

<sup>4</sup> Finnish institute for health and welfare

<sup>5</sup> Although these titles are strictly followed in Finnish context; in Turkish context, it is quite common to use 'kindergarten teacher' as an umbrella title. Additionally, hiring vocational high school graduates as 'kindergarten teacher' in private sector is very common.

## Theoretical framework

The cooperation between home and educational institutions is referred to by a variety of terms (Driessen et al., 2005, p. 510). In the current study, the term 'parental involvement' is used, as the focus is on the views and practices of educators rather than on mutual efforts for partnership. It is difficult to provide a conclusive definition of PI because of differing understanding of its features, which depend on the parties involved and from whose perspective PI is viewed (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). While for parents, PI might mean ensuring their children's safety and access to education, for educators, it might mean the active participation of parents (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Nonetheless, PI can be generally constructed as collaboration related to children's learning between home and educational institutions (Uludağ, 2008). In this study, the term parental involvement is preferred and defined as multi-faceted collaboration between parents and educational institutions in various activities.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) states that the interactions between elements of a child's environment, such as the home and educational institutions, influence children. A healthy relationship between home and the elements of the educational institution is as important as the relationship between the child and these elements (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Epstein (2016) also emphasises the significance of the interactions between home and educational institutions in her influence model of overlapping spheres. Under this theory, the collaboration is categorised into six types of involvement (Epstein et al., 2002, p. 27):

1. Parenting: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.
2. Communicating: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.
3. Volunteering: Recruit and organise parent help and support.
4. Learning at home: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.
5. Decision-making: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.
6. Collaborating with the community: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices and student learning and development.

Epstein's model is used in the current research, as it focusses on educators' views of the collaboration between home and educational institution. To narrow the focus to educators and their PI practices in the educational institutions (Hakyemez, 2015;

Hakyemez-Paul, et al., 2018b), four types of PI are chosen from Epstein's model: communication, learning at home, volunteering and decision-making. By excluding 'parenting', the focus is narrowed to educational activities, while by excluding 'collaborating with the community', the focus is fixed to a smaller stream of cooperation. This narrowing will help to uncover the current differences and similarities between educators' views of PI practices in Finnish and Turkish ECEC institutions.

## Research questions

The aim of this research is to analyse and compare similarities and differences in the views of early childhood educators on PI in Turkey and Finland. The specific research questions are:

- To what extent do the views of Finnish and Turkish early childhood educators on PI differ?
- How do associations between Finnish and Turkish early childhood educators' views on PI and their characteristics relate?
- To what extent do the types of PI educators use and their reasons for insufficient practices differ?

## Methods

### Comparative aspect

Comparative studies provide researchers with the possibility to explore concepts by controlling affecting variables (Hantrais, 2009). This type of scientific query does not only allow researchers to expand knowledge about other systems, but it also broadens their understanding of their own system (Hantrais, 2009). Therefore, the researcher's perspective is an inextricable part of comparative research, and the researcher's familiarity with the subject(s) of study stands as valid justification for case selection (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2008). The diagram (see Figure 1) created by Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008) explains four different possibilities for choosing research subjects based on two dimensions, familiarity and proximity.

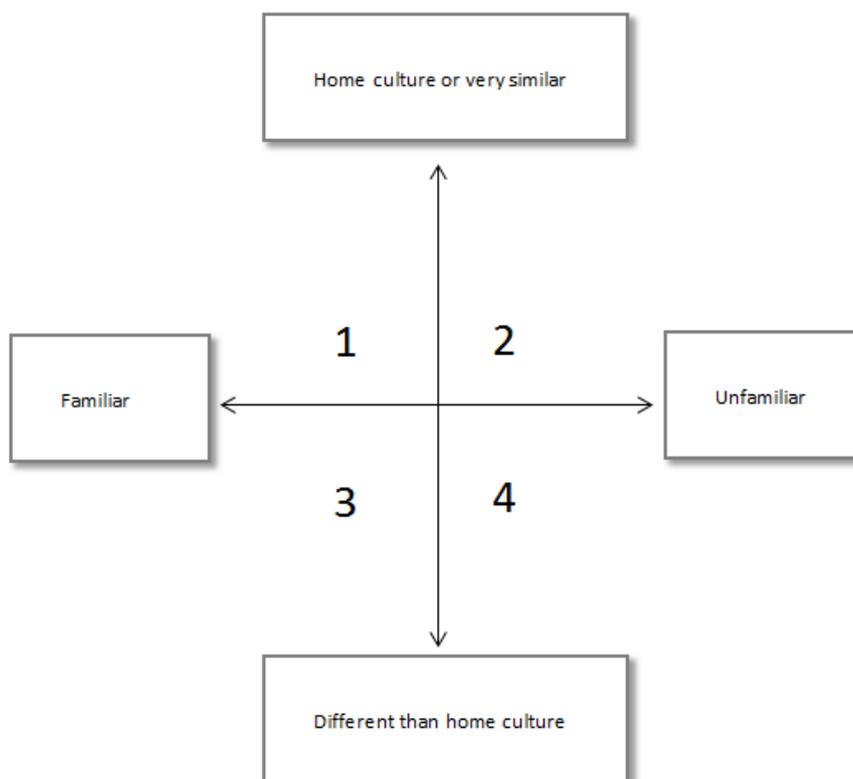


FIGURE 1 Philips and Schweisfurth's (2008) diagram for research circumstances and potential responses.

In the diagram, the quadrant 1 represents the context with which the researcher is familiar, the researcher's home culture or one very similar to it. In quadrant 2, the chosen context is unfamiliar to the researcher, although it is the researcher's home culture or similar. Quadrant 3 represents a context, which is familiar to the researcher but is different than the researcher's home culture. Finally, quadrant 4 represents the context, which is unfamiliar to the researcher and different from the researcher's home culture. In this study, Turkey, the native country of the first author (Hakyemez-Paul), fits into quadrant 1. Finland fits in quadrant 3, a country familiar to the first author because of her long-term residence and work experience in the field of ECEC, although Finland does not express the researcher's native culture. For authors Lähteenmäki and Pihlaja, Finland falls into quadrant 1, as it is their home country. This circumstance provides additional robustness to the research. In addition to the convenience of studying these countries, their differences and similarities regarding their ECE systems and societal structures create a valuable opportunity for a comparative research.

To analyse the similarities and differences in PI practices in a multi-country setting, a synchronic research design was used. This term refers to a cross-sectional design in which different countries are compared over the same time period. In the context of this study, this period covers the time from 2012 to 2015. The structure of this study was inspired by the steps of general comparative inquiry (Phillips, 2006). According to this structure, the research questions are first phrased in neutral and broad terms. In the second step, the contexts are investigated separately and data are collected to answer the questions of the first step. In the third step, all differences outside the questions addressed in the first step are isolated and the data collected from both contexts are examined. In the fourth step, the findings are explained. In the fifth and final step, 'reconceptualization', i.e., implications of the findings are discussed.

One of the most important aspects of conducting cross-national research is to establish conceptual equivalence (Hantrais, 2009). In the present study, conceptual equivalence has been sought through policy documents where PI is mentioned. In studies focusing on attitudinal differences and similarities between countries, it is critical to ensure measurement equivalence to distinguish which of the results are due to differences in the participants' construal of the measurement instruments, and which are due to actual differences in attitudes between the countries (Hantrais, 2009). In order to overcome this issue in the current study, the instrument was first tested in both countries to ensure that the items were perceived the way they were intended to. Additionally, high reliability scores for each country further validated the measurements used in this cross-national study (Hakyemez, 2015; Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018a).

## **Participants**

Data were collected through surveys conducted in one of the largest municipalities in Finland and in Turkey. A total of 515 early childhood educators participated (See Table 2). Data collection in Turkey took approximately one year and in Finland approximately five months. All participants provided their informed consent and participation was anonymous. Submission to an ethics committee was not required in the contexts where the data were collected, but research permission was gained by provision of the questionnaire to the responsible authorities.

TABLE 2 Descriptive characteristics of participants

VARIABLE	TURKEY (N = 228)		FINLAND (N = 287)	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Female	225	99.1	280	97.6
Male	2	0.9	7	2.4
Work experience				
0-5 years	65	29.0	92	32.3
6-10 years	60	26.8	32	11.2
11-20 years	53	23.7	57	20.0
21-40 years	46	20.5	104	36.5
Educational background				
Kindergarten teacher	228	100	203	70.7
Social pedagogue	N/A	N/A	77	26.8
Other	N/A	N/A	7	2.4
Education level				
Vocational high school	29	12.7	N/A	N/A
University	164	71.9	132	46.5
Master's degree	16	7.0	10	3.5
Associate degree	19	8.3	N/A	N/A
University of applied sciences	N/A	N/A	75	26.4
Old kindergarten teacher seminars	N/A	N/A	67	23.6
Age group (years) of the children				
0-3	16	7.2	68	23.7
4-5/6	104	46.6	147	51.2
6*	69	30.9	58	20.2
Mixed age	34	15.2	14	4.9

\*There are still considerable numbers of children continuing their early childhood education before age 7 years in Turkey although the compulsory school age has changed, because parents can delay the transition to primary school based on a physician's statement that the child is not ready to start primary school.

## Instrument

A questionnaire was prepared in English and then translated into Finnish and Turkish. To maintain reliability of the translations, a translator triangulation was conducted. For each language, two native speakers translated the questionnaire separately and then

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compared their translations. The resulting translations were mostly the same, and there was no need to revise the translations. A pilot study was conducted to further validate this instrument in Turkey and in Finland. It turned out that the questionnaire items were clear and unambiguous, and further alteration was not needed. The questionnaire was designed to measure general views on PI and attitudes towards types of PI in the ECEC setting. All items have been prepared anew for this questionnaire based on Epstein's (2016) overlapping spheres of influence model.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections plus background questions. The five sections of the questionnaire focused on types of PI and the respondent's views on PI. The first section, 'General view' (nine items), assessed the general attitudes of the respondents towards PI on a Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree* to 5 = *totally agree*). The rest of the questionnaire focused on the types of PI. The second part, 'Communication' (seven items) measured the frequency of PI through communication; the third part, 'Voluntary works' (five items) focussed on the frequency of involving parents as volunteers; the fourth part, 'Learning at home' (six items) measured the frequency with which parents were encouraged to support ECEC activities at home; and the fifth part, 'Decision making' (five items) explored the frequency with which parents were involved in the decision-making process.

For the sections assessing PI types, all questions were based on a Likert-type scale (1 = *never*; 5 = *always*), except for one multiple-choice question including an open-ended answer as an option in each of these sections regarding PI type. Participants were instructed to only answer these multiple-choice items if they believed their PI practices were insufficient, and they were allowed to select more than one choice on this item (Hakyemez, 2015; Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018a, 2018b) to express their reasons for insufficient PI practices. For each PI type, participants could choose from a series of possible reasons for not using PI:

- A. Our education system is not suitable for this.
- B. Educational institution principals do not support teachers for this.
- C. Parents do not want to be involved.
- D. My education is not enough for this.
- E. I do not believe in the benefits of this particular PI type.
- F. This type of PI is hard to deal with.
- G. Other. Please explain...

## Analysis

To test for reliability Cronbach's alpha score was calculated. The overall reliability was found to be high (30 items;  $\alpha = .85$ ). This test was repeated separately for each section. Cronbach's alphas for these sections were .55 (general view), .62 (communication), .82 (voluntary works), .80 (learning at home) and .69 (decision-making). Although the cut point for reliability for this tool is .60 (Tähtinen et al., 2011). Cronbach alpha for general view is also considered to be reliable because it is likely to increase it by increasing the items (Cortina, 1993; Griethuijsen et al., 2014; Schmitt, 1996).

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed for each section. One item each from the sections 'general views' ("Parents and teachers should work as a team"), 'communication' ("I talk to parents face to face to discuss their child's development") and 'volunteering' ("I invite parents to classroom parties/ students' birthday parties") did not load onto any of the factors and were removed from the sum scores. According to the EFA, the general view of PI and the communication as a type of PI had subgroups that explained different aspects of these sections. In the general view section, these subgroups were labelled as positive and negative views, and in the communication section they were labelled as one-way and two-way communication. These subgroups were included in the subsequent analysis as sum scores. Further information on these factors and sum scores are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3 Variables and groupings based on EFA

<i>GENERAL VIEWS</i>			<i>COMMUNICATION</i>		<i>VOLUNTEERING</i>	<i>LEARNING AT HOME</i>	<i>DECISION-MAKING</i>
$\eta 1$ <i>Positive views</i> ( $\alpha = .60$ )	$\eta 2$ <i>Responsibility</i> ( $\alpha = .71$ )	$\eta 3$ <i>Negative views</i> ( $\alpha = .64$ )	$\eta 1$ <i>One-way communication</i> ( $\alpha = .59$ )	$\eta 2$ <i>Two-way communication</i> ( $\alpha = .72$ )	$\eta 1$ ( $\alpha = .82$ )	$\eta 1$ ( $\alpha = .80$ )	$\eta 1$ ( $\alpha = .69$ )
Parental involvement has an important role on children's development. Factor loading = .808	Building a relationship between early childhood educational institution and parents is teachers' duty. Factor loading = .733	Parental involvement is not needed in the education process, because parents are not competent on this area. Factor loading = .796	I share my weekly/monthly activity plans with parents. Factor loading = .630	If the child does not come to educational institution, same day I phone parent to ask about the child. Factor loading = .832	I invite parents to classroom and want them to present their hobbies. Factor loading = .910	I give home activity ideas, which support the educational institution activities, to parents. Factor loading = .776	I ask parents' opinions about planning the trips. Factor loading = .785
Early childhood educational institutions have an open door policy for parents. Factor loading = .520	Building a relationship between early childhood educational institution and parents is principals' duty. Factor loading = .609	Educating is only teacher's duty. Factor loading = .641	I prepare and send to parents monthly newsletters about trips, project works and topics that we focused on. Factor loading = .565	I phone parents and talk to them about their child's development. Factor loading = .678	I invite parents to classroom and want them to present their jobs. Factor loading = .881	I give simple homework to students, which they can do with their parents. Factor loading = .714	I ask parents' opinions about the classroom activities and topics that I am planning. Factor loading = .761

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Building a relationship between early childhood educational institution and parents is parents' duty.	Parent meetings organized twice a year are enough to inform them about kids' development.	I write journals for each child to inform parents about children's daily performance at educational institution.	I invite parents to classroom and want them to teach a game to the children.	I encourage parents to talk to their children about what they did during the day.	I ask parents' opinions about monthly lunch menus.
Factor loading = .605	Factor loading = .421	Factor loading = .514	Factor loading = .832	Factor loading = .674	Factor loading = .490
			I invite parents to classroom and want them to join classroom activities with their child.	I want parents to help their children on subjects, which they have trouble at educational institution.	I ask parents' opinions about deciding discipline attitudes against children.
			Factor loading = .753	Factor loading = .652	Factor loading = .480
			I invite parents to excursion.	I want parents to play the games at home, which we play at educational institution.	
			Factor loading = .429	Factor loading = .563	

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The missing data were excluded pairwise from the analysis to minimise loss of data. The following statistical tests were run to answer each research question:

(1) An independent samples t-test was conducted to draw a general picture of the differences and similarities between Finland and Turkey.

(2) A univariate general linear model analysis was run to allow comparison of these two countries, taking into account the background variables, such as educators' work experience and the age of the group they worked with.

(3) Several cross-tabulation analyses were conducted to identify the differences and similarities in the reasons for insufficient practices of particular PI types between Finland and Turkey.

## Results

### *General Views*

The analysis began with an independent samples t-test to compare the general state of PI in these countries. As shown in Table 4, there were significant differences in almost every aspect of PI, indicating that educators' views and practices of PI were significantly different between Turkey and Finland.

TABLE 4 Differences between Turkey and Finland in parental involvement views and practices

<i>PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT</i>	<i>TURKEY</i>		<i>FINLAND</i>		<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
General view	3.83	.61	3.82	.44	483	.32	.743	0.02
Positive view	4.22	.82	4.09	.62	496	1.97	.049	0.17
Negative view	3.61	.99	4.24	.61	506	-8.78	.000	-0.78
Volunteering	3.43	.94	2.28	.69	503	15.66	.000	1.39
Learning at home	4.27	.75	3.43	.58	494	14.12	.000	1.27
Decision-making	3.13	1.09	2.27	.61	482	7.17	.000	0.65
Communication	3.36	.95	2.86	.61	500	7.06	.000	0.63
Two-way comm.	3.58	1.00	1.96	.66	507	21.81	.000	1.93
One-way comm.	3.22	1.11	3.46	.81	503	-2.75	.006	0.24

According to these results, although there was no statistically significant difference between the general views on PI, there was a significant difference in negative views: the Finnish participants expressed more negative views than their Turkish counterparts. Also, there were significant differences in the frequency of implementing every PI type and this indicates that Turkish early childhood educators use PI more frequently than Finnish educators.

A univariate general linear model was run to discover whether the country plays a role in the relationship between general views on PI and the age group with which the participants work. The results supported the independent samples t-test findings and showed that country did not affect the relationship between general views and the children's age group ( $F[3, 472] = .194, p = .901, \eta^2 = .001$ ). Similarly, country did not affect the relationship between participants' general views and their experience in the field ( $F[3, 471] = 1.841, p = .139, \eta^2 = .012$ ).

EFA revealed that the 'general view' section focussed on two aspects, negative views and positive views. A univariate general linear model was used to examine the effect of country on the relationship of these factors to the background variables. The results of this analysis showed that country did not play a significant role in the relationship between negative views and the age group with which the participants worked ( $F[3, 495] = .470, p = .703, \eta^2 = .003$ ). Similarly, the relationship between the work experience of the participants and their negative views was not affected by country ( $F[3, 494] = .805, p = .492, \eta^2 = .005$ ).

The role of country in the relationship between the positive views of the educators and the background variables showed no significant difference between the countries in the relationship between positive views and the age group of the children ( $F[3, 485] = .221, p = .882, \eta^2 = .001$ ). The results further showed neither was the relationship between work experience and participant's positive views affected by country ( $F[3, 484] = 1.450, p = .227, \eta^2 = .009$ ).

### ***Parental Involvement Types***

The univariate general linear model was repeated for each PI type to determine if country was an indicator of the relationship between the frequency of implementing the particular PI type and the background variables, age group of the children and work experience of the participants. The results of this analysis showed that country does play a role in the relationship between the frequency of using communication as a PI type and the children's age group ( $F[3,489] = 5.486, p = .001, \eta^2 = .033$ ) (Table 5). According to these

results, Turkish early childhood educators who worked with younger groups of children used communication more often than their Finnish counterparts.

Country also played a role in the relationship between the frequency of using communication as a PI type and the participants' work experience ( $F[3,488] = 8.405, p = .000, \eta^2 = .049$ ) (Table 5). According to these results, Turkish early childhood educators who were the least experienced in the field used communication methods of involving parents more than Finnish educators with the least experience in the field did.

EFA revealed that the communication section measured two aspects of communication as a PI type, one-way and two-way communication. The univariate general linear model was used to investigate the effect of country on the relationship between the frequency of using one-way and two-way communication methods and the background variables. The results showed that country played a role in the relationship between the frequency of using two-way communication methods and the children's age group ( $F[3,496] = 3.555, p = .014, \eta^2 = .021$ ). According to these results, Finnish educators prefer two-way communication for younger children significantly less than Turkish participants. Similarly, country affected the relationship between two-way communication and participants' work experience [ $F[3,495] = 11.622, p = .000, \eta^2 = .066$ ]; see Table 5.

The same tests were repeated for one-way communication methods for PI. The results showed that country did not have an impact on the relationship between the frequency of using one-way communication methods and the children's age group ( $F[3,492] = 5.441, p = .001, \eta^2 = .032$ ). On the other hand, country influenced the relationship between one-way communication and participants' work experience ( $F[3,491] = 4.062, p = .007, \eta^2 = .024$ ) (Table 5). According to these results, more experienced Finnish educators prefer one-way communication more frequently than Turkish participants with same work experience.

TABLE 5 Effect of country in the relationship between communication/two-way communication/one-way communication as parental involvement type and age group of the children / participants' experience in the field

	<i>COMMUNICATION</i>				<i>TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION</i>				<i>ONE-WAY COMMUNICATION</i>				
	<i>TURKEY</i>		<i>FINLAND</i>		<i>TURKEY</i>		<i>FINLAND</i>		<i>TURKEY</i>		<i>FINLAND</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Age group (yrs.)													
0-3	3.84	.98	2.66	.63	3.83	1.23	1.84	.67	3.85	1.00	3.21	.88	
4-5	3.41	1.01	2.85	.62	3.70	1.02	1.93	.61	3.24	1.19	3.47	.82	
6	3.24	.86	3.10	.49	3.44	.94	2.14	.74	3.11	1.01	3.73	.65	
Mixed	3.20	.93	2.86	.49	3.34	.89	2.03	.69	3.11	1.06	3.41	.49	
Work experience													
1-5	3.80	1.00	2.82	.57	4.02	.92	1.89	.67	3.65	1.20	3.44	.79	
6-10	3.27	1.00	2.87	.52	3.64	1.00	2.03	.77	3.02	1.21	3.43	.78	
11-20	3.18	.83	2.83	.70	3.40	.86	2.04	.62	3.10	.96	3.36	.91	
21-50	3.01	.69	2.91	.62	3.01	.93	1.97	.64	3.02	.82	3.54	.79	

According to the univariate general linear model, country did not have a significant role in the relationship between the frequency of involving parents as volunteers and neither the age group of the children ( $F[3,492] = 2.503, p = .059, \eta^2 = .015$ ) nor the work experience of the educator ( $F[3,491] = .728, p = .535, \eta^2 = .004$ ). Similarly, neither the relationship between learning at home and the age of the children ( $F[3,483] = .765, p = .514, \eta^2 = .005$ ), nor the relationship between learning at home and the work experience of the participants ( $F[3,482] = .153, p = .928, \eta^2 = .001$ ), were affected by country. Additionally, the results showed no impact of country on the relationship between the frequency of involving parents in decision-making and either the age group with which the participants worked ( $F[3,471] = .771, p = .511, \eta^2 = .005$ ), or their work experience ( $F[3,470] = .421, p = .738, \eta^2 = .003$ ).

### ***Sufficiency of PI***

To determine early childhood educators' beliefs regarding the sufficiency of PI practices, frequency results were analysed. It was found that for each PI type, over 50% of the participants endorsed the belief that existing practices were not sufficient. Cross-tabulation showed that although participants from both countries thought that PI

practices were not overall sufficient, more participants from Finland stated that learning at home and volunteering were not implemented sufficiently (Table 6).

TABLE 6 Insufficient practices of parental involvement types

<i>PI TYPES</i>	<i>TURKEY</i>		<i>FINLAND</i>		$\chi^2(1)$	<i>p</i>	Cramer's <i>V</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>			
Communication	159	69.7	207	72.1	.35	.553	.026
Volunteering	161	70.6	232	80.8	7.34	.007	.119
Learning at home	120	52.6	181	63.1	5.69	.017	.105
Decision-making	140	61.4	189	65.9	1.09	.296	.046

The frequency results of the multiple-choice question about the reasons for PI insufficiency showed that, for every PI type, the most frequent reason was 'Parents do not want to be involved', and the least frequent was 'My education is not enough for this.'

To gain further insight, cross-tabulation was repeated for each PI type separately, and the percentages of the chosen reasons for the insufficiency were analysed. As presented in Table 7, regarding the usage of communication as a PI type, Turkish participants stated that the insufficiency was caused by the educational system and cited a lack of support from the administration significantly more frequently than the Finnish participants. On the other hand, Finnish participants mentioned lack of willingness of parents significantly more frequently than the Turkish participants. As the reason for insufficient practice of this type of PI, while Turkish participants did not consider communication important, Finnish participants considered it difficult to deal with.

With regard to involving parents as volunteers, the results were parallel to those of communication: While Turkish participants cited lack of support from the administration as a reason for the insufficiency, Finnish participants were troubled by the lack of willingness on the part of parents and the difficulty of engaging in this type of PI. Cross-tabulation showed no significant difference between Turkish and Finnish participants in terms of the reasons for insufficient PI practices, except that Finnish participants, significantly more frequently than Turkish participants, mentioned a lack of willingness on the part of parents and difficulty of using learning at home as a PI type (Table 7).

TABLE 7 Reasons for insufficiency in practices by parental involvement (PI) type

<i>PI TYPE</i>	Reason	<i>TURKEY</i>		<i>FINLAND</i>		$\chi^2(1)$	<i>p</i>	Cramer's <i>V</i>
		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>			
<i>COMMUNICATION</i>	A.	43	18.9	25	8.7	11.41	.001	.149
	B.	43	18.9	19	6.6	17.97	.000	.187
	C.	86	37.7	144	50.2	7.97	.005	.124
	D.	4	1.8	1	.3	-	.176	.071
	E.	7	3.1	1	.3	-	.025	.109
	F.	19	8.3	64	22.3	18.33	.000	.189
	G.	12	5.3	84	29.3	48.27	.000	.306
<i>VOLUNTEER WORKS</i>	A.	28	12.3	36	12.5	.008	.928	.004
	B.	31	13.6	13	4.5	13.36	.000	.161
	C.	101	44.3	164	57.1	8.39	.004	.128
	D.	0	0	1	.3	-	1.00	.039
	E.	10	4.4	9	3.1	.55	.455	.033
	F.	21	9.2	76	26.5	24.79	.000	.219
	G.	8	3.5	76	26.5	49.12	.000	.309
<i>LEARNING AT HOME</i>	A.	18	7.9	27	9.4	.36	.546	.027
	B.	14	6.1	11	3.8	1.46	.226	.053
	C.	69	30.3	124	43.2	9.08	.003	.133
	D.	2	0.9	1	.3	-	.587	.035
	E.	5	2.2	3	1.0	-	.476	.046
	F.	15	6.6	56	19.5	17.88	.000	.189
	G.	14	6.1	42	14.6	9.45	.002	.136
<i>DECISION-MAKING</i>	A.	40	17.5	51	17.8	.004	.947	.003
	B.	17	7.5	7	2.4	7.19	.007	.118
	C.	47	20.6	115	40.1	22.30	.000	.208
	D.	6	2.6	1	.3	-	.048	.098
	E.	31	13.6	14	4.9	12.11	.001	.153
	F.	31	13.6	56	19.5	3.16	.075	.078
	G.	5	2.2	42	9.1	23.71	.000	.215

## Discussion

This study focused on the differences and similarities that Finnish and Turkish early childhood educators have with respect to their views and practices related to PI in ECEC. For this purpose, the frequency of exploiting different types of PI, specified as communication, volunteering, learning at home and decision-making (see Epstein et al., 2002), was investigated, along with educators' views on PI. The reasons for insufficient PI practices were compared between the countries.

The results showed that there was no significant difference concerning the general views on PI among early childhood educators in Turkey and in Finland. Previous studies have shown that both Turkish and Finnish early childhood educators have positive views on involving parents (Hakyemez, 2015; Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018b). Preliminary findings of the current study indicated that world culture seemed to exert a major influence on the perceptions of PI and that this resulted in a common understanding of the importance of PI in these countries, despite societal and legislative differences. However, this picture changed when the analysis was taken to a deeper level, bringing the local culture into perspective, according to which the reason for the difference between countries is adaptation to a global phenomenon (Carney et al., 2012). General views were divided into negative and positive views, and when this was further analysed, Finnish educators turned out to be more critical and to express more negative views on PI than Turkish educators. The items gathered under this factor also pointed to a high standard of professionalism, especially in the Finnish context, where non-professionals are not utilised in educational institutions. As Alasuutari (2010) concluded in a previous study, Finnish early childhood educators exhibit a high level of professionalism. In the Turkish context, however, early childhood educators do not exhibit this high professionalism as a distancing factor. On the other hand the reason for this might be found from the recent history in Finland. Hujala et al. (2009, p. 72) pondered in their earlier study before the administrative change (to educational sector) in Finland that whether the ECEC being part of social care "was one of the reasons for the Finnish teachers' tendency to keep social distance with parents". For teachers might perceive parents as customers receiving services.

In contrast to the findings regarding general views, there were significant differences between Finland and Turkey regarding the frequency of using given PI types. Turkish educators use the given PI types more often than Finnish educators. This difference might be caused by expectations for PI on a policy level prevailing at the time of this research. While there is a clear notion of what is expected of PI and the methods of PI for achieving them in the Early childhood education programme in Turkey (2013), the Finnish

curriculum lacked solid parameters for how to involve parents (Hirsto, 2010). National guidance policies on PI and teacher education in these countries may explain some of this difference. A previous country-based study showed that differences in the educational level and educational background of Finnish early childhood educators play a significant role in their views on and practices of PI (Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018a). While Turkish early childhood educators complete a four-year degree in early childhood education or child development, the educational background of Finnish early childhood educators vary more than the Turkish.

Communication is quite often the most common type of PI (Cottle & Alexander, 2014; Hirsto, 2010). While Finnish early childhood educators favour one-way communication methods significantly more than Turkish, the opposite is the case for two-way communication methods. This difference may be due to heavy work schedules of parents in Finland (Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018b). In a setting of constant time constraints, it is understandable that parents may want to move quickly at drop-off and pick-up times, which are the classic opportunities for two-way communication. On the other hand, in a setting of one-way communication, professionals share weekly or daily openly their knowledge about the child and what the child has done. In other European countries, kindergarten teachers opt also for one-way communication because of busy schedules (Baeck, 2015) and to have parents as curriculum supporters rather than as partners (Deslandes et al., 2015). In Turkey, again, since the number of women in the workforce is low, parents might be less rushed during drop-off and pick-up times and might seize these opportunities more often for two-way communication with educators. In the Finnish context, early childhood educators use the children's personal ECE plans as the major opportunity for two-way communication, but these meetings regarding development plans do not take place daily. Personal ECE plans and the focus on them can also be seen as a represent of an individualist culture.

There were also significant differences between Turkey and Finland in involving parents as volunteers and in encouraging parental support at home. Turkish early childhood educators use these PI types significantly more often than their Finnish colleagues. Again, this difference might be explained by the percentage of women in the workforce. Finnish early childhood educators struggle with their workloads and the busy schedules of the parents, and hence PI types that require time to be spent by both parties are less frequently implemented (Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018b). Further, child groups in Finnish ECEC institutions are not stable, meaning that children and staff might change groups during the course of an education year (Korkalainen, 2009; Pihlaja & Junttila, 2001). This circumstance might generate difficulties which limit the educators' possibilities to practice certain PI types, whereas in Turkey, children usually continue in the same child group and with the same educator throughout their early education.

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Although country played a significant role for which PI practices were mainly used, country did not affect the relationships between the selected background variables and the participants' views and practices of PI. Here the exception was communication, where results showed a significant difference in both one-way and two-way communication. Extrapolating from the results of this study, the use of communication as a PI type among educators who work with the youngest age range of children is significantly higher in Turkey than in Finland. Similarly, the least experienced early childhood educators in Turkey involve parents through communication more often than those in Finland. The reason for this difference might be that the least experienced early childhood educators in Finland are usually teachers of the youngest child groups. Also, a previous study (Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018a) has showed that the least experienced early childhood educators in Finland engage less in PI than more experienced ones.

The most common PI type in both Finland and Turkey is learning at home, while the least common type in Turkey is involving parents in decision-making and in Finland involving parents in decision-making and involving parents as volunteers. The reason for choosing home learning over other PI types might be that the workload of educators can be reduced to a certain extent by leaving some teaching tasks to parents (Hakyemez, 2015; Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018b; Preston et al., 2018). The lack of PI in decision-making can be explained by the fact that educators do not have a great deal of control over this process. Apart from educators' lack of control over the decision-making, Venninen and Puroila's (2013) research revealed that early childhood educators preferably do not include parents in decision-making, activity designing or daily activities because the parents lack of ECEC knowhow. This attitude also is evidence for the vertical frame of PI practices, in which educators disregard PI because the parents lack knowledge in the field of ECEC (Alasuutari, 2010), which is a reasoning that underestimates parents' role in their child's early education.

Although the most and the least preferred PI types are the same in Turkey and Finland, there is a difference in the second and third most popular types of PI. While volunteering is the second most used PI type in Turkey, it is third in Finland. Since Finnish educators consider parents to be passive parties in children's education (Hujala et al., 2009) and Finnish parents consider child-rearing as their duty and leave teaching to educational institutions (Räty et al., 2009), it is not surprising that less preference is put on involving parents as volunteers in the Finnish context. Conversely, in the Turkish context, the employment rate of women is low, Turkey is a collectivist society in which child rearing is, to a certain extent, a shared responsibility and educator-child groups are stable through the years. These reasons may enable Turkish participants to use volunteering as a form of PI more often than Finnish participants.

Although participants stated that they involve parents in the education of their children, they also often stated that it is not done sufficiently. This type of PI is practiced insufficiently in both Finland and Turkey. In fact, more than 50% of the participants stated that all types of PI were insufficiently used. Although the mean scores showed that Finnish participants were more critical than Turkish participants about the sufficiency of PI, there were significant differences between these countries in the PI types volunteering and learning at home. These differences suggest that Finnish early childhood educators are significantly more concerned about not involving parents as volunteers and not using parental support at home to enhance PI. On the surface, educators in both countries most often mentioned that the parents did not want to be involved and least often that their education was insufficient for the task. However, further analysis revealed that Turkish participants were more worried about the educational system and administrative support, while Finnish participants were more of the opinion that parents were not willing to participate. Still, it has been shown (Kyrönlampi & Karikoski, 2017) that Finnish parents actually wish that professionals actively arrange possibilities for them to participate in planning and evaluating their child's development, however another study (Pihlaja et al., 2010) showed that parents' positive attitude to participate in kindergarten's activities were not as strong when it comes to take part actively and in a concrete way.

In conclusion, there is indeed a positive view of PI in Turkey as well as in Finland, which points to the influence of world culture as an explanation. Ideas of education are shared globally and many international actors affect also national policies, and global trends might drive the educational systems of these countries in the direction of reforms. As a result, PI practices tend to converge, regardless of differences in ECEC governance. However, a deeper analysis reveals that this "world culture" is, in fact, implemented locally (Akboga, 2016; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). The same course of policy reform might have occurred in the Finnish and Turkish contexts, leading to PI practices that are similar at first glance but different beneath the surface, as both local and world culture affect policy-making (Akboga, 2016).

### **Limitations and future studies**

The data gathering procedure of this research created some limitations. For the Turkish data, because of logistical issues, the researcher was not available while participants were filling in the questionnaires. Therefore, if participants had further questions, they did not have the opportunity to ask directly, which might explain some of the missing data. Also, although the participation rate was quite high, the decentralisation of education in Finland must be kept in mind and findings may not be fully generalisable because of different PI practices among the municipalities. For this study, capital municipalities were

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chosen to create a common ground and support feasibility, but there might be major differences between other municipalities. Such possible differences between municipalities generate an avenue for future research. The Turkish data was collected from both private and public ECEC institutions, and further research on differences between private and public institutions might be enlightening.

One of the aims of this study was to target associations between the backgrounds and views and practices of PI of educators. As a country comparison, these background variables were limited by the governance of ECEC and teacher education. The limited amount of usable background variables undoubtedly limited the results, as well. This study can be improved in the future by expanding the background variables outside the educators' professional variables. Also a national reform of ECEC was in progress in Finland, where the national administration and guidance were transferred to the Ministry of Culture and Education, and this might have affect PI in the future.

Educator viewpoints and attitudes towards PI and its types in this study indicates a potential lack of motivation on the part of parents. Further research could focus on parents' views and attitudes to being involved education of their children. The participants of this study considered parents to be unwilling to participate and, hence, such research would be needed to reveal the underlying issues related to insufficient PI practices. Investigating the views of and support strategies for PI on the part of administrators of ECEC institutions would provide a more complete state of PI practices.

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