Teenagers' Opinions on Parental Involvement in Compulsory Schools in Iceland

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Students' voices in research on parental involvement in schools are rather weak since many studies report only on opinions of parents and school personnel. This paper draws on findings from a study in 14 compulsory schools and uses data from questionnaires from students in 7th to 10th grade (n=1821). The issue, students' wishes for parents' participation, is approached from a systemic perspective; Bronfenbrenner´s ecological systems theory, Epstein´s model of family-school-community partnership, and Pasi Sahlberg´s Nordic point of view are applied. Multiple regression analysis testing revealed that gender, grade, and student confidence in his or her learning ability explained 9.4% of the variance (R^2) in students' wishes. School experiences were added in a second model and explained an additional 8.8% of the variance (R^2 change). Believing that parents' support is important for achievement and believing that discipline and peaceful class environment affects achievement were the two variables added in the third model of the regression analysis, and the overall explanation of the model was raised to 27.6% (R^2). Implications are that home-school cooperation on a lower-secondary level should focus more on activities related to the academic side of school life. Also, schools should take action in bettering the quality of factors related to students' school experience since that could result in an increase in students' interest for parental participation, which in turn contributes positively to academic achievement.

Keywords: Parental involvement, students' opinions, parent participation, teenagers, Bronfenbrenner´s ecological systems theory

Introduction

The vast majority of the teenagers who participated in a study in compulsory schools in Iceland wanted their parents to be involved in their education (Jónsdóttir, 2013; Jónsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2014; Óskarsdóttir et al., 2014b). It is as if they knew that parents' participation could have a significant, positive effect on their achievement and well-being at school (Bæck, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Hattie, 2009; Jeynes, 2011).

The Nordic countries all have long traditions of home-school cooperation. The features of the cooperation are described, at least officially, in a similar way in these countries, and the importance is unquestioned. Practices are also surprisingly similar from one school to another and from early

childhood to graduation, no matter what kind of ideology or school policy is prevalent (Christiansen, 2010; Dannesboe, Kryger, Palludan, & Ravn, 2012). The exception in this pattern is that parents often cease participation in their children's lives as students grow older and the children become teenagers (Epstein, 2007; Nordahl, 2007). That change could affect teenagers' lives in many different and sometimes unfortunate ways. Yet this cessation of participation could also be a sign of sound relationships as it is especially important for teenagers, developing their own identity and autonomy, to find their own way to deal with parent-teacher cooperation (Kryger, 2012).

This paper focuses on teenagers' opinions about parental participation in school and how they differ according to personal traits, such as age and gender and factors related to their school experiences. The latter aspects, those relating to

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school experiences, include questions about interest in academic activities, teenagers' views on teaching quality, student-teacher relations, and how important the teenagers believed parents' support to be for their learning outcomes and achievement. The topic will be approached from a systemic perspective, using Urie Bronfenbrenners´ ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Coleman, 2013; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) and Joyce Levy Epstein´s model of family-school-community partnership (Epstein, J. L. 2001, 2007; Epstein, J. L., Sanders, Mavis, G., 2000; Epstein, J. L., Sanders, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002). The findings will also be discussed from a Nordic point of view, as described by Pasi Sahlberg (2011, 2014, 2015), emphasising quality and equity as the strengths of the educational systems in the Nordic countries.

Home-School Cooperation in Nordic Countries

Home-school cooperation has developed in a rather similar direction in all the Nordic countries. Legislation and policy documents emphasise its importance, and steps have been taken in recent years to allocate parents a more significant position in schools (Bæck, 2009; Jónsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2012; Kristofferson, 2009; Risku, Bjork, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2012). Political campaigns have emerged to strengthen the home-school relationship, for example in Denmark, and Dannesboe et al. (2012) explained that these are grounded on the rhetoric that home-school cooperation is always in the child's best interest – the more the better.

The features of the cooperation are described very similarly in the other Nordic countries: one or two home-school conferences per year, where parents and teachers – and most often the students – discuss matters deemed relevant. Added to this communication is information exchange through systems on the Internet, via emails or letters, and various social events. Even if the "more the better" rhetoric is prevalent, a Norwegian study brought forth that the direct contact between teachers and the majority of parents is limited to participation in one common parent meeting and in one parent-teacher conference for 30 minutes per semester (Nordahl, 2007). And parents' social and cultural capital affects their view on participation and readiness to cooperate with schools (Bæck, 2005, 2009; Palludan, 2012). Findings in an ethnographic study

in Denmark (Palludan, 2012) showed that parents tend to adapt to the social and cultural organization of home-school relations without questioning it or without trying to influence it. The adaption was easier for couples than for single parents and easier for parents living in a middle class neighbourhood than for those living elsewhere.

In a preceding study, I focused on the organization of home-school relationships and the communication between parents and teachers, and it revealed that parental participation is limited and rather similar to that in the other Nordic countries as described above and that the largest share of the time supervisory teachers spend on communicating with parents is about issues concerning a few individual students (Jónsdóttir, 2013; Jónsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2012, 2014).[1]

Findings also showed that the majority of both parents and school staff favoured the more traditional kind of parental participation, which primarily involves social activities (Jónsdóttir, 2013). Generally, the more educated parents favoured parental involvement more than the less educated, implying the importance of social class (Palludan, 2012). However, teenagers have other preferences from the adults and really showed more interest in relating parental participation to their academic activities (Jónsdóttir, 2013). A key concept here is *parents' participation*, that is, parents come to school to attend some social events or take part in other school activities such as planning and assessment. Parents can also participate in students' education outside of

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[1] The study *Parental involvement in compulsory schools in Iceland* is founded on one of six strands in a larger research project called *Teaching and Learning in Icelandic Schools*, which deals with teaching and learning in 20 compulsory schools for age levels 6 to 15. The research project's aim is to contribute to the body of knowledge on teaching and learning, with a special emphasis on the development towards individualized and cooperative learning (Teaching and Learning in Icelandic Schools; Óskarsdóttir et al., 2014b). The overall aim of this study on *parental involvement* is to explore how parental involvement contributes to student´s education in compulsory schools. The main questions concern the organisation of home-school relationships; what parents, students, and school personnel find to be a desirable parent participation; and if home-school relations should be organised somewhat differently on a lower-secondary school level than on the younger levels in compulsory school (Björnsdóttir & Jónsdóttir, 2010, 2014; Jónsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2012, 2014).

school, for example by assisting their children with homework and in policymaking and management (Guðmundsson, 2003; Kristofferson, 2009). Therefore parents' participation can refer to a rather inactive role as passive attendants at social events but also to an active participation and shared responsibility of pedagogical decisions regarding their child.

Students' Role and Placement within the (School) System

Relationships between compulsory schools and their communities are growing in the 21st century (Hargreaves, 2000). Parenting is not restricted to the family anymore and contemporary families often work in cooperation with a variety of childcare and family professionals, such as daycare and healthcare staff and teachers (Böök & Perälä-Littunen, 2014). The ecological systems theory describes how an individual's development is affected by his social relationships and the world around him (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theory identifies four environmental systems with which an individual interacts, the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem; see Figure 1 (Hchokr, 2012).
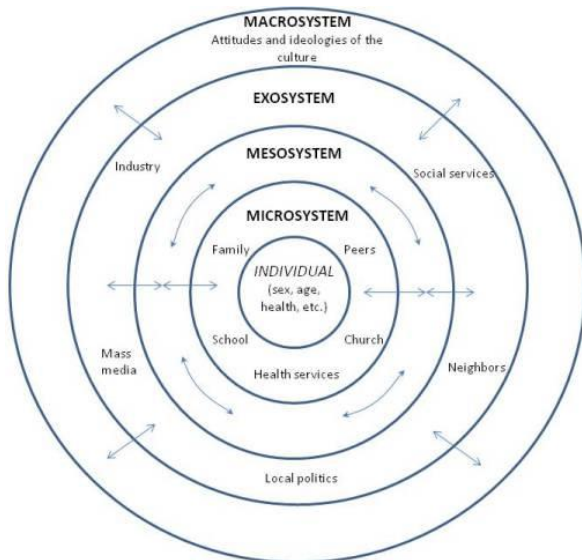

Figure 1 Bronfenbrenner´s ecological systems theory

Children live and mature in many microsystems, such as at home and in school, and these systems are connected in the mesosystem, for example by mails and meetings. The mesosystem in turn is a part of the exosystem, which includes systems of institutions, such as the social system and the school system in a community. Individuals are affected by the exosystems; for example, students are affected by the school system, but they have no direct influence on it themselves. Finally all these systems are surrounded by the macrosystem of culture, traditions, customs, rights, and duties in a society. In later versions, Bronfenbrenner added the chronosystem to his model to acknowledge that, like physical ecologies, human ecologies change over time (built on Coleman, 2013; Martínes-Gonzáles, 2001; Óskarsdóttir, 2012).

The family-school-community partnership model by Joyce Levy Epstein and colleagues (2002) has been widely used to explain the relationship between three "overlapping spheres of influence", the family, the school, and the community, which have to work together to support children´s development and education (Coleman, 2013; Epstein, 2011). The model is a framework for schools to keep parents engaged in home-school cooperation regarding their teenagers as well as their younger children (Epstein, 2001, 2007; Epstein, & Sanders, Mavis G., 2000; Epstein et al., 2002). Sanders (2007) claims that adding community to the family-school partnership adds resources and support that are needed for students' academic success and networks that can respond to students at risk. When middle schools and high schools implement partnership programs, more students benefit than just those whose families become involved, says Epstein (2011) since several studies confirm "that when families are involved, more students earn higher grades in English and math, improve their reading and writing skills, complete more course credits, set higher aspirations, have better attendance, come to class more prepared to learn, and have fewer behavioral problems" (Epstein, 2007, p. 18).

In this study, the student in a compulsory school is the individual at the centre of the Bronfenbrenner model. The systems interact and affect each other and the student´s development and education. Epstein's framework has proved to be efficient in strengthening home-school relations and the theory of the overlapping spheres is useful when interpreting findings regarding students' wishes about parental involvement. But even though Epstein (2001) refers to the ecological systems theory, the individual student is neither very visible nor described as an actor in home-school relationships. Therefore

Bronfenbrenner's theory is necessary as an analytical tool that sharpens up the student's role and central placement when exploring the home-school relations from a systemic perspective.

Equity and Teenagers Need for Space

Pasi Sahlberg (2014) has described the emphasis on equity and quality in educational systems and has suggested that it could be called the Nordic point of view, since the Nordic countries in general have emphasized these values. The improvement of education systems is now a global phenomenon, and the sixth element of GERM – the Global educational reform movement – is the increased external control of school, says Sahlberg (2011). He warns that inequalities in Finnish society and in its education system are increasing and says that the challenge for Finland is "not just to try to maintain high student performance but to strive to keep the country an equal society and hold onto its leading position as the most equitable education system in the world" (Sahlberg, 2015, p. 195). This is an important reminder, since family-school-community cooperation isn´t just to serve these institutions of society and their goals, but to empower every student and uphold his or her rights to mature and to respect each student's families' choices and preferences. Equity and diversity within a teenage student group can be discussed from different perspectives, such as achievement, identity or self-perception, and social class and social capital as mentioned before.

The expectations for better academic achievement are all around in modern societies, and they put pressure on teenagers as well as adults. John Hattie (2012) pointed out that it is necessary to distinguish between factors in achievement that can be changed and those that cannot. Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between factors that can be easily changed and those that demand very complicated efforts. It is well known that parental involvement has a positive effect on achievement and well-being at school (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Hattie, 2009), so it is a question of which aspects of parental involvement could be easily changeable factors.

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) point out that lessening parental involvement as the child gets older is strongly influenced by the child taking an active mediating role. A possible explanation for the dwindling contact may be that teenagers simply need to distance themselves from adults, parents, and teachers and need more space as they mature. This cessation of participation could be a sign of sound relationships as Kryger (2012) has suggested in his research on ninth grade students' interpretation of the home-school relationship. The study describes teenagers' different positions as three different voices. The first voice is the school adaptive voice of teenagers that tries to live up to the expectations the students have at home and at school. Second is the youth cultural voice that wants to keep home and school apart but also to have space to create individual cultural scenes across the microsystems. The third voice is the generational voice of teenagers who are creating their identity as independent individuals in relation to adults and finding themselves with regard to their relations between the adults, teachers, and parents. The conclusion is that the established forms of cooperation between home and school leave very little space for students' perspectives, and teenagers have to find their own way to deal with the parent-teacher cooperation because it is a part of their maturation process (Kryger, 2012).

The aim of this paper is to lend a voice to the teenage students and to discuss if family-school cooperation should be organised somewhat differently at the lower secondary school level than at the younger school levels. The research question set forth in this article is: *What do teenagers prefer in parents´ participation, and how could their wishes affect the cooperation?*

Data and Method

Data derives from a mixed method research project *Teaching and Learning in Icelandic Schools* (Óskarsdóttir, 2014). The participants were the principals, teachers, and other school professionals in 20 compulsory schools in Iceland who accepted an invitation to take part in the project. Also participants were the students and the parents of the children attending these schools. The sample is large; for example, the students in those 20 schools comprised 17% of all of the students in compulsory schools in Iceland (Óskarsdóttir et al., 2014a).

Participants

Findings in this paper build on the questionnaire to students in 7th to 10th grade in 14 schools; six of the 20 participating schools didn´t have students in the lower-secondary level. The

response rate for the students was 86% (n=1821). Boys were 49.6% (n=904) and girls 49.8% (n=907). Students in 7th grade were 21.4% (n=389), in 8th grade 25.7% (n=468), in 9th grade 24.1% (n=438) and 10th graders were 28.2% (n=514). The response rate was high in this research as the response rate for surveys frequently falls below 50% (Saunders, 2011).

Materials

A questionnaire was developed for students using guidelines on survey construction (Karlsson, 2003; Þórsdóttir & Jónsson, 2007). The questionnaire included questions about learning styles, students' relations with the teachers, and about what they preferred in parental participation in school activities; a pretest of questionnaires was conducted in a pilot study in one compulsory school (Jónsdóttir & Björnsdóttir, 2012).

Variables

Table 1 gives an overview of the variables used in the data analysis. The outcome variable is *Teenagers' wishes for parental participation*. It is a scale computed out of six questions into one dependent or outcome variable. The questions are about how desirable students find parents' participation, such as assisting them with homework and participating in assessment and planning of student´s future studies, if parents should be informed about curriculum and student's tasks, and how desirable it is to have parents attend social events at school or participate in lessons. A reliability analysis revealed an internal consistency of ɑ = 0.87.

The explanatory variables that are shown in Table 1 touch upon personal traits such as age and gender, school experience, and upon students' opinions on what affects achievement.

Table 1.
Overview of the variables used in regression analysis, n=1821

	Categories	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Outcome variable: Teenagers' wishes for parental participation	1 = very undesirable, 2 = rather undesirable, 3 = neither desirable nor undesirable, 4 = rather desirable, 5 = very desirable	3.71	0.87	1	5
Explanatory variables:					
Respondent´s gender	Girl = 1, boy = 0	0.50			
Respondent´s grade in compulsory school	1 = 7th, 2 = 8th, 3 = 9th, 4 = 10th grade	2.60	1.11	1	4
Confidence in one's own learning abilities	1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = neither poor nor good, 4 = good, 5 = very good	3.88	0.90	1	5
Teaching quality	1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = neither poor nor good, 4 = good, 5 = very good	3.82	0.88	1	5
Relations with teachers	1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = neither poor nor good, 4 = good, 5 = very good	4.07	0.88	1	5
Students' appreciation of school activities	1= disagree strongly, 2 = disagree, 3 = moderate, 4 = agree, 5 = agree strongly	3.04	0.99	1	5
Discipline and peaceful class environment influence students' learning outcomes	1 = very little, 2 = little, 3 = neither little nor much, 4 = much, 5 = very much	4.05	0.94	1	5
Parents' support influences students' learning outcomes	1 = very little, 2 = little, 3 = neither little nor much, 4 = much, 5 = very much	4.39	0.82	1	5

Procedure

The online survey software QuestionPro was used for data collection. The data was collected in an on-site survey conducted by researchers who visited the schools in November and December in 2010.

The data was analysed with SPSS 22. Percentages and Spearman correlation were computed, and Spearman was used to measure the correlation between the variables on an ordinal scale (Field, 2013). A multiple regression analysis was performed to provide information on the effect of the explanatory variables on the outcome variable (Gujarati & Porter, 2009).

The regression analysis was done to test three models in order to group together the strongest explanatory variables belonging to the same spheres: the personal, the school related, and the sphere of opinions and values.

Model 1 contains the three personal variables; *gender* a girl or a boy, *grade* from 7th to 10th, and *confidence in one's own learning ability* estimated on a scale from 1-5, in which 1 stood for very poor confidence and 5 for a very good confidence.

In model 2, three school experience variables were added: *teaching quality* was estimated on a scale in which 1 stood for very poor teaching and 5 for very good teaching. *Relations with teachers* were estimated on a scale in which 1 meant very poor relations and 5 meant very good relations. The third variable measured *students' appreciation of school activities* by computing three statements into one: I am interested in learning tasks, the homework tasks are interesting, and I am having fun at school. The scale is 1 – 5, where 1 stood for disagree strongly and 5 for agree strongly. Thus, in model 2, variables of school experience were added to the personal traits in model 1.

In model 3, two variables with statements about achievement or learning outcomes were added to model 2. The first statement was about the influence of discipline and peaceful class environment on students' learning outcomes, measured on a scale 1 – 5, in which 1 stood for very little and 5 for very much. The second statement was if parents' support influences students learning outcomes, measured on the same scale.

Results

Teenagers were positive towards parental involvement in their education and parents' participation in school-related activities (see Table 2). The teenagers were most eager to have parents helping them with their homework; around 84% of teenagers found help with homework to be very or rather desirable. 73% found it very or rather desirable to have parents collaborate with teachers in assessing students' work, and 67% thought positively about parents' participation in planning. Almost 60% of the students thought it would be positive if their parents were informed about the school curriculum and their learning tasks.

Table 2
Students' evaluation of how desirable parents' participation is in school-related activities, percentages, n=1821

Variable	Very undesirable %	Undesirable %	Neither desirable nor undesirable %	Rather desirable %	Very desirable %
Assist with homework	3.3	1.9	11.4	31.0	52.5
Assessment of student´s studies	4.2	3.9	18.9	34.3	38.7
Planning of student´s studies	4.6	5.7	22.7	36.2	30.8
Being informed about subjects and tasks	6.7	6.8	26.7	32.4	27.3
Attend extracurricular activities / social events	8.3	8.5	29.3	29.6	24.2
Visit school and participate in lessons	21.2	16.7	31.4	17.6	13.1

These four questions, all related to student academic activities, scored higher than the two questions related to the social side of school. Just over half of the teenage group, or 54%, found it desirable to have parents attend extracurricular activities or social events at school; the group that found it neither desirable nor undesirable was rather large, or 29%, and almost 17% of students found it undesirable to have parents attend social events. The students formed three rather equal groups when asked if they wanted parents to visit school and join lessons; around 38% said undesirable; 31% said it does not matter; and 31% of the students said it was desirable to have parents come for visits to school.

The correlations between the six questions in Table 2 were positive and statistically significant. The strongest relations were between answers on participation in assessment and in the planning of studies (r_s (1586) = .65, p < .001), but the lowest were between assistance with homework and visits to school (r_s (1608) = .31, p < .001).

According to the results of the multiple regression analysis testing Model 1 (see Table 3), personal traits that defined the student explained around 9.4% of the variance (R^2) in students' wishes for parental participation. These personal traits were *gender*, *grade*, and *confidence in one´s own learning ability*, and all three variables had significant effect in this model (p < .001).

In model 2 (see Table 3), three variables concerning students' experience at school had been added to the original model. They all had positive effects, meaning that if students' estimates rose on the quality of teaching and on relations with teachers, they were also more positive towards parents' participation. Furthermore, teenagers who were pleased to be in school and took interest in their learning tasks and homework, found parental participation more desirable than students who reported poor contact with their teachers or who found their tasks boring. When these school experience variables were added, the explanatory power of the model increased to 18.2%, indicating that school experience variables were responsible for an additional 8.8% of the variance. One can say that the share of teachers and teaching, in students' opinions, on parental participation is almost as big

as the share of the personal traits. Age and gender were still significant factors in the second model, which shows how important these factors are for students´ opinions.

In model 3 (see Table 3), two variables concerning students' opinions on achievement or learning outcomes were added to model 2. The first one was about the influence of discipline and peaceful class environment on students' learning outcomes, and the second one was if parents' support influenced students' learning outcomes. The overall explanation of the model was raised to 27.6% (R^2). There is no doubt that students believing in the value of parents' support for learning outcomes made parents' participation desirable. This variable was the strongest one in the regression analysis, with b value of 0.298. The second strongest is the variable estimating students' appreciation of school activities (b value 0.162), and the third one was school grade (b value -0.136), and it was significant as a single variable in all three models.

To sum up what the multiple regression analysis testing shows, we can say that school grade proved to be an important factor for students´ opinions and notably the only factor with a negative b value, meaning that students´ wishes for parents' participation diminished as students grew older. Gender was not as important as grade, but it was still a significant one as a single variable in the second model when variables of school experience had been added. The remaining six variables in the regression (estimating confidence in learning ability, experience in school, and beliefs about effects on achievement), all point in the same direction: Students' more positive opinions and experiences in school went hand in hand with more positive opinions towards parental participation.

It is important also to remember the answers from teenagers who didn't share the positive views of the majority. See Table 2. The percentage of those who found parents' participation very undesirable varies from 3.3 – 8.3% in five of the questions, but more than one out of five students (21.2%) found it very undesirable to have parents visiting school and participating in lessons.

Table 3
Regression analysis on the outcome variable: Teenagers' wishes for parental participation (n=1821)

MODEL 1	b	SE	Sig.
(Constant)	3.269	.121	<.001
Gender (girl = 1, boy = 0)	.190	.044	<.001
Grade in school (1 = 7th, 2 = 8th, 3 = 9th, 4 = 10th grade)	-.147	.020	<.001
Confidence in one's own learning ability	.189	.026	<.001
Percentage of variance explained (R^2)		.094	
MODEL 2	**b**	**SE**	**Sig.**
(Constant)	2.508	.146	<0.001
Gender (girl = 1, boy = 0)	.087	.043	0.044
Grade in school (1 = 7th, 2 = 8th, 3 = 9th, 4 = 10th grade)	-.126	.019	<0.001
Confidence in one's own learning ability	.051	.027	0.056
Teaching quality	.053	.030	0.080
Relations with teachers	.110	.030	<0.001
Students' appreciation of school activities	.208	.027	<0.001
Percentage of variance explained (R^2)		.182	
R^2 change		.088	
Sig. F change		<0.001	
MODEL 3	**b**	**SE**	**Sig.**
(Constant)	1.421	.160	<0.001
Gender (girl = 1, boy = 0)	.054	,041	0.189
Grade in school (1 = 7th, 2 = 8th, 3 = 9th, 4 = 10th grade)	-.136	.018	<0.001
Confidence in one's own learning ability	.020	.025	0.429
Teaching quality	.021	.029	0.460
Relation with teachers	.069	.028	0.014
Students' appreciation of school activities	.162	.026	<0.001
Discipline and peace in class affect students' learning outcomes	.090	.025	<0.001
Parents' support affects students' learning outcomes	.298	.028	<0.001
Percentage of variance explained (R^2)		.276	
R^2 change		.093	
Sig. F change		<0.001	

Discussion and Conclusion

The study revealed that the majority of students were positive towards parents' participation in school-related activities. Students found parents' participation to be more desirable in activities related to the academic side of school life than to the social side, contradicting the opinions of the majority of adults: both parents and school staff favoured the more traditional kind of parental participation, which primarily involves social activities (Jónsdóttir, 2013). This is one of the main findings of this study and indicates the importance of bringing students' wishes forth in the debate on home-school relationship, i.e., direct the focus onto the student at the centre of the ecological

system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and listen to her or his opinions.

Findings also showed a strong correlation between students' answers about different kinds of parental participation, so one can say that there was a tendency for students to be either positive or negative towards parents' participation in all types of activities. With reference to Epstein´s family-school-community partnership model (2011), one can say that teenagers were positive towards the overlapping of the spheres, parents' active participation in their school life and a fruitful relationship between their family and their teachers at school. Students also wanted parents to be informed about school subjects and students' learning tasks. This desire implies that the conventional flow of information from teachers to parents through the communication systems on the Internet does not cover what students think is important for parents to know. The traditional home-school relationship should thus be stretched to include the community in the partnership, for example, by teaching parents about the aims and learning outcomes described in the national curriculum and about the tasks that students work on to achieve the required goals. This could be done on a community basis and not restricted to single schools.

Teaching quality, teacher-student relations, and students' appreciation of school activities are the variables of school experience that were added in Model 2 in the regression analysis. They explained additionally almost as much of the variability in teenagers' wishes for parental participation as the personal traits of Model 1 did. These factors are within the school sphere, referring to Epstein´s three overlapping spheres, so schools have opportunity to influence and change them. This influence implies that teachers and school leaders should examine these students' wishes for parental participation with a close regard to the situation in their own school. It is worth recalling that it is necessary to distinguish between factors that can be changed and those that cannot be changed and also between factors that can be easily changed and those that demand very complicated efforts (Hattie, 2012). Many communities and school leaders have survey information at hand (for example in "Skólapúlsinn," 2015) that can be used to measure their own students' *appreciation of school activities*. Based on that measurement, school professionals could then take action in bettering the school-related factors, if needed, since they

are within their own sphere. The result would most likely be that students appreciated the school activities more than before, and there would be an increase in students' interest for parental participation, both factors contributing to better academic achievement (Epstein, 2007; Hattie, 2009).

Prior findings have shown that these students find it more important for schools to prioritise good achievement than the adults do: Students put achievement in second place on the priority list while parents put it in fifth place and school staff in sixth place (Björnsdóttir & Jónsdóttir, 2014). Model 3 in the regression analysis showed that teenagers who believe that discipline and a peaceful class environment contributes to good achievement were more likely than those who did not believe it to welcome parental participation in school. This adds to the factors of school experience that school professionals should notice. Students' belief that parents' support is important for academic achievement had the biggest effect of all the variables on the outcome variable: *Teenagers wishes for parental participation*. No doubt, teenagers are smart; they want all the help they can get from both teachers and parents to get good grades, for example to gain status or to be able to choose the upper secondary school they want to attend.

The expectations for better academic achievement are all around us, and the influence of GERM can be detected in the Nordic countries. The emphasis on equity and quality is prominent in the Nordic educational systems, and Pasi Sahlberg (2015) advises us to be careful not to sacrifice equity and quality in the strife for high student performance. According to the findings of this study, students who reported positive school experience and confidence in their own learning ability were also more positive towards parental involvement than those with less self-confidence or more negative experience in school. The size of the student group that was negative towards parental involvement is rather big; one out of every five students said that parental visits to school and lessons were very undesirable; they clearly preferred to keep home and school apart. This cynical student group needs attention and encouragement, and teachers should reach out to build up a relationship with their families

also. These students will not experience quality and gain equally from their school years as their fellow classmates in achievement or well-being if the attitudes comprising negative school experience are neglected. Researchers report that parents' social class, social and cultural capital, and parents´ education (Bæck, 2005, 2009; Jónsdóttir, 2013; Palludan, 2012) affect their opinions about parental involvement, and parents opinions at home influence students' opinions (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). My conclusion here is that teachers and school leaders should note which parents do not participate in the regular parent-teacher conferences and seldom attend the traditional social events. If these are parents of students who lack confidence in their learning abilities and do poorly in school, the school professionals should deliberately reach out to those families, encourage them to participate, and explain to them the value of cooperation.

It is important for teenagers' maturation to distance themselves from adults, and, therefore, parents' diminishing participation in school-related activities could be a sign of sound relationships (Kryger, 2012). Findings in this study bring in another perspective. Since a lack of confidence in one's own learning ability and a less positive school experience are related to students' less positive opinions about parental involvement, we might find that a certain group of students is in revolt against both parents' and teachers' influences. Furthermore, the effects of gender and grade on teenagers' wishes for parental participation were clear in the regression analysis. The girls favoured it more than the boys did. The difference between grades was also highly significant; the elder students were less likely than the younger ones to wish for parents' participation. It is tempting to interpret this in line with Kryger´s findings about the different paths teenagers choose when developing their own identity and their need to find their own way to deal with the parent-teacher cooperation. Now referring back to the first paragraph in this discussion, since students find parents' participation much more desirable in activities related to the academic side of school life than to the social side, a greater emphasis on parental involvement in students' academic activities should be favoured as the students get older.

Some implications for research on parental involvement and school practice have already been mentioned. In summary, findings indicate that the family-school cooperation should be more responsive to diversity in the student group and sensitive to students' social background. If students' school experiences are rather negative, it is necessary to reach out to the families and the students, even if they are reluctant towards cooperation. The cooperation at the lower-secondary level should focus more on learning outcomes and school-related activities, including guidance for parents in understanding the tasks and the demands that their teenagers are dealing with. A refresher course in the organisation of home-school relationships should emphasise respect for students' wishes for cooperation with their academic tasks, but should also be clear that good relationships contribute to student achievement and well-being at school.

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