Abstract
The aim of this study is to present to what extent the participation rights of the children in the social studies textbooks of the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades of secondary education in Turkey. Analysis unit of the study is “Children’s Participation Right”. This analysis unit is divided within itself into some main categories. Each main and sub-category is associated to the related article of UN CRC and decisions of Children’s Rights Committee. Frequency and percentage are used in analyzing the data. As a result, the statements about “child’s participation in school environment are given the utmost place in all social studies textbooks.

Keywords: Social Studies, Children’s Participation’s Rights, Textbooks, Turkey.

1. Introduction
The notion of Children’s Rights is a significant part of human rights. Therefore, the emergence, materialization, development, and perception of children’s rights are explained based on the development process of human rights (Doğan, 2000). The idea that children and children’s rights need to be protected first came into light with the notion of people’s responsibility towards children, regardless of language, religion, race, color, nation, and faith and ideology (İnan, 1968). In our world developing in time, protecting children’s rights, improving them, and keeping children away from any kind of inattention and abuse proved the fact that these will require internationally binding documents (Ünal, 2008).

Convention on the Rights of the Children is the most significant step for children’s rights. The cycle beginning with historic 1824 Geneva Children’s Rights Declaration continued with 1959 Children’s Rights Declaration, and led to the expected and desired legal grounds in 1989 United Nations Convention on Children’s Rights (Doğan, 2005). With the Convention signed, a new era began for children. Nations including Turkey today have committed children as individuals with rights through the Convention. Children’s protection, survival, development and participation are globally recognized as fundamental rights. Convention declares four fundamental rights for children. These, children’s life, development, protection, and participation rights, are put forward as the basic principles on Convention.

United Nation’s Convention of Children’s Rights (UNCRC) focuses on three fundamental rights. These are right to protection, right to life, and right to participation (Lansdown, 1994:38). The first two are often more clearly expressed and perceived. Right to participation is disputed upon and therefore would usually be the right ignored (Smith, 2002:77). Children’s right to participation is not paid attention as much as the right to protection and the
right to meet basic human needs. In addition, except some countries, in almost all other countries, children’s right to participation is entirely ignored whereas provisions about children’s protection and improvement are provided (Reddy and Ranta, 2002; Garbarino, 1991; Habashi et al., 2010). In modern societies, the child is ostracized, not given voice, and his/her personality is damaged (Ennew, 1994: 130; Roche, 1996: 477). In many countries around the world, some efforts are put in favor of children’s participation; however, studies show that children’s participation is not on the expected level. It has been observed that children do not participate adequately in the school environment and school administrators do not provide children with adequate opportunity in making significant decisions related to schools. Similar issues are observed in the US. Students are not adequately consulted with over issues such as curriculum and school rules in the US (Howe and Covell, 2005). The child lacks participation in the societal life. In Turkey, children over twelve are able to subscribe in associations founded by children; however, they cannot participate in the administration without parents’ consent.

UN Children’s Rights Committee recommends participating nations to make efforts within 12th, 13th, and 15th provisions of the Convention, to provide children’s active participation in family, school, and society; to set rules to provide children’s participation in making decisions related to them; and for this purpose, to take required steps to ensure these rules are obeyed. Yet, in order for children to use the right to express opinion, it is required to develop the awareness and consciousness levels of families, public in general, and those working in organizations related to children; and to train these people to motivate children in this direction and to empower children’s expression of opinion (Akyüz, 2001: 16-18; Hodglin and Newel, 2002). One of the fundamentally significant principles in implementing Convention of Children’s Rights and interpreting all provisions of it is that any child skilled in forming an opinion should express opinion on issues related to themselves and their opinions should be treated fairly in regards to their ages and maturity levels (Akyüz, 2001:7).

Participation is a democratic right and an important tool for children to learn democracy in their local environment. School and family are the very fundamental institutions for democracy education. Thus, schools need to be made functional as social life centers with surroundings. In other words, schools need to be restructured to provide all associated to education with participation and use.

Studies found in relation to children’s rights are observed to be often focusing on factors influencing children’s rights. In addition, reviews of literature in Turkey and abroad reveal no study related to the level of allocating children’s participation right in social studies books. Therefore, it is believed that this study will contribute to overcome this inadequacy. Additionally, knowing about the level of allocation of children’s right to participation in social studies books whose basic purpose is to educate democratic citizens will be beneficial for future studies.

2. Purpose

The aim of this work is to determine the level of allocation of “Children’s Participation Right” issues in secondary social studies textbooks that are published by the Turkish Ministry of National Education in the 2012-2013 educational year in Turkey.

3. Method

The research applies the case study among qualitative designs. “Document analysis” was used as the instrument of data collection. Analysis unit of the study is “Children’s Participation Right”. This analysis unit is divided within itself into some main categories such as “child’s participation in family environment”, “child’s participation in school environment”, “child’s participation in general (national) politics”, “child’s participation in media”, “child’s participation in environmental protection and sustainable development”, “child’s participation in health environment”, “child’s participation in judicial environment”, and “child’s participation in society”. Main categories are divided into sub-categories. Each main and sub-category is associated to the related article of UN CRC and decisions of Children’s Rights Committee. These subcategories are defined in the present analysis as follows (Merey, 2012):

**Participation in the Family Environment**: In this study, through this main category, definitions related to children’s participation in decision making processes within family are marked.

**Participation in School Environment**: In this study, through this main category, definitions related to children’s freedom of expressing opinion on anything about themselves and participation in decisions on school life are marked.
Participation in General Politics: In this study, through this main category, definitions of children’s active participation in all decision making processes related to general politics and participation in decision on politic life are marked.

Participation in Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development: In this study, through this main category, definitions of children’s active participation in all decision making processes related to environmental protection and development within improvement of child’s respect towards natural environment are marked.

Participation in Health Environment: In this study, through this main category, definitions about children’s active participation in decision making related to decisions on health services, services, and planning for themselves are marked.

Participation in Media: In this study, through this main category, definitions about children’s participation in decision making processes related to media, hearing children’s opinions, and considering them seriously are marked.

Participation in Judicial Environment: In this study, through this main category, definitions related to hearing children, listening to their opinions, and considering them seriously in relation to any legal or judicial questioning are marked.

Participation in Society: In this study, through this main category, definitions related to children’s active participation in society for issues directly relating to themselves are marked.

This research was carried out using survey design. Content analysis, a qualitative research technique, was used. The analysis of the data was carried out by calculating frequency, and percentage. While examining the textbooks, ‘sentence’ was selected as the unit of analysis and the frequency of sub-categories seen in the textbooks’ passages are considered. In all textbooks, both the apparent and the hidden content were taken into consideration. In generating the inter-rater reliability of the content areas of interest, all subcategories in a textbook were arbitrarily selected and coded by the co-authors of the paper. A consistency with an average of 85.5% was generated, implying a good inter-rater reliability (Hall & Houten, 1983). In order to assure the validity of the work when analyzing books, books were examined as a whole, excluding the table of contents, bibliography, and index. Thus, the measuring instrument is the prerequisite of the validity. It has proceeded to measure what it has to measure and so the validity of the work is ensured. Both frequency and percentage are used in this data analysis (Karaman-Kepenekçi, 2010).

4. Findings

As can be observed on Table 1.1, most emphasized categories in total are the themes related to: “children’s participation in school environment” (54.46%, n=305), “children’s participation in family environment” (54.46%, n=305), “children’s participation in media” (11.79%, n=66), “children’s participation in environmental protection and sustainable development” (8.57%, n=48), “children’s participation in society” (5.54%, n=31), “children’s participation in general (country) politics” (2.50%, n=14), “children’s participation in health environment” (0.18%, n=1). Total frequency of categories related to children’s rights in Social Studies book is n=560.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>6th</th>
<th>7th</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Child’s participation in family environment</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19.41</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21.92</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.05</td>
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<td>2. Child’s participation in school environment</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>32.94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>64.38</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>78.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Child’s participation in general (country) politics</td>
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<td>5. Child’s participation in health environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Child’s participation in media</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21.18</td>
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<td>7. Child’s participation in judicial environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Child’s participation in society</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.35</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>
Results of content analysis in texts of Social Studies books are presented on Table 1. As can be observed on theme distribution in relation to grades, in 4th grade texts, categories most emphasized in regards to children’s rights are “children’s participation in school environment” (21.18%, n=36), children’s participation in family environment” (19.41%, n=33), and “children’s participation in society” (11.76%, n=20). Total frequency of categories related to children’s rights in 4th grade Social Studies book is n=170.

As can be observed on theme distribution in relation to grades, in 5th grade texts, categories most emphasized in regards to children’s rights are “children’s participation in school environment” (64.38%, n=94), children’s participation in family environment” (5.48%, n=8), and “children’s participation in general (national) politics” (1.37%, n=2). Total frequency of categories related to children’s rights in 5th grade Social Studies book is n=146.

In 6th grade texts, categories most emphasized in regards to children’s rights are “children’s participation in school environment” (78.38%, n=58), children’s participation in general (national) politics (8.11%, n=6), children’s participation in family environment” (4.05%, n=3), “children’s participation in health environment” (1.35%, n=1) and “children’s participation in society” (1.35%, n=1). Total frequency of categories related to children’s rights in 6th grade Social Studies book is n=74.

In 7th grade texts, categories most emphasized in regards to children’s rights are “children’s participation in school environment” (57.06%, n=97), children’s participation in media (17.65%, n=30), children’s participation in family environment” (15.88%, n=27), “children’s participation in environmental protection and sustainable development” (4.71%, n=8), children’s participation in general (national) politics (3.53%, n=6), and “children’s participation in society” (1.35%, n=2). Total frequency of categories related to children’s rights in 7th grade Social Studies book is n=170.

Following statements may exemplify the expressions on “children’s participation” included in Social Studies textbook (4th – 7th grades):

- I am involved while a decision is being made at my home (SB4, p.28).
- We decided altogether, determined some rules for our home (SB5, p.16).
- I can explain my thoughts to other people effectively. I can welcome tolerantly different view and understanding (SB4, p.143).
- I learned that the journal has around 50 thousand readers today. I was so happy to be included in this group. Educators and families have joined also in addition to young readers (SB5, p.133).
- Issues to related me take my view. If I am child someone take my view behalf of me (SS5, p.33).
- President of the Consumer Rights Association said that a good example of citizenship and responsibility that consumers search for solutions to problems within the framework of rights and freedoms (SS6, p.23).
- We organize events to show environmental awareness on these issues as a society (SS4, p.132).
- I can pay attention to problems around personally or in groups. I can develop and run projects that can solve these problems (SB7, p.143).
- Today, we are organizing a panel discussion on Freedom of the Mass Media. I give the first words to our colleague Ayla for her to express her views on the subject (SS7, p.22).
- After, students were guests of the show “Karadeniz” which is a radio program by Trabzon Radio (SS7, p.18).
- Students learned that there are public and voluntary organizations that protect consumer rights. Applied to one of these organizations (SS4, p.92).
- Provided that your family agrees, you can also form a club/society. This is one of your rights (SS5, p.28).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Social studies courses are one of the most important courses of elementary education in Turkey. They include history, philosophy, geography, law, sociology, and political sciences (citizenship education). Besides these issues, in social studies classes in Turkey, human rights issues are presented as interdisciplinary topics (MONE, 2005); Social studies classes provide students as citizens who adopt democratic values with adjustment in the society and let them apply their information and richness in the life. Social studies classes always present the most significant possibilities for human rights education. Social studies textbooks are expected to play an important role in children rights, particularly in participation rights issue. A number of studies were conducted that showed the level of allocation of children rights education in elementary school textbooks. However, as it can be seen, there is no research about “children’s participation rights” issues in social studies textbooks in Turkey. Textbooks are analyzed in terms of their level of “children’s participation right” in accordance with Merey (2012)’s subcategories. Accordingly, the first remarkable finding is that the number of references “children’s participation rights” in Turkish
textbooks to “child’s participation in school environment is much more frequent. The statements about “child’s participation in school environment are given the utmost place in all social studies textbooks. Also, this results most likely from legal regulation about participation in Turkish education system. Because, a number of legal regulation about participation children were adopted by Minister Education most of which is placed in social studies textbooks in Turkey. Ministry of Education in the school environment is aimed through this basic law occurring children’s participation right, democracy culture and to develop awareness (Akyüz, 2001; Kincal ve Uygun, 2006; Arabacı, 2005; Kiran ve Kiran 2009; Karaman- Kepenekçi, 2003). One other finding is that No statement on children’s participation in judicial environment is allocated any space in Turkey social sciences textbooks. In addition to that, the distribution in the textbooks clearly shows that children’s participation rights child’s participation in general (national) politics”, “in environmental protection and sustainable development”, “in health environment” is not allocated enough space. Statements about children’s participation rights were listed the highest in fourth and fifth grade textbooks, however, children’s participation rights were placed at least in sixth grade textbook.

Based on the findings of this study:
1. Texts related to children’s right to participate should be restructured in accordance with children’s development level and grade level.
2. This study should be compared to the results obtained by studies of other primary school textbooks or other countries’ textbooks.
3. There are extremely little research about childrens’ participation rights. New research in this field should be developed.
4. Experts from human rights education or experts in the field of child rights education should be benefited from while textbooks are being prepared.

References