Promoting a Traditional Home–School Partnership: A Teacher's Efforts to Involve Families in a Turkish Urban School

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Abstract

Despite the rhetoric, establishing effective home–school partnerships remains a puzzle for Turkish educators. Extant literature in Turkey provides some guidance, but these studies focus heavily on problematic cases and merely request educators' and parents' perceptions about existing problems. The current study focuses on an exemplary literacy teacher ("Mr. Kara") in an urban public school who was recognized for implementing an effective partnership program with the parents of his counseling classroom[1] (8-E) and examines what Kara and the 8-E parents were able to achieve. Findings of this case study reinforce the importance of educators' leadership and their values, dispositions, and practices, as they were displayed by educators in promoting or disabling positive relationships with parents. Findings showed that 8-E parents were previously avoiding home–school partnerships because of their negative partnership experiences in schools. This one teacher was able to change about 75% of the parents' negative preconceptions by his proactive leadership. In this case, Kara believed in all the parents, viewed them as dedicated advocates for their children's education, and built on the parents' care for their children. He took responsibility for establishing a positive partnership and strategically fought parents' negative preconceptions about schools and educators.

Key Words: home–school partnerships, parental involvement, social justice and culturally responsive school leadership, teacher leadership, Turkey

Introduction

The value of home–school partnerships has been well documented in the research literature. Both in national and global arenas, an increasing number of studies have linked parental engagement with various positive schooling outcomes, such as increased school achievement (Ma et al., 2017; Sarier, 2016); literacy development (Gül, 2007); higher school attendance rates (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002); and overall student well-being (DeMatthews et al., 2016). Furthermore, engaging parents in their children's education and partnering with them in schools gives parents a voice in their children's education, promotes democratic schooling (Çalik, 2007; Goldring & Hausman, 2001), and helps decrease the achievement gap among student groups (Fruchter, 2007). Given its promise, Turkey has also been paying more attention to fostering meaningful parental engagement and building effective home–school partnerships in its schools (Yıldırım & Dönmez, 2008). For example, Turkey's newly introduced "Education Vision 2023" highlights parental engagement and home–school partnerships as an essential component for boosting achievement among disadvantaged groups (MEB, 2018).

Despite the charming rhetoric and the value attributed to effective home–school partnership, existing practice does not seem to meet the expectations in Turkey, and the split between the two institutions (school and home) remains unfixed (Çalık, 2007; Ceylan & Akar, 2010; Cinkir & Nayir, 2017). Literature suggests that the split widens even further depending on parents' home culture, socioeconomic status, and educational levels (Bellibas & Gumus, 2013). For example, (domestic) immigrant parents, who move to inner cities searching for new jobs, struggle when they try to adapt to dominant school cultures in urban areas (Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010). Similarly, parents who have limited financial and educational resources find it more difficult to connect with schools and educators than their counterparts (Ceylan & Akar, 2010; Erdener, 2014). Without delving into the underlying reasons, some of these studies even suggest that parents evade schools because they "lack the confidence" to speak to educators (i.e., Ceylan & Akar, 2010). This picture suggests that the families with the greatest disadvantages who most need a positive home–school partnership are denied the opportunity and labeled as not caring parents (Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010; Velsor & Orozco, 2007).

Barriers to Parental Engagement and Home–School Partnerships: Perceptions of Turkish Educators and Parents

Turkish literature inquiring into the roots of the problem heavily relies on educators' and parents' perceptions of the barriers to the partnership, and the

barriers suggested by educators and parents seem to diverge from one another. For instance, parents criticize that educators perceive the partnership as a parent responsibility which parents have to shoulder to support schools and educators (Balkar, 2009). Also, parents find it problematic that their roles are constrained to limited responsibilities, mainly disciplining their children, solving problems their children cause in schools, supporting schools' decisions, and providing financial aid via donations (Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010; Yıldırım & Dönmez, 2008). In contrast, parents seek to have more of a voice in partnerships, want to be able to participate in decision-making processes, and want to support the quality of education their children receive (Çelik, 2005; Gokturk & Dinckal, 2018).

Furthermore, when they are invited to schools, parents believe that they are often going to be mistreated by educators, particularly if their children disturbed the order in schools (Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010; Özgan & Aydin, 2010). Thus, educators' negative attitudes towards parents rise as an important barrier, alienating parents from school spaces (Erdoğan & Demirkasımoglu, 2010; Limberg, 2017; Yıldırım & Dönmez, 2008). Additionally, parents perceive that ineffective communication channels and unproductive parent–school meetings create another barrier to effective home–school partnerships. Specifically, parents find the number of parent–school meetings inadequate and the content of meetings to be shallow, merely providing some repetitive, standard information that parents find unproductive (Balkar, 2009; Ceylan & Akar, 2010; Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010). Parents also insist that overall communication channels need to be improved and diversified in order to ensure communication flow (Balkar, 2009). Otherwise, parents tend to believe that existing home–school partnerships do not yield any benefit for their children's education (Cinkir & Nayir, 2017; Özgan & Aydin, 2010). Besides these school-related problems, parents also perceive their busy work schedules, lack of time, and transportation issues as important obstacles preventing them from regularly visiting schools and sustaining active home–school communication (Balkar, 2009).

Educators hold different views regarding the barriers to home–school partnership. In fact, they often believe that problems such as lack of time, busy work schedules, and transportation issues are mere excuses that parents use to justify their lack of interest, care, and awareness about their children's education (Balkar, 2009; Bellibas & Gumus, 2013; Erdoğan & Demirkasımoglu, 2010). As mentioned above, educators often view partnership as a parent responsibility, that is, that parents have an obligation to engage in supporting schools and school goals (Babaoğlan et al., 2018; Lindberg, 2013), rather than as an opportunity to work together to achieve mutually inclusive goals. Therefore, educators

often define the problem as parents' lack of interest in their children's education and lack of support for the schools (Bellibas & Gumus, 2013; Özgan & Aydin, 2010). Contributing to the deficit discourse around public schools, educators also argue that parents do not know how to support their children's education nor how to support schools and educators (Babaoğlan et al., 2018; Ceylan & Akar, 2010). International literature suggests that defining all the possible engagement and partnership roles based on school-centric, traditional objectives and using deficit language for parents who cannot comply with schools' requests could even further marginalize certain parents who, in fact, need school partnership the most (Delgado-Gaitan, 2012; Moreno et al., 2011).

Finally, similar to parents, educators also believed that asking parents for donations rise as a barrier to partnership efforts, for it took too much administrative time while scaring parents away from schools (Özgan & Aydin, 2010). Along with parents, educators also suggested that removing financial responsibilities from schools could eliminate one critical barrier to effective home–school communication and partnership.

Overall, one can argue that everyone agrees on the value of partnership, but there is confusion regarding how it should look and what ends it should serve. Neither parents nor educators are well-informed about parental engagement and home–school partnership (Lindberg, 2013). Therefore, educators often blame parents for their lack of interest in their children's education, for their negative attitudes toward schools, and for lack of support for the schools (Babaoğlan et al., 2018; Bayar, 2016), while parents criticize how home–school partnerships are structured and practiced, benefitting schools and educators only (Özgan & Aydin, 2010).

Importance of the Present Study

Although an increasing amount of research has been conducted to address this issue in Turkey, most of the extant literature merely relies on educator and parent perceptions to define the existing conditions, identify the barriers, and produce recommendations. Furthermore, this extant literature, descriptive and exploratory in nature, shows us that the divergence existing between educators and parents even further widens the disconnect between them and hinders both parties from taking proactive actions. In contrast, this study intends to share a sample case for educators who want to "walk the walk" rather than "talk the talk."[2] Instead of focusing on mere perceptions, this study intends to focus on what is already in place and working and explain a real case where a group of parents successfully collaborated with a teacher in supporting their children's education. By doing so, first, it aims to fill a gap in the Turkish literature, which has been heavily built on educators' and parents' insights

on the problems and their recommendations for possible solutions. Second, it aims to share a counter discourse to object to the increasing deficit discourse about parental participation in urban schools. Lastly, and most importantly, this current study aims to provide inspiration and guidance for educators who are willing to tackle this issue and make sure all of their parents are included in their partnership circles.

For these purposes, this study examines a literacy teacher (Mr. Kara; note: to maintain participant confidentiality, this study uses pseudonyms for all the parents, teachers, and administrators, as well as for any location names discussed herein) and the parents of his counseling classroom (8-E) as they collaborated in supporting 8-E children's preparation for the national placement exam that they would be taking at the end of the school year. Kara was a teacher who was recognized for his success in partnering with 8-E parents and supporting their engagement with their children's education. The purpose of this case study was two–fold: (1) to gain an understanding of how Kara and the 8-E parents made sense of parental involvement, and (2) to explore how they were able to overcome the above-cited barriers in their urban public school context.

Framework: School Leadership and Home–School Partnership

Centering on a group of previously marginalized parents in an urban public school, this study examines the case of a teacher who was able to win over most of these previously marginalized parents in a span of less than two school semesters. To understand the nature of partnership they sustained as well as the strategies and the conditions made that partnership possible, this study builds on the leadership literature focusing on home–school partnerships for previously marginalized parents.

School Leadership and Home–School Partnership

Previous literature suggests that school leadership greatly affects what counts as a valid and effective partnership and whose voice is heard in schools (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Delgado-Gaitan, 2012). In fact, school leadership plays an integral role in promoting an inclusive school culture and improving home–school partnerships (DeMatthews et al., 2016; Johnson, 2007; Khalifa, 2012).

Literature suggests that schools often welcome only certain school-centric practices (Warren et al., 2009), since the dominant school culture can situate certain groups of parents, who possess certain capitals, in advantaged positions while alienating others from school spaces (Lareau, 2000; Yosso, 2005). Therefore, it is very important how educators define their roles and how they place

family partnership into their role construction (Auerbach, 2009). Leaders who portray themselves as community advocates and adopt a community-centered approach tend to gain the trust of their school communities and are even able to improve student outcomes through effective school–family partnerships (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Khalifa, 2012).

Teachers and Home–School Partnerships

In the current study, school leadership roles for promoting home–school partnership were initiated by a teacher, who took the action and advocated for a home–school partnership for his classroom. Literature suggests that teacher dispositions (Baum & Swick, 2007), teacher attitudes, teacher invitations (Kim, 2009), as well as how teachers interpret partnership, what they promote as partnership, and how they promote it influences parents' participation in home–school partnerships (Kim, 2009; Lareau, 1987).

Basing their understanding on social justice leadership, Palmer et al. (2014) portrayed teacher leaders as activists who are willing to take "the responsibility to step outside their classrooms and work with other adults" (p. 961) and strive to promote change to meet high learning expectations for all students. Similar to Palmer et al. (2014), Paulu and Winters (1998) also highlighted the importance of accepting the responsibility to "lead the way" as they suggested, "teachers can get started moving into their leadership positions by identifying the need and by not waiting for someone else to make the change" (p. 3). Recognizing a need and embracing the responsibility, teachers can advocate "in the classroom," "across the school," or (and) "within the community" to make a positive change for the children and families who have been denied an equal opportunity in the existing systems (Bradley-Levine, 2018). In light of this literature, teacher leadership in this study can be understood as teachers' efforts to go beyond achieving in-class teaching duties, identifying a need, and accepting the responsibility for promoting a positive change for children and their families.

Defining Home–School Partnership

As suggested by the above-cited research literature, school leadership can greatly affect the nature and direction of home–school partnerships (Barr, & Saltmarsh, 2014; Ho, 2009). Therefore, it is critical that school leaders pay attention to what they promote as valid and effective participation and partnership in their schools. Literature shows that there are countless ways through which parents can support their children' education (Grant & Ray, 2010; Lareau, 2000), and different parents may choose different practices as more desirable or suitable to support their children's education (Ingram et al., 2007;

Kim, 2002). Given this variety, it might be difficult for school leaders to consolidate their understandings about the concept.

Regarding the meaning of home–school partnership, a confusion over the terminology prevails in the literature as well. Various concepts, such as parental involvement, parental engagement, and home–school partnership have often been used interchangeably (Bowen & Griffin, 2011; O'Toole et al., 2019). As a result, several studies have examined the literature and attempted to clarify what we are aiming or should be aiming for when we strive to achieve a home–school partnership.

Goodall and Montgomery (2014), for example, examined the literature and proposed a model that sorted existing definitions into a continuum scale with three categories: "parental involvement with the school" being the most primitive form, "parental involvement with schooling" at the middle, and "parental engagement with children's learning" being the most advanced practice. At the lower end of this continuum, educators play expert roles, assuming that parents are only passive recipients with little agency. As the practice moves on toward the engagement side of the continuum, the agency given to parents for their children's learning increases and parents become active participants, sharing responsibilities with educators. "Specific examples would include parents providing learning opportunities for their children, whether they relate to school (extra tuition) or other forms of learning (dance or music lessons), along with other activities which provide opportunities for learning, such as scouting or guiding, membership of sports clubs, religious tuition" (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014, p. 406). Despite all the good intentions, however, this conceptualization still employs a narrow and school-centric framework, viewing the practice as "parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children" (Jeynes, 2012, p. 817) to promote students' academic achievement (Hill et al., 2004).

Critically examining the research, both Boutte and Johnson (2014) and Johnson (2015) tried to examine different conceptualizations of home–school partnership, and they argued that studies defining home–school partnership are operating under three different paradigms: "positivistic," "ecological," and "critical." Research relying on positivist paradigms often assumes that there are certain, effective practices that all parents should learn and perform to support their children's learning. This type of understanding often focuses home–school partnerships on schooling (academic) ends and naturally places educators as the experts in any partnership to emerge (O'Toole et al., 2019). Again, this type of conceptualization defines home–school partnership in terms of "parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children" (Jeynes, 2012, p. 817) to promote students' academic achievement (Hill et al., 2004).

Ecological conceptualizations, similar to positivists, operates on the basis that it is about student learning and school achievement, but different from positivists, they highlight the importance of collaboration between home and school, as Epstein (1987) famously put it, viewing home and school as "overlapping spheres of influence" (p. 127). An understanding of home–school partnerships relying on ecological models can enable us to recognize different roles that parents can play in different spaces: home, school, and community (O'Toole et al., 2019). Similar to Goodall and Montgomery's (2014) model, an ecological approach promotes (increased) agency for parents by encouraging them to take more active roles in different spaces that impact their children's learning.

However, Boutte and Johnson (2014) and Johnson (2015) criticize both positivistic and ecological tendencies for limiting home–school collaboration with traditional school-centric practices (intending to benefit schools) and marginalizing those who "fail" to meet these traditional expectations. At this point, they champion for critical models, which intend to take home–school partnership beyond mere schooling objectives. Home–school partnership models building on critical paradigms suggest that partnership between home and school cannot only be about schooling (academics), but it should consider and aim for whole child development. While the focus on schooling in traditional models gives educators the ultimate voice over the partnership processes, the critical approaches invite parents as equally qualified partners in the process of children's education (Boutte & Johnson 2014; O'Toole et al., 2019). With this paradigm shift, new efforts to define home–school partnership tend to suggest an empowerment model in which parents are perceived as central to their children's education (O'Toole et al., 2019; Valli et al., 2018).

The purpose of this current research is not to evaluate home–school partnership practices in this study based on a certain metric, but rather it aims to recognize the whole range of practices that are perceived as a valid home–school partnership in this case. In other words, this study seeks to understand what was promoted and practiced as a home–school partnership in this case and what strategies were employed by Kara to promote this participation. Therefore, building on studies on both sides, home–school partnership in this study is described as educators' and parents' collective ability to work together on a given task (either school-centric or family/child-centric) to improve the lives of children and to contribute to their development. Later in the discussion, I will discuss my findings in light of the previous research and try to make sense of them for educators and researchers.

Methods and Data

Epistemologically speaking, this study follows a constructivist approach that emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality as it is represented in the minds of people (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998, 2014). A qualitative researcher aims to understand the meaning people have constructed in particular contexts (Merriam, 1998). As she/he strives to construct that knowledge, the investigator has to play a mediating role, interpreting meaning constructed in the minds of the people who were studied (Merriam, 1998). Thus, this study aims to explore the meaning of parental participation as it was understood and experienced in this specific context.

Focused on one teacher who advocated for an inclusive partnership, this study intended to explore the attributes of his leadership that contributed to the promotion of a successful home–school partnership in his counseling classroom (8-E).[1] Grounded in qualitative methods, this study used a positioned-subject approach which assumes that "people, as positioned subjects (where subject refers to people with particular needs, perceptions, and capabilities for action, and position refers to the environment in which they are located), actively interpret and make sense of their everyday worlds" (Conrad et al., 2001, p. 203). This approach enabled the researcher to consider how Kara (the teacher) and the parents of 8-E had interpreted their own experiences as located in their specific contexts, focusing their energies on establishing a home–school partnership to provide the maximum support that children needed. Two main questions guided this study:

1. What was promoted and practiced as a home–school partnership in Kara's counseling classroom, 8-E?
2. How was Kara able to foster this partnership with 8-E parents?

To answer these questions, multiple data sources and methods were utilized to collect deep and detailed information about the phenomenon of home–school partnership (Yin, 2009) within this bounded case of one middle school teacher (Merriam, 1998). Relying on multiple data sources, the case study methodology enables researchers to examine a phenomenon in its bounded context, providing researchers with the opportunity to reach a "holistic description and explanation" of one case (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). Therefore, the data for this study came from interviews with parents, Kara (the teacher), one school counselor, and one school administrator; from site observations; as well as analysis of related documents. Merriam (2014) suggests that instead of focusing on generalizability issues, qualitative researchers concern themselves with uncovering the deeper meanings of lived experiences and illuminating complex social phenomena. Therefore, the process for this study followed a

purposeful sampling technique to select an exemplary and information-rich case (Patton, 2002).

To this end, I selected one of the largest school districts in a densely populated, urban city, Istanbul, and attended a district-level school counselor meeting to be able to talk with a representative from each school in this district. Meeting with school counselors, I initiated a conversation around a school-level implementation of a home–school partnership program that was recognized as successful in the district. Unfortunately, I was told that "this is an impossible case to find in Istanbul," and it was suggested by several counselors that I switch my attention to individual teachers who strive to promote home–school partnerships for their classrooms. Based on their suggestions, I identified several candidate teachers (including Kara), who were recognized for implementing successful home–school partnerships in their counseling classrooms. After this point, initial interviews were conducted with these teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of parent partnership programs they were promoting. As a result of these teachers' self-reports in these interviews, Kara's success in engaging parents stood out in several ways. First of all, Kara was able to reach out to and partner with a higher number of parents with a higher frequency than the other candidates. For example, other teachers reported that they only hosted parents once each semester during their school's general parent meetings. Besides this, their efforts focused on the parents whose children were causing or having a problem in their classrooms. Secondly, all other candidates viewed home–school partnership solely from a teacher-centered perspective,[3] expecting partnership to benefit only teachers, and they rarely viewed home–school partnerships as a way to support children and families. Thirdly, Kara spent much more time, effort, and energy in engaging parents and partnering with them. He employed more activities (social events, parent hours, parent meetings, and so on) than the other candidates. Last but not least, other teachers tend to use deficit languages toward the parents and blamed them for their children's failings.

After selecting this case, I started conducting site observations in the school on a weekly basis, and I chose to visit on Thursdays since Kara spared Thursday afternoons as parent hour and many parents paid school visits to Kara on Thursdays. My observations heavily focused on the parents visiting the school, Kara, and Kara's interactions with the parents. Beside observations, I conducted two semi-structured interviews with Kara, one semi-structured interview with each of seven 8-E parents,[4] and one semi-structured interview with each of two school staff (one school administrator and one school counselor).

Furthermore, several documents were analyzed mostly for triangulation purposes; some of the main documents included: Kara's meeting notes, sample

student contracts (study plans signed by Kara, children, and parents), parent invitations for school meetings, the school visitor book, and the school rules sheet. Literature suggests that case studies that rely on multiple data sources provide researchers with deep and detailed information about a phenomenon[5] (Yin, 2009) and bounded case(s)[6] (Merriam, 1998).

Data analysis can be broadly defined as a process of "making sense out of the data, [which] …involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read—it is the process of making meaning" (Merriam, 2016, p. 176). Starting as early as data collection, the analysis followed both inductive and deductive procedures through a constant comparative analysis process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 2016). The constant comparative analysis was proposed as "a research design for multi-data sources" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 73). Deriving data from multiple sources, first, I employed an inductive approach and conducted an open coding in the first phase, assigning categories to the emerging codes later (Merriam, 2016). The codes emerging from observations, field notes, and different interviews (parent, teacher, staff, and administrator) were compared with each other. Ultimately, the themes were compared with the research literature guiding the design of this study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Study Context

Schooling in Turkey

This study was conducted in a public middle school in Istanbul, Turkey. All the rights and responsibilities regarding the provision, supervision, and reformation of education in Turkey lies with the state (OECD, 2015; Silman & Simsek, 2009). All public schools are free, but especially high school and university placements are made based on students' academic achievements and test performances. Middle schools in Turkey include Grades 5–8 and thus lasts for four years. At the end of fourth year, students take a national placement exam, and based on their scores, they can choose a high school. Students who score higher can go to a more competitive high school and raise their chance for accessing a better university.

About Kara

Before delving into the findings, it might be worthwhile to briefly introduce Kara. First of all, Kara was an experienced literacy teacher who was serving at the Ataturk Middle School for his thirteenth year. Before coming to that school, he was employed in a private school for five years. Throughout this study, he referred to this private school experience numerous times, since it was there Kara learned to work with parents as a fundamental part of his teaching job. As a first-generation college student in his family, Kara was also able to

complete a master's degree in an educational administration program at a local university and was working toward a PhD at the same program.

Difficult to Reach Parents: Who Was Engaged, and Who Was Not?

In Ataturk Middle school, every classroom had a counseling teacher who was in charge of that class at the administration level. Every year, Kara was responsible for an eighth grade classroom, and most of the time, he was given the most "troubling classroom"[7] since he was known for handling such classrooms well. Kara took over the classroom 8-E at the beginning of the academic year with around 25 students. Most of these students were coming from working class families, but about 75% of parents[8] were actively engaged in Kara's partnership activities. The missing 25%, however, were considered the "poorest of the poor" families, who had never come to the school since the beginning of the academic year when Kara started to counsel 8-E. Kara named this group "difficult-to-reach parents" instead of "difficult-to-engage parents," because Kara believed that he could easily win these parents over, if they were to pay him a single visit at the school. Nonetheless, Kara considered this group beyond his reach when they did not take that first step to meet him at the school.

Findings

> Although family background appears to be a powerful determinant of parental involvement, most parents, if duly encouraged, are able to devote extra time and effort to assisting with their children's education, both in the home and school settings. (Ho, 1999, 2002, 2006, as cited in Ho, 2009, p. 102)

Research over the years has shown that leadership provided in schools plays a vital role in creating an inclusive school culture and improving parents' involvement as well as home–school partnerships (DeMatthews et al., 2016; Johnson, 2007; Khalifa, 2012). Aligned with the previous research, the findings of this study support the idea that committed teachers can improve home–school collaboration, even in urban public schools (where serving working class families and their children has been problematized by the literature). In this case, Kara, a literacy teacher, was able to win over the parents of his counseling classroom by prioritizing his students' developmental and achievement needs, following a positive, solution-centered attitude with the parents, and developing the parents' capacities to enhance their parenting skills. Kara believed that engaging parents is a prerequisite to helping students succeed in schools, and he also believed that "there is nothing that parents won't do for their children if they believe that their efforts will contribute to their children's

betterment." The rest of this section is dedicated to exploring what kind of involvement and partnership Kara promoted for 8-E parents and how Kara was able to establish this partnership with the parents of 8-E classroom.

A Home–School Partnership to Support Students' Academic Test Preparation

This first theme explores what the whole process of parental engagement and home–school partnership looked like as parents supported their children's education in Kara's counseling classroom (8-E). It is worth pointing out that all of the parents' efforts to support their children's education were heavily affected by Kara's leadership and his vision for parents' roles in their children's education. Kara's primary goal was to harness all the parents' support in preparing their children for the national placement exam that they were going to take at the end of eighth grade. This way, his students could go to a competitive high school, which in turn would help them gain access to a four-year college (Akay & Karadağ, 2019).

At the beginning of every new school year, Kara was always given a new eighth grade classroom to counsel. It was a mutual agreement between the school administration and Kara that he was given the most troubling eighth graders as his counseling classroom. This was appreciated by the school administration, since Kara was known as an expert in handling troubling classrooms nicely. Kara also wanted to counsel an eighth grade classroom because he saw their increased exam anxiety as an advantage to motivate them study.

Kara started the school year by testing his students with a standard exam, which was similar to the one that his students were going to take at the end of the school year. This test was intended to help him determine where the students were standing in terms of their ideal scores. Then the next step was to hold a parent–school meeting[9] to inform the parents about their individual children's standings[10] and how much they needed to improve in order to go to a competitive high school. During this first meeting, he also explained to all the parents how the whole testing process works and how it affects which high schools their children could attend.

While these general parent meetings continued to be held monthly, after the first general meeting Kara also tried to hold individual meetings with individual parents. During the first of these individual meetings, Kara had parents only as witnesses as he helped their children set individual goals and negotiated a study plan to achieve these goals. At the end, all the parties–child, parent, and Kara– signed a contract, and each carried a copy as a reminder. In this contract, children marked their goals for the end of the school year and promised to carry out an individual study plan to reach that goal. Similarly, parents set goals

for themselves to support their children so that the children could comply with the contract. For example, in one of these meetings, the child requested her mother invite guests into their apartment only when the child was not studying at home. Another mother shared a similar example, as she explained how she supported her son at home so that her son could better prepare for the national test:

> We laid down a lot of rules for his study. Actually, he is really motivated right now. [He says] "I am going to study very hard. This is my last year, and I don't want my sister's friends coming home." Well, we accepted all of his conditions. We only want him to study. Thanks to Mr. Kara, we designed a study space as he [Kara] asked. The computer is removed; also I am trying to support him as best as I can.

In fact, in these contracts, parents played only secondary roles, as Kara tried to encourage students to take on their own responsibilities. Parents usually promised to provide a study environment with minimum distraction and oversee children, whether they complied with the plan or not.

After signing the contract, parents had lots of reasons and also opportunities to visit Kara at the school. For example, Kara held monthly parent–school meetings for 8-E parents. During these meetings, he always informed parents about their individual children's progress and asked them how their children were doing when they are at home, as well as how well they complied with their contract. Kara asked parents to act as his eyes at children's homes and not intervene when the children were not studying. If parents had concerns, they brought them to Kara, and they made an action plan together before parents acted on their own.

Kara also organized various seminars and workshops for parents' development as effective parents. Sometimes these seminars were incorporated into the monthly meetings, other times they were held as separate events. Kara believed that the parents in his classroom did not have adequate parenting skills. When they acted on their own, they were like "elephants in a glass store," harming the very child that they wanted to support and cherish. Therefore, Kara tried to improve his parents' parenting skills and tried to teach them how to deal with teenagers when they were going through a stressful time in their lives. During these seminars, parents particularly learned how to support their teenage children as they were going through exam anxiety. Special attention was given to communication skills to establish and ensure positive, encouraging parent–child communication.

When parents needed to meet with Kara, he was always there and available for them. Besides these events, he also held weekly office hours for parents

to visit him in the school. For these, parents usually called Kara to schedule an appointment with him. During these meetings, parents usually brought their personal questions or concerns regarding their children's progress or other problems. Kara also kept himself available 24/7 via phone. The parents commented that they could call him any time if they needed to talk to him.

Receiving this amount of guidance from Kara, parents acted as his agents at the children's homes. As Kara wanted, parents were like an extension of the teacher, Kara, overseeing children's home activities. They supported children's test preparations by fulfilling their promises that they made in the contract. They were mainly responsible for creating a productive home study environment, overseeing children's study, and informing Kara immediately if they detected any problem distracting their children from the study plans.

Building Home–School Partnership to Support Children's Test Preparation: Strategies for Educators

The first theme above explored what Kara promoted as parental engagement and home–school partnership and the ways in which these concepts were practiced in his classroom. Although Kara was able to establish partnerships with most of the 8-E parents in a very short amount of time, he promoted a very teacher/school/academic-centric agenda on the parents, and he did not expect or want his parents to engage on their own. In fact, he found this idea dangerous, since he believed that parents can be overtly strict and controlling, taking all responsibility from the students. For parental engagement, he aimed for "a balanced approach, which can only be possible when parents consult and work with teachers." Through partnership, Kara tried to prepare, encourage, and control parents so that they could help him to prepare his students for the national exam.

The purpose of this section is to explore how Kara was able to encourage and foster a positive home–school partnership. Kara's case reveals several strategies that helped him to foster a teacher-guided partnership: building a positive teacher image, increasing parents' awareness and building their capacities, and lastly, establishing effective communication and partnership opportunities. Besides these actions that Kara took to build a partnership, this case also revealed that Kara's success was enabled by the flexible school administration that encouraged Kara to take innovative actions for increased parent partnership.

Breaking Down Negative Impressions of Teachers and Schools, and Winning Parents Back Over

Kara believed in parents and saw their support as a prerequisite for student success. He believed that "every parent deeply cares about her/his child, and

there is nothing that teachers can't convince them to do for the sake of their children." However, this case suggests that parents develop negative impressions of schools and teachers by the time their children reach middle school. Supporting this, the school counselor, Mr. Boz, remarked:

> We [educators] only call them [parents] when there is a problem. As a result, parents lose their belief that they can contribute to [their children's] education. [Thus,] when they are invited to the school, they start thinking, "Probably there is a problem that they will tell me."

Also, parents reported that when they are invited to schools concerning a problem, they often get blamed and scolded for the issues that their children caused in schools. As a result, these negative impressions alienate parents and isolate them from the school spaces. Kara explained that to win the parents back over, the first thing he tried to do was to "break down parents' prejudices…[and] negative images that pop up in parents' minds [when they think of schools and teachers]."

At the root of this issue lie several problems that parents are exposed to in schools: the domination of discussions about money, focusing parental engagement on problems, consistently exposing parents to mistreatment in school spaces, and restricting parents' roles to limited engagement practices. Kara was well aware of these issues, and he worked hard to overcome them to reach a state where parents actively participated in various activities that he designed to tap into their support. To this end, he purposefully treated parents with respect, used positive language while focusing on solutions, avoided monetary discussions while prioritizing children, and finally acted altruistically toward parents. The combination of these efforts reshaped parents' perspectives about Kara as a teacher, facilitated a trust between him and the parents, and parents began to feel respected and valued. For example, one parent reported, "Let me tell you this. You would go to where you are valued, right? This is human nature: you would go where you are appreciated, paid attention to…because he doesn't do it for money." Especially seeing Kara sacrifice a lot of extra time and energy outside the classroom without being paid helped parents to completely trust him.

Through all his efforts, Kara was able to convince 8-E parents that he was really trying to help their children (to be successful in the placement exam), and he needed parents' support to achieve that goal. As Kara well summarized it:

> Throughout my 25-year career, I have observed that when parents start feeling like we truly value their children, they start showing us their real personalities and finally behave normally, because they say, "This teacher doesn't expect anything of me, he loves my child as his own. I

can trust him." When parents receive this message, they start displaying their authentic personalities. It is at this point that we can start the type of communication and interaction we want.

Therefore, Kara tried hard to convince parents that it is all about their children. On their every single school visit, he intentionally made efforts to show and help parents feel the contribution that they were making towards their child's progress. He stated that his parents always responded to his invitations, because he didn't "invite them to complain about their children" and because he did not "call them in for a disciplinary issue, but invited them in order to improve/guide parents" so that they could be a better help to their children.

Increasing Awareness and Building Capacities

As stated above, Kara deeply believed that "their children are the most valuable things in the parents' lives, and there is nothing that teachers cannot convince parents to do for their children's sake." For Kara, there were two main issues causing parents to be reluctant to partner with educators: negative impressions of educators, and parents' lack of awareness and abilities to start engagement. Therefore, increasing parents' awareness about the value of their contribution to their children's education and helping them to build the necessary skills were considered fundamental tasks in which every teacher must engage.

Kara stated that most of his parents did not know the necessity and value of their contribution or how they could support their children's education. Thus, Kara spent a lot of time, especially during his first encounters with the parents, explaining to parents how they could be a game changer for their children's education and how they could fulfill this role. During the first meetings, Kara explained to parents how education and testing systems work and the steps that their children would need to go through. After informing parents about the rules of game (testing system), Kara later tried to explain to the parents how they could work as a team with him and their children to reach the maximum test score.

Kara believed that the idea of parental involvement in education is a rather new concept for parents, especially in low-income urban schools like Ataturk Middle. He explained that parents may not engage in their children's education because of "their lack of training and experience [with the concept]… they don't receive any training, or information, and they haven't seen a role model in their own parents. How are they supposed to model this behavior on their own?" On these grounds, Kara always emphasized parents' individual development in his practice and organized various seminars for parents to improve their parenting skills so that they could consciously help their teenagers through this stressful journey. Also, the parents appreciated the fact that they

learned something useful for their children's education every time they met with Kara. This case suggests that schools should serve parents, in addition to students, supporting their individual development, especially as parents.

Establishing Communication Channels and Opportunities for Partnership

Achieving an effective home–school communication was always a challenge for the partnership efforts. Kara highlighted the value of communication skills for winning over the parents and argued that most educators in Turkey do not know how to communicate with parents. He also stressed that both the teacher preparation programs and the available professional development opportunities were not addressing this issue. However, Kara was lucky that he had plenty of opportunities to develop his communication skills when he was working at a private school early in his career. He highlighted the fact that winning parents over was a priority in this private school, and he was provided, in fact required, to attend several professional development seminars and had to read books about home–school communication and communication in general.

For Kara, it was always the first contact that troubled him the most. Kara believed that parents were beyond his reach if they did not take to first step to come to the school and meet with him. He made it clear when he stated:

> I can win over these parents [who are currently showing no sign of parental engagement]. Yet, they must give me that opportunity first and say, "Dear Kara. Here I am. I have come to the school. Change me now!" I claim that I will change these parents and win them over, but I can't do anything for those who won't give me this chance.

As Kara claimed, once a parent visited the school, he was able to win that parent over and make sure that she/he was included in regular communication circles. To enable a constant home–school communication, Kara created various—mostly school-based—opportunities for parents to contact him. In fact, Kara spent an enormous amount of time organizing monthly school–parent meetings, holding weekly parent hours, and making himself available 24/7 via phone. He also asked parents to invite him to their homes, and when invited, he conducted home visits in order to realize more personal communications, while learning more about his students and their families.

Besides these opportunities, the content of their communication and how communication occurred was important for attracting parents' interests. On the one hand, parents criticized other educators for focusing on problems and blaming them for not taking good care of and disciplining their children. These type of teacher attitudes caused parents to feel uncomfortable and develop negative impressions of schools. In contrast, Kara was always solution-centered and made parents feel that he was working to help them and their children. He

treated parents with respect and gave them opportunities to express themselves. The content of communication mostly focused on the children and improving their situation. For Kara, home–school communication was mainly about exchanging information, detecting problems, planning together, and acting together. Through this process, Kara and 8-E parents were able to closely oversee students' test preparation and act as soon as a distraction occurred. Therefore, their interactions were mostly focused on issues related to test preparation.

Flexible School Administration That Allows Innovation

As discussed above, leadership plays a central role, not only in implementing a successful parental engagement program (Auerbach, 2009; Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014), but also in making any meaningful change within schools (Harris, 2013; Hopkins, 2003; Gumus et al., 2013). Throughout this case, Kara's leadership was the center of this study. However, the findings of this study also indicate that Kara's successful leadership, as demonstrated in this case, was made possible by the flexible nature of the formal leadership in Ataturk Middle School.

This contextual factor, in fact, critically affected Kara's ability to achieve what he achieved with the 8-E parents by not only allowing Kara to try new strategies in the school, but also encouraging him in his efforts to partner with parents in new ways. Both parents and Kara highlighted that most school administrators in Turkey would not be as permissive. In contrast, they would restrain teachers who were trying to do to something new, especially with parents. Kara described engaging parents and partnering with them as a teacher responsibility, but he also highlighted that school administrators should "stand out of idealistic teachers' sunlight" when they are trying to do something new. He further explained that:

> What I, first, expect of school administration is to stay out of the way when idealistic people are trying to realize their ideals.…[When] you have a dream and others don't, they can put a wall between you and your dreams in this country. We don't have this problem in this school.

In fact, Kara reported that "I feel administrators' encouragement in my efforts. The principal praises my efforts, and he presents me as an example to other teachers." This support gave Kara validation and justification to organize various activities for the parents and made him a role model for his colleagues. Also, thanks to this support, Kara was able to tap into all the school resources and collaborate with the school counselor and other teachers when their help and expertise was needed.

Discussion and Implications: Partnership as Educators' Responsibility and Parents' Rights

This study focuses on one schoolteacher who was recognized for implementing an inclusive home–school partnership for his counseling classroom and examines the nature of the partnership that he was able to achieve as well as how he was able to as achieve it. I must start the discussion by raising a caveat that the partnership portrayed in this study was not perfect, but rather had its own flaws. While winning over most of the previously marginalized parents, the partnership that was achieved in this case simply ignored the most vulnerable group ("the poorest of the poor as Kara himself put it") in the 8-E classroom. However, building on the research that underlines the importance of social justice and culturally responsive leadership practices for improving home–school partnership, what Kara and the 8-E parents achieved and could not achieve still provides important insights for those educators who would like to transform their understandings of home–school partnership to develop more inclusive approaches for diverse parents in urban public schools.

Parents' Devotion to Their Children Can Serve as a Capital on Which Teachers Can Build a Partnership

Kara's case suggests shifting the responsibility and discourse of blame away from parents and restoring their position as dedicated advocates who are ready to do anything for the sake of their children. Viewing parents through deficit lenses, most educators develop negative attitudes toward parents when parents are unable to meet the school expectations (Bellibas & Gumus, 2013; Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010; Ozgan & Aydin, 2010) which becomes an obstacle that prevents educators from spending time to understand their potential partners and make efforts to establish positive relationships (Balkar, 2009). This case suggests that when teachers believe in parents and view them as dedicated agents in their children's causes, this awareness can provide them with a solid basis for building their relationships with their constituent parents. The findings show that all the participating parents in this study, regardless of their background, deeply valued their children's education and partnered (in gratitude) with Kara to support their children's education. Kara believed that parents are not disinterested in their children's education; rather, they are systematically driven away from schools thanks to the ineffective partnerships that do not intend to benefit children and their families. Kara viewed parents as devoted agents for their children's causes and thus as natural allies for teachers, whose support was necessary for students to succeed in Turkey's competitive education system. Kara explained that all parents are greatly devoted to their

children, and "there is nothing that they won't do for their children." Seeing this as a natural parent capital, Kara successfully built on parents' devotion to convince them to partner with him in supporting children's test preparations.

Educators Need to Take Charge to Win Parents and Establish Positive Partnership

Achieving effective partnerships for all parents is possible, but requires educators to become culturally responsive, social justice leaders who view home–school partnership as an ethical responsibility, take proactive actions advocating for their communities (DeMatthews et al., 2016; Goss, 2013; Khalifa, 2012; Paulu & Winters, 1998), and carefully plan strategies so that they can take systemic action to reach all the parents and sustain an effective partnership with them (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). Therefore, it is very important how educators define their roles and how they place partnership into their role construction (Auerbach, 2009).

Building on the previous point, this case suggests that since parents are dedicated agents, the responsibility for not having them as partners lies with schools and educators. It was found that parents develop negative impressions of schools due to ineffective and incorrect partnership programs and practices in schools. As a result, parents start losing their trust in home–school partnerships and cease to participate. Rather than criticizing parents, Kara accepted partnership as a teacher responsibility and proactively worked so that he could "win the parents back over." To turn the situation around, Kara intentionally aimed to address parents' negative perceptions about schools and educators. He portrayed a teacher image who prioritized children above all matters and was dedicated to helping them improve. For educators, it means that even if you are a dedicated teacher or administrator viewing parents as invaluable partners, you should also be aware of parents' previous experiences and work strategically to improve their negative perceptions.

These finding are aligned with the previous research which notes educators' reluctance to take responsibility as a barrier to effective home–school partnerships (Balkar, 2009; Cinkir & Nayir, 2017; Erdener, 2016). This case suggests that educators need to expand their role definitions to include family relations as a central part of their job description and learn to take responsibility for initiating and sustaining meaningful home–school partnerships (Raffaele & Knoff, 1999). When this is achieved and educators begin to view it as an ethical responsibility toward the families, positive home–school partnerships can begin to emerge (Auerbach, 2009; DeMatthews et al., 2016; Johnson, 2007). Yet, before any of these things could even begin to happen, educators need to cease "blaming the victims [parents]" and make a commitment to change their schools to serve their communities (Ryan, 1971, as cited in Valencia, 2012, p. 3).

A School-Oriented Partnership

Literature suggests that school leadership plays a critical role in defining the nature of partnerships practiced in schools (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Ho, 2009). This is important because schools can be receptive or welcoming to only certain school-centric parental practices while alienating or failing to recognize others (Jordan et al., 2002; Lareau, 2000; Yosso, 2005).

Surprisingly, the partnership that was portrayed in this study was deeply school-oriented. Aiming to achieve a school-centric goal (improving students' test scores), a series of school-based activities and events were successfully orchestrated by Kara to harness parents' support. School-oriented partnerships are often criticized as they can marginalize certain groups of parents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Velsor & Orozco, 2007). In contrast, this case shows that through a school-oriented model, Kara was able to foster a partnership that was inclusive to most of 8-E parents (about 75%). Indeed, he was able to partner with parents from a wide range of social classes, but as Kara put it, he was still missing "the poorest of the poor" parents. In light of the literature, I would like to provide a discussion focusing on both the success and failure of his model.

Although Kara's model was deeply school-centric and heavily relied on school-based activities, Kara's main concern and focus was "saving the children," and he was able to successfully communicate to the parents that everything they do is for their children, and this is the only way. In 8-E, seeing Kara's genuine efforts and self-sacrifice, parents trusted him. They knew that they were on board for their children, and their contribution was going to improve their children's chance for getting into a better high school. Kara believed that if parents can see the link between their participation and their children's improvement, saying, "there is nothing that teachers can't convince parents to do for the sake of their children." Building on this, he purposefully worked to make sure that after every visit, as Kara said, "parents leave the school feeling that they learned something new" to support their children and that their visit was worth the sacrifice. In other words, Kara did not invite parents to the school because their children were disturbing his class or the school order. Rather, he invited them so that he could work with each parent to improve her/his child's situation. Therefore, this notion or feeling of supporting their own children and having an impact on their education helped previously alienated parents to develop a stake in this partnership.

Now if we shift focus to the missing group, namely "the poorest of the poor," they were never truly contacted, and they were left in their own worlds. Comprising around 25% of the group, the parents from this body never met with Kara or, as Kara put it, gave him "the opportunity to win them over." Kara

believed that they were beyond his limits, as he remarked: "I can't do anything for those who won't give me this chance" by coming to the school. Kara was almost certain that he could have included them in the partnership circle if he had been able to meet with these parents even once. Yet, Kara's vision for partnership was limited within the walls of his school, requiring parents to be present in the school. This finding suggests that even the best school-based practices, programs, or interventions may not be enough to "win over" all the parents.

Research that has focused on previously marginalized groups of parents' home–school partnerships suggests that turning the situation around in favor of disadvantaged families is possible, but it requires educators to advocate for the families in their communities rather than keeping it in the school and only prioritizing academic goals (DeMatthews et al., 2016; Khalifa, 2012; López et al., 2001). Therefore, to reach these groups, it could be useful for teachers like Kara to make their presence seen in the communities they intend to serve, to recognize the needs and problems of the families, and to collaborate with them to address their challenges (DeMatthews et al., 2016; Jansen, 2006; Khalifa, 2012; López et al., 2001).

Given Kara's superior communication skills, he might have even advocated for a bigger change and tried to foster an even more inclusive partnership by reaching out to the parents who were absent in his model through alternative communication methods. That being said, attempting to try new strategies and initiating a change in centralized education systems such as Turkey's can invite certain challenges and risks to the leaders (Kayaoglu, 2015). Yet, school leaders must be willing to take these risks if they ever want to promote a positive change in such contexts (Jansen, 2006).

Teacher as an Expert and Viewing Parents Through Deficit Lenses

Literature suggests that schools often turn to parents' deficits that hinder their involvement and demands that "fixing parents" is necessary "rather than altering school structures and practices" to improve their involvement with their children's education (Chrispeels, 1991, p. 371). However, it is also suggested that this "fixing parents" approach to improving parent involvement renders parents as passive recipients of the services and information provided in schools (Ishimaru et al., 2016) and further marginalizes them from the school spaces (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Moreno et al., 2011). Despite these findings, Kara, in this case, imposed a "fixing the parents" approach as he positioned himself as an expert over the involvement he expected parents to perform. Although he believed in the value of parental support, he also believed that this support must be guided by teachers. This is why he tried to educate parents and constantly tried to communicate with them.

Kara viewing parents as "one of the three legs holding a child's education" and not trusting them might seem to be two contradicting sentiments to some, but the literature suggests that in some cultures, such as Turkish, parents expect educators and schools to take on expert roles (Denessen et al., 2001) and believe that their interference as nonprofessionals with school decisions might cause further damage to the professional work that is carried out in schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). Based on these findings, it makes sense that parents were pleased to follow Kara's lead and rely on his expertise to provide their children with the maximum support that they could.

Flexible School Administration

Besides Kara's leadership, school administrators' flexible and even supportive attitude appeared to be another critical component contributing to the success of this partnership program. Looking closely at the Turkish education system, all the rights and responsibilities regarding the provision, supervision, and reformation of education in Turkey lies with the state (OECD, 2015; Silman & Simsek, 2009). Through a top-down organizational structure, schools are strictly controlled and regulated by the government, leaving little room (or none) for local schools to implement change (OECD, 2015; Silman & Simsek, 2009). Rooting from this centralized structure and top-down mentality, the lack of flexibility in school organization often hinders "the capacity of school leaders and teachers to respond to school needs" and implement school-based local changes (Akkök & Watts, 2003; OECD, 2015, p. 4).

This case suggests that teachers as leaders need administrative support and the flexibility to engage in creative innovations to serve their unique communities. Yet, Kara highlighted that school administrators can often be a challenge to innovation rather a support. In his school, he was lucky enough to receive this support from the school administration as he was introducing new practices and approaches to improve home–school partnership. Without a doubt, teacher leadership is a key component for school change and improvement (Whitaker, 1995). In this case, Kara's private school experience provided him with the necessary awareness and skills to lead this change in his classroom, but his peers did not have the opportunity to work in a school culture where home–school partnership was a norm. Therefore, giving teachers the autonomy that they need can make such individual cases possible, but to spread these kinds of classroom-level initiatives and make them schoolwide programs, administrators need to take more active roles and turn it into a school culture. If administrators do not take active or even leading roles, as in this case, teachers like Kara might be end up striving on by themselves in isolation from the rest of the crew. To stimulate more administrators in this direction, teachers could

benefit from policy regulations which would give them more flexibility and the time that they need to tackle this issue.

As I was starting this project, I searched through one of the largest school districts in Istanbul, Turkey, but I could not find a school-level home–school partnership program that was recognized in the district. In fact, most of the educators whom I contacted were surprised, for according to them I was looking for a "utopian school." I believe we should ask ourselves why it is arguably impossible to find examples where such achievements are realized at the school level, led by school administrators. Furthermore, finding individual teacher leaders was possible only as rare cases. We can ask why these teachers are also in so short supply and how we can prepare more teachers who are motivated, equipped, and ready to take on the responsibility, break down the negative images of their constituent parents, and foster positive home–school partnerships with the families they are meant to serve.

Endnotes

[1] This is roughly analogous to an "advisory" or "homeroom" in U.S. schools. Kara was the school's literacy teacher, but he was homeroom teacher for 8-E.

[2] "Talking the talk" instead of "walking the walk" is an analogy used by Auerbach (2009) to explain how school leaders often talk highly about parental engagement and participation (eagerly talking the talk), but in practice, are reluctant to take any action and make effort to make it happen (not so eagerly walking the walk).

[3] Kara also holds a very school-centric stance on partnership, but Kara's aim was to help students by improving their learning, in contrast to viewing parental support as a way to ease his work, manage disruptive students, etc.

[4] "Parent," in this study, is defined as any adult caregiver who is in a primary caretaking role of the child. In five of the cases, children were living with both of their biological parents; in one case, it was mother and step-father; and in one case, an aunt was the caregiver while the mother was in jail and the father was gone.

[5] The phenomenon focused on in this study is home–school partnership.

[6] This study specifically focuses on an exemplary teacher. His individual experiences are the limits of this study. For more details about bounded cases, please see section: "Case study" in Gedik (2018).

[7] This is how the school principal defined students in Kara's classroom who needed additional behavioral/social/emotional support.

[8] Kara was in regular contact with about 75% of the parents. They attended events organized by Kara and regularly communicated with Kara about their children's progress. The remaining 25%, on the other hand, never met with Kara.

[9] Organizing multiple parent–school meetings and other school-based events, Kara invited parents to these activities by sending them text messages through the school database and also asked the students to inform their parents about these activities.

[10] During the meeting, parents received detailed report cards about their children's test scores and academics, and Kara also gave a presentation on the performance of his classroom. He used visuals, graphics, and charts to explain to parents where their children are and where they need to be to go to a competitive high school.

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