

Announcement of the Regional Conference

**Advancing Education Inclusion and Quality
in South East Europe**

Parental Involvement in the Life of Schools Matters

The event organized within the framework of the project

**Advancing Education Inclusion and Quality
in South East Europe**

funded by

Open Society Institute/Education Support Program

Dates: April 23 – 24, 2010

Venue: Becici, Montenegro

Parental Involvement in the Life of Schools Matters

“The nation’s schools must improve education for all children, but schools cannot do this alone. More will be accomplished if schools, families, and communities work together to promote successful students.”

*Joyce L. Epstein, Director,
Center for School, Family,
and Community Partnerships
Johns Hopkins University.*

Background

The systemic crisis of education, exacerbated by the global economic crisis, particularly in developing countries, threatens to deepen social division and drastically reduce equal chances for the quality education for all children. By reducing the barriers to parental involvement in school life, and empowering parents to achieve meaningful involvement in the education of their children, we hope to reduce this threat. A meaningful partnership between school and parents/community has been proven to bring about more inclusive and better quality education for children.

Giving parents a voice in school administration and governance, from curricula to budgetary matters, may lead to the fairer distribution of public spending for education as well as greater accountability of decision-makers. It may also curb the burgeoning privatization of public education for lower income segments.

South Eastern European (SEE) countries’ education policies make provision for parental engagement in school governance and administration. However, education experts and civil society organizations active in the field of education in all ten SEE¹ countries have agreed that parental involvement in the life of schools is insufficient and/or inadequate.

To address this issue, the Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute has initiated and funded the regional research evidence based advocacy with the aim of:

¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia

- Better understanding the opportunities created by school leadership for parents to participate in school life and to assess the extent to which equal opportunity for parental participation in school life is promoted.
- Learning about parental needs, expectations and experiences of school efforts to engage parents and their influence on school life.

For this purpose, the Center for Educational Policy Studies (Slovenia), in cooperation with country teams, carried out two cross-country national surveys.

The first survey, in 2008, inquired about the principals' views on the parental involvement. A total of 2,273 hour-long, face-to-face interviews were conducted with primary school principals in 8 SEE countries².

The second survey, in 2009, sought to determine the views of parents, including those belonging to the vulnerable groups. It covered all 10 countries, where a total of 9000 'regular' parents, 1500 'active' parents, 600 vulnerable group parents and 300 principals were interviewed. Both surveys used rigorous scientific methodology.

Parallel to the studies, good practices of school-parent partnerships have been collected and innovative activities for building strong school-parent partnerships have been initiated. The latter focus particularly on enhancing a teacher-led approach.

We hope that the research findings, innovative activities and the related projects in the region will lead to sound policy measures and practices for meaningful and sustainable school-home partnership in order to provide equal quality education for all children.

The purpose of the conference:

- 1. To initiate informed dialogue on the introduction and implementation of policies and practice for meaningful parental engagement in the life of schools.**
- 2. To provide a venue for outlining regional and national courses of action for advancing education inclusion and quality through parental engagement in the life of schools and establishing sustainable home-school-community partnerships.**

² Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia

Objectives:

1. To present the findings and recommendations of the cross-country surveys,
2. To better understand related initiatives in SEE countries
3. To learn about experiences and practices in some EU countries
4. To outline the next steps in promoting meaningful school-home partnerships

The participants

The meeting will bring together: delegations of the countries that have participated in the surveys: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo (as defined by UNSCR 1244), Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia; the regional and country research teams; representatives of the Open Society Institute network programs and national foundations; representatives of global, EU and other international organizations active in SEE such as UNICEF, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Commission's DG Education and Culture, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; EC Delegation representatives; European Training Foundation (ETF), ERISSE; the Regional Cooperation Council; South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (SEECCEL); Education International; the Roma Education Fund; the World Bank; bilateral government agencies such as KulturKontakt, Austria, Canadian International Development Agency, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) Swiss Development Cooperation, and distinguished international and local experts in the field.

Each country delegation will have up to 6 members, preferably as follows: a teacher, a school principal, a parent, a policy/decision maker of the highest possible level, the lead country researcher and the country team coordinator. The organizers will cover travel and accommodation expenses for the country delegations, central research team members and invited guests.

The Open Society Institute network and national foundations staff and members of international organizations are expected to cover their travel and accommodation costs. The lunches on the conference days and coffee breaks are free for all participants.

For more information and to register for the conference, please visit <http://www.see-educoop.net/aeiq/conference-registration.htm>

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