

## **Report on the focus-group discussions with parents from the Republic of Moldova on the topic: Participation of Parents in scholar activities; period of realization – April-May 2009**

### **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS / Top lines**

#### **I. GENERAL INTRODUCTIVE ASPECTS**

At the beginning of the activity, parents were asked the way they feel being parents children who go to school, what feelings they have. **More than 90 percent of parents said today it is very hard to be a parent of a child who goes to school, especially from the financial point of view.** They hardly manage to cover all necessities of their children and at the same time, children are frustrated due to some lacks or material problems. Many children go to school without having breakfast and it is very bad that breakfast or lunch is not provided in educational units. It is a paradox. The society has become more developed, children too, but in rural regions there are still families with no TV station at home, families that have children who attend the school (ex. Codreanca, Strășeni). There were many other arguments proving many difficulties and problems of parents, like the following: the lack of school uniform for all pupils increases their financial needs. They need more cloths to wear, but parents do not have the necessary resources to ensure these clothes. Consequently a competition between pupils arises. Pupils' behavior is not so good, they are negatively influenced by the street, mass media, other pupils who do not have the necessary education and who have problematic behavior. In many schools, including from urban areas, there is a problem related to the lack of physical and psychological protection - thus there is no life security in their school. Parents say that they cannot help their children with homework, because manuals and workbooks are too complicated for them and full of theory. Parents are also frustrated because 3<sup>rd</sup> form pupils' schoolbag weights 12-15 kg and there are too many home tasks at every subject. **Only few parents have mentioned that it is very interesting to be parents of children who attend the school,** because they become pupils again, have the same feelings like they once had, study new interesting things, make sure they know all the recent changes and news from our society, they feel young again etc.

#### **II. REFORMS IN EDUCATION**

**Regarding the way in which school has changed in comparison to the time when parents were pupils, as well as regarding who benefits now from our educational reforms, parents gave different answers.** Many changes took place – some of them into better, the other into worse, but most of the answers were related to the fact that all these changes are not for the best of our children from many reasons. Reform's beneficiaries are parents and children; these reforms were written in an interesting way, but they are not implemented the way they have to be. The quality of the teaching-learning process has decreased. **Children are more developed intellectually, culturally they want to know more, but teachers do not have the same motivation of working with children, they also do neither have the status that they once had, nor the moral and material satisfaction.** The state can no longer support public education; without parents' financial contribution, the school practically cannot exist. There are almost no extra-curricular or additional activities; in rural areas, children who have skills related to art, music, sport, painting cannot develop their talent. There were times when pupils from modest families that lived in rural areas, had at least some possibilities to be promoted, to develop their abilities etc. There was no such level of corruption, pupils were equally treated, and attention was given to all of them, even if they did not pay to teachers. Today many schools do not have teachers of foreign languages, of physics, mathematics; pupils cannot study some disciplines. The transition from medium schools to lyceums creates big problems to graduates; many of them do not manage to pass the baccalaureate exams. Accents have been changed – for what do pupils study, for life or for the baccalaureate? Many children and parents would answer that pupils study for the baccalaureate, because this exam decides whether a graduate is admitted or not to a faculty. The baccalaureate has become a fight, both of children and parents, a fight for high marks, many times obtained by having different relations – and all this hides pupils real aptitudes, capacities, skills and efforts. Many subjects for

the baccalaureate are bought, many marks are bought etc. **The most corrupt element of the educational process is, evidently, evaluation – and this is at the highest levels, starting with the Ministry of Education.** Current evaluation generates as well many problems.

**The most stringent problems of today schools,** in parents' vision, are the following:

- **Children who have one or both parents working abroad create the biggest problems. Most of them are not being taken care of anyone; they have a good material and financial support, but the moral part of their behavior is very problematic.**
- **High level of corruption from our society affects our school. Teachers do not help pupils without having an interest and motivation do to so. At the policy level, many good intentions are mentioned, but they are only declared or written on paper. School discipline has become a real problem.** For example, if a parent comes to school, he/she can be laid on the ground in corridors by pupils.
- **Pupils discrimination,** depending on their financial situation and their living place (in rural schools, where pupils come to school from 2-3 different small regions).
- High amount of homework make children stay up until 1-2 a.m. and this affects a lot their health.
- School cannot solve their current problems because they do not have the necessary financial resources. They can do nothing without parents' help. Any kind of problems becomes parents' problem too, and it is not fair, because educational is public, state owned, we all pay taxes on education and we also pay a monthly fee for the School Foundation of Parents.
- Many pupils and parents are indifferent towards bad marks, because these marks do not have a real value in their lives; in our society people who had good marks do not necessarily live better. Some time ago, teachers were required a lot, but now they are too indifferent.

### **III. GENERAL PARTICIPATION AND PARENTS' PARTICIPATION**

To the question related to the way in which parents are involved in the school life and in what cases they take part in the decision-making process, the answer was the following: most of the time, parents that are continuously involved in school activities are those who have pupils with remarkable academic results. **The most frequent form of participation in the presence of parents at parents meetings (80-90 percent, with some exceptions, of course).** In primary classes, parents' participation at meetings is much better. As pupils grow up, parents come more and more seldom. Most of respondents say they get involved in school activities, because they are taking care of their children, but the main problem in their participation is the lack of information and the fact that the school does not have an efficient mechanism of communication with parents through their children. Most of the cases, the school informs parents that they have to contribute with a sum of money for the school fund. **Most of parents do not know what the functions of the Committee of Parents are; they do not participate to the decision-making process, but still they are always involved in collecting school financial funds.** Parents didn't mention any other positive practices of the Committee of Parents besides collecting financial funds. **In general, the share of parents' participation in the decision-making process is mentioned as being very small or insignificant.**

#### **A. Types of involvement: Parents council**

Committees of Parents activate at the class level, having three members from every class. They are changing annually. At the school level, in most of the institutions, there are from 5 to 9 members, one representative from every class. At the class level, results of these Committees are more visible than at the institutional level. An example of positive practice is the following: during a meeting of the Committee of Parents from the Gymnasium from Butesti, members have discussed with pupils with inadequate behavior. These pupils were breaking current school rules and regulations and they were troubling other pupils. The effect was an immediate one. After that it was not necessary to take these pupils to the Chamber for Minors from the regional police office.

#### **Other types of involvement.**

**Beside financial contributions of parents, they are also responsible (almost 100%) of the school capital repairs and renovation.** They also contribute to planting trees on the school territory, they help teachers and pupils in organizing different school events (special weeks for every discipline),

different expos, contests etc. Other positive practice of participation from the Primary School from Molesti was the following: Parents have insisted that their children should study English and not only French. They wrote requests and the school coordinated with the Educational Department from the region. So a young specialist was sent and he worked during a half of the year. Similarly, a teacher of informatics came and worked during a year. Young teachers don't want to stay and work in the country, due to small salaries. There are schools in which half of the didactic staff consists of pensioners "tired of life and work".

### **Motivation for participation**

**Many interviewed parents state that they are not motivated to participate to the school life because they do not see any benefits of Committees of Parents, besides collecting money. Parents also mentioned that decisions are taken only by the school administration without taking into consideration parents' opinions.** They say that it would be very good for the school to come with an initiative, or that a group of parents to have an initiative that could motivate all parents, that would stimulate them to get involved and contribute to improving the educational process of their children. Intellectual, cultural and professional preparation, in general, decreases year by year and that is why, motivation of children also decreases and, consequently, parents' motivation for actively being involved in school activities decreases too.

### **Initiatives**

**Most of the initiatives of parents' involvement relate to helping the school when a problem arises or when money are necessary for buying something.** Intellectual parents, including those involved in different NGOs had some initiatives of organizing methodical seminars with teachers, including for initiating them in using new interactive techniques and methodologies, but teachers were quite reserved (for example, the initiative from Chisinau) the most frequent question put by parents: *How can we make teachers learn many new things related to psychology and pedagogy, to approach individually every child and to initiate new forms of viable and sustainable partnership with families?*

### **Parent-teacher relationship and mutual trust**

The attitude towards pupils in many schools depends on their material and financial situation. Children from vulnerable, poor families get many times no attention from teachers. Some disciplines are taught superficially and pupils do not manage to understand them. Due to the fact that teachers' salaries are very small, there is a tendency to "buy good marks" – if you pay – you have a higher mark, if not – it can be even lowered on purpose. **Parents are many times asked to do pupils' homework so that their children could be able to cover the curricular program.** Many teachers do not respect pupils and pupils also do not respect their teachers, as well as other old persons. In rural areas, teachers cannot preserve their intellectual status; they are forced to be involved in different agricultural works, growing plants, rearing animals and birds, next to simple peasants. This affects a lot their status, authority and consequently their way of thinking and acting. Many school directors and teachers think that school is responsible for the educational process and for the decisions taken. Thus the school believes it is self-sufficient and it does not involve parents in this process and there are no stipulations in any normative acts of educational policy regarding this matter.

**E. The most important obstacles in parents participation are the following: indifference of many parents; lack of time; many parents are working at more than on working place and they do not have time for the school matters; parents absence from the country, from families; lack of trust of parents and children in the school administration; lack of their authority in some regions etc.**

**F. Exclusion patterns:** Practically, in schools from Moldova, parents do not recognize the fact that they are excluded or that they intentionally exclude themselves from the school life. Some categories of parents automatically exclude themselves when they go to work abroad (more than 10 thousand of parents); alcoholic parents, parents with other behavioral problems. There is another group of parents that are not interested in the school life (but they are less than the first group) – they have very good financial situation and they are more concerned of their work and carrier rather than of their child. **Parents feel themselves excluded due to the fact that many educational decisions are taken at the policy level; there is no consultative body, at least no one created by parents that could be involved in the decision-making process at the educational policy level or curriculum on school**

**decision level.** Children should choose optional courses together with their parents, but practically this is not happening; either the school offer is too modest, or parents are just formally asked.

**G. Benefits of participation.** The most important benefit is considered to be the following: a higher level of attention given to children, improvement of the school-family-teachers relationship that will evidently positively influence comfort of children at school.

### Details, illustrative statements

#### **I. GENERAL INTRODUCTIVE ASPECTS**

##### **1. How is like to be a parent nowadays? What feelings do you have?**

- Nowadays it is very hard to be a parent, especially from the financial point of view; we hardly manage to cover all the financial needs of our children;
- For me it is very hard because of the lack of school uniform in our school. Due to this, financial needs of my child increase a lot. We cannot always buy new clothes for our children;
- For me it is hard to be a parent too, because children behavior is not so good, they are influenced by the street, by other pupils who don't have values that our children have, pupils who are not educated;
- I think it is very difficult to be a parent, because there is also a problem related to the lack of security in schools. In my opinion, it would be very good to hire a person who would be responsible of pupils' security (for example a police officer for minors). *Durlesti*
- It is very hard, requirements are very high, but our salaries do not permit us to cover even a half of them. However, I try to do my best to make sure that my child has everything he needs, and I do a lot of effort for this;
- For me it is very hard too. Besides clothes and food, I also need financial resources for paying additional courses for my child. I have to pay to teachers for these additional lessons because I cannot help my child with homework;
- I have two children and it is very difficult. Children have many needs and requirements, teachers give them much homework that is difficult for me and I cannot help them. My vocabulary is very poor and nowadays schools use new terms that are unknown for me;
- It is very hard to be a parent, but we manage – we read a lot of literature, browse the Internet and we try a lot to be able to help our children and to face this challenge;
- We thank a lot teachers, they take care of our children and are like real parents for them;
- I cannot help my children with their home tasks, but I feed them and I make sure they have the necessary clothes. However, my children have remarkable academic results and they require some material remuneration. This is the problem for me;
- It is hard, but we are grateful to teachers and their work;
- I am a mother, a teacher and a class master for my child and it is difficult for me to manage. For my child it is also hard because the rest of pupils consider him more special and favored somehow, but he has the same requirements and tasks to do. *Botanica*
- For my soul it is a big happiness to be a parent, to see how your child grows up, but from the financial point of view it is very difficult;
- I have a child with special educational needs (SEN) and for me it is even harder. For my child, the time for preparing all the tasks is not sufficient. If he manages to do the tasks – it is good, if not – it is also good. There are absolutely no solutions in the school for this problem, both my child's necessities and mine, as a parent of a child with SEN are not ensured at all;
- For me it is a great responsibility to be a parent because I have to do my child's homework. She does not manage to assimilate all the information during classes, because there are a lot of children in this form and teachers cannot deal with them all during classes. Thus have to permanently help my child with homework;
- I enjoy being a parent and I am very happy, but my child needs permanent supervision and he does not manage to do all his homework by himself;

- It is important for teachers to individually approach every child, but this is not done – maybe because of no sufficient time or maybe because teachers are not motivated. *Molesti*
- The curricular program for pupils is very difficult, requirements are very high.
- A kind of discrimination is felt towards children from smaller regions who go to school in larger villages, where most of the pupils live;
- It is hard because not all the children can eat at school, by the afternoon they get tired and hungry and they have to walk 3-5 km from a village or another back and forth, sometimes it's raining, sometimes it's cold, they get wet and dirty. *Brinzeni*
- There are too many responsibilities for parents (education, food, clothes etc.);
- There is a big difference between pupils from villages and those from cities and towns. Children from villages want to be equally treated as those from cities, but for parents it is very hard, because we don't have the same possibilities as parents from cities, we cannot afford many things. People from cities and towns have more possibilities to earn some money, to find a place to work;
- In our villages there are families with no TV station and that is why, it is very difficult;
- Things that are happening in our country seem like a paradox – on the one hand, we have modernized a lot, and on the other hand – our financial situation has worsened a lot;
- And one more thing – if we go abroad to earn some money, our children remain alone, with no support and care and with no educational results;
- Even books are very expensive today and we need a lot of money for them. *Codreanca*
- It is very interesting, we revive our childhood.
- It is a day-to-day challenge for us, with new aspects to be given attention to.
- I feel like a pupil because I revive my school years and I graduate each year together with my child;
- It is interesting to be a parent. You have to be up-to-date and to be always informed.

### **PRO DIDACTICA**

#### **2. What other problems identified by parents and prior for being solved in schools do you see?**

- Besides those mentioned above, I think that another problem that exists in our schools is related to weak knowledge of pupils, as well as the quality of teaching and assimilating knowledge by our children;
- This is really a problem, especially because I personally observed many times that children want to know more, to gain many new information, but teachers appreciate pupils according to the financial situation of their parents, according to their social status and this frustrates a lot other pupils;
- I think that another very stringent problem is the fact that our curricular program is very complicated and it is not accessible for pupils and parents. I want to help my child, but I can't. Our pupils are tired of studying and are frustrated by their low academic results;
- The problem that bothers me is the excessive freedom of children and lack of some obligations for them – pupils know very well their rights, but not so well their responsibilities;
- The biggest problems are created by pupils who have parents working abroad. Most of them are not being taken care of anyone, except some material and financial support;
- The attitude towards children is formed depending on their financial situation and children from socio-vulnerable or poor families have almost no attention from teachers;
- High level of corruption from our society affects the school a lot. Thus, there is almost no help or attention from teachers without any interest; there is no “dezinterested” support;
- Teachers teach superficially. If you pay – you have a good mark, if not – the mark can even be lowered;
- The school cannot solve problems because of no financial resources;
- During a year, there wasn't any teacher of mathematics in our school (he went abroad). We are close to the capital, but young teachers don't want to come here and teach because of the low salaries;

- Many children and parents are indifferent of low marks, because it has no value for them.
- Durlesti***
- A problem is parents who work abroad and left their children to no one.
  - I consider very important the motivation of children to come to school. They cannot understand the reason for attending the school because they see in the real life many examples in which it is not necessary to study for becoming someone;
  - We, parents, do not sufficient time for taking care of our children, because we are busy with our work and other activities necessary for making money. ***Botanica***
  - The curriculum is very difficult and parents must help a lot their children, because teachers do not manage to help all of them. Manuals and workbooks are also complicated;
  - Simple parents from villages cannot help their children, not even from the second grade, for example at mathematics;
  - There is no sport classroom, parents contribute with financial resources, but a sport classroom requires too much money;
  - Another problem is the lack of didactic materials. In the primary school there is not even a computer;
  - A discriminatory behavior can be observed in schools: children with remarkable academic results are offered modest gifts on holidays. The rest of children get nothing;
  - In some classes where the class master is a good professional, there are a lot of children, but in others, pupils are fewer and fewer. ***Molesti***
  - Parents' possibilities to help their children with homework are very limited;
  - There are no conditions for children who want to have additional extra-curricular classes: dance, music, sport etc. There are less extracurricular activities and teachers are not paid for them;
  - I have a child in the first grade and he is not given attention to at all, he is not being asked during 2-3 days. ***Brinzeni***
  - In cities, children have everything they need, but in villages it is very hard for us to ensure all the necessities of pupils;
  - A big problem for me is the fact that our children are not busy in the afternoon. There are almost no extracurricular activities for them – no special classes, no clubs nothing;
  - But we did not do anything for making possible to organize some extracurricular actions we did not even addressed to the Educational Department.
  - The curriculum is too loaded and complicated;
  - Teachers are too loaded, they have many children in classes and they do not manage to teach qualitatively the materials. Also they are not motivated because of the low salaries;
  - A big problem in our school is the lack of the extracurricular and extra school activities for pupils;
  - For me a big problem is parents' contribution that has to be paid monthly. Besides that, there are many additional contributions;
  - There is no transparency of School Administration actions;
  - Many parents do not pay the monthly contributions and in this case, all the money go to the school fund and no money remain for the class needs. However, we are interested in the class benefit from the money that we pay. ***Codreanca***
  - Parents are asked to teach some lessons at home because teachers do not manage to teach all this huge amount of materials;
  - The intellectual preparation of teachers is decreasing and at the same time, pupils' interest and motivation for learning decreases too;
  - In the informational era, the volume of knowledge decreases. Sad but true;
  - Intellectual over-working of pupils – many responsible children stay up late and study a lot thus affecting their health;
  - No mutual respect between pupils and teachers. ***PRO DIDACTICA***
- 3. Do you feel like you could solve these problems?**

- I personally cannot solve these problems; I need help from teachers, from school, from the class master. They are those who have to set a school discipline, to impose some regulations and even some restrictions related to children behavior;
- I also consider that not only parents are responsible of solving all these problems. For example the problem related to liberal behavior must be resolved partially by teachers – they have to be more restrictive. *Durlesti*

#### 4. Who do you think could help you?

- The state is the one who has to ensure a decent salary, so that we could be able to choose the perfect school for our children, to spend more time with our children. *Botanica*

## II. REFORMS IN EDUCATION

### 1. How has the school changed in comparison to the times when you had studied?

- The ideal silence during classes, discipline and rules that were respected during our childhood is not anymore respected. And this is caused by the fact that nowadays pupils have too many rights;
- Changes that occurred are more into worse. Many problems cannot be solved neither by teachers, not by parents and there are cases when a police officer must be involved in order to solve some problems related to children behavior. There are many cases of deviant behavior of pupils, who create discomfort to other classmates;
- I frequently visit the school because I have a child and a grandchild who are studying and when I enter the school, children can hit me, running on corridors. They do not have respect for older people or teachers. That is why, there have to be more requirements for them;
- Nowadays pupils have more knowledge about everything that surrounds them, they are more developed in comparison with us at their age;
- It is very bad that there are no extra-school activities for pupils;
- There were times when children were not so controlled. Parents did not involve so much in the school life and things were much better. *Durlesti*
- Children are more developed intellectually, they know many things, we can discuss with them about almost anything;
- Changes that occurred are most of them into better;
- Manuals are more interesting, more attractive, with more captivating information;
- Children are now more motivated to learn, we believe that this is due to financial problems;
- Pupils' behavior with teachers is getting worse, children have excessive freedom, and there is no mutual respect. For example, I wanted to attend a lesson and the teacher allowed me with pleasure, but when I saw how pupils behavior was, I was shocked;
- Usually children are behaving well at home, but at school they become aggressive and rude. Sometimes I just went to school in order to see if my child behaves properly and I saw that at school he wasn't doing his tasks because otherwise other children would laugh;
- Mass media negatively influences children education. They can easily watch different uncensored movies during the day. When we were children, we were healthier both physically and morally. Today children are less and less resistant to different diseases;
- I think that we were more independent; even if our parents didn't check our homework, we had better results and we were studying a lot;
- Many changes occurred into better, but the school did not become more attractive to children;
- We had exams starting with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and we were more prepared to all this kind of tests and examinations, but today pupils have their first real exams in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and they are too stressed and they are not used to study regularly; also there should also be oral exams too, not only written tests;
- Previously our parents didn't pay so much money for the school fund; also graduates didn't pay for being admitted to a university, but nowadays, money do matter, and knowledge – not so much; *Botanica*
- It is very bad that there is no school uniform. Nowadays there is a competition for clothes and children from poor families are so much affected;

- Current changes are not into better at all. During our childhood, pupils had more responsibilities towards the school, but now they are more indifferent. They see that society is not supporting wise and intelligent people and they have a really modest life;
- Some good traditions have disappeared; for example, there were voluntary activities that gathered many people who met and solved several issues. Nowadays it is very hard to gather parents for some common interest activities.
- School reforms and society reforms have a positive impact on children. They are more intellectually developed and they many times teach us different things;
- Most of today movies negatively influence children education;
- When I was a pupil, children were friendlier, more willing to help, more hardworking. *Brinzeni*
- I think that there are many positive changes – children want more from their lives;
- Another positive thing is that teachers are more objective, they have higher requirements from pupils;
- It is good that there is a huge amount of didactic materials;
- Children know a lot and they want to know even more;
- If you want to help your children, you have to study along with your child, year by year, because the curricular program is so different;
- The school is ready to respond to all these challenges – teachers are well prepared, they study a lot. *Codreanca*
- We have better conditions in our schools (heat with natural gases). It is not cold during winter;
- Children are being fed once a day (it would be better twice a day but it is better than nothing);
- Nowadays, parents are being much more involved in the school life. There are much more meetings with parents;
- The state has no responsibility for supporting the school. All financial problems are covered by parents;
- I do not see any good changes. More things were destroyed rather than built;
- Children don't attend any extracurricular activities. Salaries of teachers are low and they don't want to work additionally with our children;
- There is no summer camp for children in our village. *Molesti*
- Most of the changes are into better for our children;
- Pupils' expectations from the school are too high and the school cannot deal with all pupils' needs. Another thing is that laboratories and classrooms are not endowed with the necessary equipment – which is a real paradox;
- Children carry everyday schoolbags weighting over 10 kg;
- A child graduates the school at 19-20 years old – and it is too late;
- There is a lot of theory and it is not clear – for what do children study – for life or for the baccalaureate exams?
- Lessons with class masters are more like punishment classes rather than educative ones;
- The transition from General Schools to lyceums creates big problems for graduates and at the educational policy level this problems are not being solved. *PRO DIDACTICA*

## 2. What do you think about the future of recent educational reforms? Do you trust them?

- We don't trust them, but we still hope that our children will have a better future;
- How can we trust them, if everything can be bought! For example, the Communist Party gave 100 lei for each of us to vote for them at the elections. I told them to offer me a better job so I could earn for my living. *Botanica*
- Many reforms have been made: some of them are good and other are not so good;
- For me it is very disadvantageous that pupils who graduated the 11<sup>th</sup> grade within General Schools cannot be admitted to superior educational institutions. This means that our children have to go in other regions and study one more year, take the baccalaureate exams, which are very difficult for them;
- I think that some reforms that could stimulate and motivate pupils' enrollment in the labor force market have to be developed. Also it is very important to motivate young teachers to

### III. PARTICIPATION IN GENERAL AND PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS

#### 1. How are you involved in the school life and in what cases do you participate to the decision-making process?

- I participate to the school life by helping my child, but the most important problem for me is lack of information. *Durlesti*
- It doesn't matter if a special Council exists or not. What does matter is the fact that there are always some active parents in every class. And the school-family relationship is based on their activity;
- In my child's class of 15 pupils, there are three parents who never come to meetings and who are not involved in any school activity;
- The school needs us when money is needed: for buying didactic materials or furniture, for repairs etc.
- However, a part of fault goes to parents: they are not always active, interested or motivated and they refuse to be involved. *Botanica*
- If we try to express some objections regarding the quality of teaching, teachers wouldn't let us;
- Usually only a group of parents are being involved – parents who really care about the future of their children. The rest of them are reticent and don't want to participate. It is very interesting the fact that we have two categories of parents who are not involved in the school life: 1) rich parents – they don't want to contribute financially, because they think that the local mayoralty or the state has to cover all the educational need of their children, that this is their responsibility; 2) poor and socio-vulnerable families, who are totally out of this process;
- If we calculated the percentage of parents who are involved, we would see that 70-80% of parents are involved;
- An active parent must be brave and must convince others to get involved. He/She also must know very well the situation or the problem. *Molesti*
- We don't have any legal associations of parents. In Camenca money are being collected from parents, but not in Butesti. There are alcoholic parents who cannot contribute with anything;
- In our school 90% of parents attend parents meetings;
- Children with SEN are taught at home, with parents' help. But there are many of them who are not being registered and they are not being taken care of the way they have to be;
- During every parents meeting there are discussions about parents' pedagogical skills;
- Meetings with parents are organized at the class level 4 hours per year and at the school level – 2-3 times per year;
- Most of our children have good academic results. Their number in classes vary from 16 to 20 pupils;
- We don't have sufficient didactic staff members;
- We have insisted to form an association of parents, but we didn't succeed. *Brinzeni*.
- If we tried to analyze the percentage of active and passive parents in our institution, than we would have 40% of active parents and 60% of passive ones (who don't come and don't help with anything).
- However, there are classes in which all parents are coming to parents meetings;
- Some parents participate by attending classes;
- I attend meetings for discussing with teachers and with the class master about the behavior of my children;
- I communicate with teachers through my child, I trust my child. *Codreanca*
- Mothers are more active than parents;
- The school is interested in more in the financial aspect of parents' participation and it is almost not interested in parents' involvement in the didactic process;

- Parents are interested in making changes into better, but this doesn't depend on them;
  - There isn't any clear regulation known by parents related to their participation;
- In there were changes into better at the system level and education became a state priority, parents would not have to be involved. *PRO DIDACTICA*

### **B. Types of involvement: Parents Council**

#### **Participation through Parents Council**

- Our parents don't participate at the decision-making process. We are communicated the decision and we just accept it. *Molesti*
- The school administration is not consulting with parents on making decisions. *Brinzeni.*
- There were no Parents Councils when we were pupils. The chemical factory was like a curator of our school but PC didn't exist. However, in cities they existed;
- Nowadays the most important responsibility of Parents Councils is to collect money for a certain school problem;
- In order for a PC to activate better, there have to be active parents, leader parents who could have time and take initiatives;
- I don't participate to the decision-making process, but I always contribute with money for the school fund and I also collect money from pother parents, as a representative of the Council; .
- I don't know any positive practice of our PC and resides financial contributions, I don't know any actions taken by them. *Durlesti*
- PC helps to organize different events like New Year, the Last Bell etc.
- PC also help with organizing different excursions outside our village and they also solve different problems at the class level – usually when teachers ask for help. *Molesti*
- None of us are members of PC and we don't know what are their responsibilities;
- We are involver in PC – there are 3 parents from each class;
- We are PC members and we take several decisions related to: class arrangement, organization of different events, collecting financial funds etc.
- We were not involved in any projects. There were some in our school, but without parents' participation;
- It would be good if pupils would make decisions related to choosing their class master, because in my child's class it is a problem and there are not compatibility. *Codreanca*

### **C. Types of involvement. Other**

- We also participate to different classes organized for parents; these kinds of lessons are not organized very often, but at least sometimes we can see performances of our children. *Molesti*
- All the school repairs and renovations are financially covered by parents;
- We participate at different activities related to planting trees and flowers on the school territory, along with pupils and teachers;
- We help with preparations for special weeks for every subject. *Brinzeni*
- Parents' participation is reduced at attending at meetings and contributing financially for ensuring several financial issues of the school. *Codreanca*

#### **Motivation for participation**

- I am very motivated to participate to the school life; I come to school very often and I don't blame teachers, but think that we have to analyze our behavior and our children behavior too;
- I have a girl in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and I come to school twice a week. My children tell me everything and I, as a mother, participate as mush as I can. I observed that many children are very noisy during classes, they are distracted and many of their parents don't work with them at all at home. *Botanica*

#### **Initiatives**

- All the school repairs and renovations are financially covered by parents;
- From parents' contributions some national costumes were bought for the dance circle. *Molesti*
- Children didn't have the reference books recommended by the curriculum, including dictionaries, encyclopedias, belletristic books and parents bought all these books; parents also bought furniture for classrooms. *PRO DIDACTICA*

- During a meeting of the Parents Council (at the Gymnasium from Butesti) members have discussed with pupils who had inadequate behavior. These pupils were breaking current school rules and regulations and they were troubling other pupils. The effect was an immediate one. After that it was not necessary to take these pupils to the Chamber for Minors from the regional police office. *Brinzeni*

### **Parent-teacher relationship and mutual trust**

Relationships are very different. The class masters are the most important persons who ensure the school-family relationships. Through them parents communicate with the school administration and teachers. *PRO DIDACTICA*

- But there are no relations between teachers-parents-pupils;
- Some teachers don't even allow us to attend some of their classes, although we only want to see the involvement, results and failures of our children;
- It is very hard to trust a teacher who does not have a communication culture – there are teachers who tell different negative things about children in front of other parents or pupils;
- We discuss a lot with teachers by phone, especially with those who work abroad. Most of them call and ask about academic results of their children. *Botanica*

### **E. The main obstacles in parents' participation**

- Parents indifference;
- Parents frustration regarding the fact that not all of them can ensure all the child's needs;
- Mistrust in didactic staff members. Many teachers have favorites among pupils and the rest of children must pay additional classes for having the mark increased;
- Mistrust in the school administration. *Durlesti*
- Financial crisis;
- Parents don't spend enough time with their children;
- Our parents did not verify us the way we do with our children. They were not coming so often to school and they were not paying so much money for the school fund;
- Most of parents don't trust so much in God, and thus they don't have such problems like children education or involvement in the school life. *Durlesti*
- Lack of time due to a lot of agricultural work in villages;
- No transparency in administrating money collected by parents. Sometimes, when more delicate decisions must be taken, like buying some presents, or making some donations, the school administration does not involve parents, unless they need more money. *Molesti*
- No constructive relations between parents and the school;
- More parents are passive; they aren't patient to attend meetings from the beginning until the end. *Botanica*
- Mothers are more involved than fathers. *Brinzeni.*
- There are no working places and, consequently, parents go abroad to find a place to work and earn money for raising their children;
- There are no young teachers and the old ones are not interested and motivated to plan their work with parents and to involve them in different activities;
- No information – we don't even know how can we contribute to improving our participation and involvement;
- Children are not open and collaborative. They don't say anything to their parents about things that take place in their school;
- Some parents are in conflict-relations with teachers and children are those who suffer. *Codreanca*
- Sometimes you want to change something into better, but you are not sure that you do what is the best for your child and you are afraid to be useless..

Sometimes the administration is not interested and there is an impression that the school is a personal business of some directors. *PRO DIDACTICA*

## **F. Exclusion patterns**

**How do parents of minority groups are being involved, as well as of parents of children with special educational needs. Is there any difference?**

- We have a mixed school (Moldovan-Russian), but we relations between pupils and teachers are very good; there are almost no conflicts;
- We have also in our school children of refugees and the attitude towards them is also very good and friendly;
- We have to admit the fact that parents from Russian families are more active;
- Officially, we don't have children with disabilities, but there are children with special educational needs and it is very bad that parents are not conscious about this, but these pupils suffer a lot. *Botanica*
- Children from roma families don't differ from us. However, these families think that their children are somehow discriminated. *Durlesti*

## **G. Benefits of participation.**

- Children, parents and the whole school would benefit from this participation. *Durlesti*

## **Conclusions**

- Parents participate only when they are asked to contribute financially to the school development;
- Parents are not motivated to participate in the school life because they do not see the real benefits from the Parents Councils (PC);
- I am a pessimistic person and I don't believe that there will be some changes into better in teacher's statute;
- Parents do not see their role, we do not know what is a PC at the school level;
- The situation will remain the way we discuss it now. Nothing is going to change, we only speak about them and that's all.
- Anyway parents let teachers solve one or another problem and I don't think that teachers expect from parents any solutions;
- It is very hard to change something. Many parents are working abroad and they are sending to their children many goods, thus spoiling them and these children negatively influence others. *Durlesti*
- Our children deserve more than we can afford in this poor country. They are not guilty for living in such a difficult period of crisis. That is why, we, parents, have a great responsibility. If we gave birth to them, we have to raise them appropriately;
- Parents do not have any support from the state; we don't have any help or attention. Families with 2-3 children have so many problems and they do not have any place to go and ask for help. These families do not have any privileges and that is why, less children are being born;
- A change must occur, but this change depends a lot on us and on our actions. *Botanica*
- I am an optimistic person and I really believe that things will change into better. At least I will continue helping the school as I have always done this;
- I think that without parents' involvement it is practically impossible to realize all the school tasks;
- A real teacher cannot qualitatively work without parents' help;
- Children need maximum attention both from parents and teachers;
- Things must change into better – we deserve it. *Molesti*
- I like being a parent. I develop myself along with my child;
- Children don't have the necessary motivation to go to school. We wake them up; they sometimes go very frustrated and annoyed. *Brinzeni*
- Pedagogic craftsmanship is very important in the school of today;
- Parents' complaints and opinions are very important. I, as a director of a kindergarten, will include this important aspect in the development plan of the institution as a prior one;

- It is very important for the school-parents relationship to be based on mutual trust. It would also be good for parents to be involved not only by financially contributing to solving some financial problems. *Codreanca*

### **Recommendations for optimizing participation**

- Transparency in the administration of money given by parents must be ensured;
- Many extracurricular activities have to be organized (excursions, different circles, events etc.);
- Changes must occur first at superior levels, with the highest level of corruption;
- The behavioral culture of children is a big problem and the society must take actions in this matter (for example many TV stations must be prohibited);
- We don't believe in changes that come from the superior levels, because we live in lies and chaos;
- Mass media has to promote good behavior among children;
- Teachers can write in pupils' notebooks the reason they gave them concrete marks. Thus we could also communicate with teachers, because we don't have time to come to school every time. Also it would be good to create an initiative group that could encourage and motivate other parents to also be involved in their children school life. *Durlesti*
- It would be good to have more young teachers;
- Classes should be more democratically organized;
- A Parents Club would be a great idea. I would come for sure;
- Parents should be involved in common projects;
- I would like to organize different meetings, in which children could participate, as well as the school administration, teachers and parents;
- We should be allowed to attend classes without announcing previously the school director;
- A more positive attitude must exist in our school. *Codreanca*
- Maybe another idea would be a law that could allow parents to take some hours from their work once a month and come and visit their children at school, because working hours coincide with pupils' classes. *Botanica*
- There should be no differences between poor and rich children. Teachers should treat them equally;
- There should be a special educational policy for small schools from villages, because many of them are being closed, but schools are the "soul" of these small villages. *Brinzeni*.

### **FGDs groups:**

- 1 urban mainstream: Gymnasium Nr. 17, Botanica sector, airport, Chisinau – facilitators: V. Postica, R. Bezedo
- 1 rural mainstream– a mixed group of parents from little rural Gymnasiums from Butesti and Camenca, Glodeni district which are place in Brinzeni – facilitators: V. Postica, R. Bezedo
- 2 vulnerable groups: Gymnasium Nr. 64 from Durlesti, Codreanca Gymnasium from Straseni – facilitators: V. Postica, R. Bezedo
- 1 group of parents who are members of Parents Councils – Primary School from Molesti, Ialoveni – facilitators: V. Postica, R. Bezedo
- A group of intellectual active parents, employed at different NGOs – Educational Center PRO DIDACTICA – facilitator: L. Nicolaescu-Onofrei

From those 52 participants, 51 were mothers and only one father from the Codreanca Gymnasium; also 4 grandmothers participated (they are taking care of their grandchildren). The average age of parents is 40 years old.